

**CITY OF CORAL GABLES ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS
 CITY OF CORAL HUMAN RESOURCES & RISK MANAGEMENT
 214 Minorca Avenue, Coral Gables FL 33134
 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2025 MEETING MINUTES**

MEMBERS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	APPOINTED BY:
	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	
Jennifer Ward Sando	P												Mayor Vince Lago
Justine Chichester	P												Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Mary Palacio-Pike	P												Commissioner Kirk Menendez
Bonnie Blaire	P												Commissioner Melissa Castro
Vanessa Bedoya	P												Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
													Ex-Officio Member Chamber of Commerce

PZ = Via Zoom

**A – Absent
 E – Excused Absence
 (-) – No Appointment
 (*) – No Meeting
 (**)-No Meeting**

BOARD MEMBERS:

QUORUM: Quorum was reached

STAFF:

Raquel Elejabarrieta – Human Resources Director
 Eglys Hernandez – P/T Administrative Assistant Labor Relations & Risk Management
 Catie Hastings – Community Recreation – D.E.I. Coordinator
 Sarah Espino – Community Recreation – Administrative Operations Supervisor
 Ana Lam, Crime Watch Volunteer / School Community Relations Committee

GUEST:

CITIZEN ADVISORS:

Debbie Dietz (Via Zoom)
 Jennifer Durocher, Director of UM-NSU Card (Via Zoom)

PUBLIC GUEST: None

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order 10:02am

MEETING ABSENCE: None

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:

November 6, 2024

Motion by: Jennifer Ward Sando / 2nd Vanessa Bedoya / Approved unanimously

SECRETARY'S REPORT: None

BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

April Autism Acceptance Month – Ms. Palacio-Pike

Ms. Palacio-Pike stated April will be a busy month for the city, it will be celebrating its Centennial as well as Autism Month and would like to have a conversation regarding what happened in the past as well as what could take place this year. Ms. Palacio-Pike spoke regarding the raising of the flag and perhaps making this more like the presentation done during Christmas in the courtyard at City Hall inviting Area Stage, speakers, etc. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated perhaps closing the street around City Hall.

Ms. Elejabarrieta stated the closing of the street may be something that cannot be done, however perhaps doing something in the courtyard at City Hall can be explored. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated that it would be a good idea and perhaps inviting others such as UM Card to join the event. Dr. Durocher stated it would depend on when in April, due to UM having their fundraising event during the same time. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated having this take place on April 2, 2025, would be best so that the flag could be flown for the whole month. The board discussed dates and determined April 2, 2025, as a tentative date.

Ms. Palacio-Pike advised she will be reaching out to Miami-Dade County Commissioner Raquel Regalado regarding her participation. Ms. Ward Sando stated perhaps reaching out to a member of the school board and she could send an email. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised she will be reaching out to the school board to pencil in the date and to the Project Victory staff.

Ms. Blaire advised the board to keep in mind that April 2, 2025, is also the board's meeting date. The board decided instead of a meeting being held on that date, the raising of the flag will take place.

Ms. Palacio-Pike stated she wanted to add something to the agenda regarding new business. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated that while attending the December tree lighting, as a disability board member, she noticed there was no representation of people with disabilities at the presentation on the stage. Ms. Palacio-Pike noticed there were opportunities where some of the commissioners brought up to the stage some children from the public and thought how great it would have been to have a family such as Sando's be included. Ms. Ward Sando stated she has not attended the tree lighting due to the volume of people, however if her family would have opportunity to get on stage, they would be willing to go. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised she spoke with Community Recreations Department Director Mr. Fred Couceyro, who stated people wanting to be included in the presentations, reach out to them directly and express their interest. Ms. Espino explained the process regarding participants and purchasing of tickets for the VIP area.

Ms. Palacio-Pike advised she had reached out to Ms. Elejabarrieta regarding the Orange Bowl parade float that the Committee Parks & Recreation department has and how to have a representation of people with disabilities participate, however it was too late for this year's parade. Ms. Espino stated it is the city's float not the Committee & Recreations department float. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated this year, Commissioner Menendez had an idea to ask the employees if they would want to participate, and a very good response was received. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated for next year this suggestion will be kept in mind regarding having diverse representation on the float.

Ms. Lam stated she would like to add something under new business and asked if as the disability board, did they have a presence regarding the Underline. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated she spoke with Ms. Meg Daly, Friends of the Underline, two weeks ago, and mentioned to her there is a lot going on with the Underline, however she had not seen verbiage on their social media regarding inclusive or sensory friendly. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated that Ms. Daly advised it had not been brought up, wanted to address it and that they will be having a meeting to further discuss. Ms. Lam stated she believes it is a perfect opportunity.

Ms. Espino stated the city does have a small part on the Underline, and which will be a dog park. Ms. Espino stated the Community and Recreations department will manage the park; however, since it is a Miami-Dade County project, programming will be through them.

The board further discussed possibilities of the city being more involved in the activations regarding the dog underline. Ms. Bedoya mentioned perhaps having something with service dogs and Ms. Espino stated that, for example, if the city would like to conduct an event regarding service dogs, it can be something to explore. Ms. Espino stated she will be addressing these conversations with her supervisor.

Ms. Lam spoke about the holiday party at Merrick House and what a gem it is. Ms. Lam stated the Santa, which is there, is available for pictures, brings a guitar and is amazing with the kids. Ms. Lam stated there is free pictures with Santa and it is low key compared to the holiday park event. Ms. Lam stated she assists with taking pictures as well as video for the families. Ms. Blaire stated it would be great to visit this information closer to the holidays so it can perhaps be advertised and have designated times available for sensory friendly visits.

Centennial Art Contest with Art Labbe – Ms. Elejabarrieta

Ms. Elejabarrieta stated Art Labbe is a gallery located in the Gables, original one in Chile. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised they have Arte Labbe Foundation, where in Chile for the last couple of years, they have chosen a theme, had an international calling for individuals with cognitive disabilities to draw, write poems or create art in homes in accordance with the theme. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated once the artwork is received, it is put together and a display is created at their gallery for all to visit and enjoy. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated the foundation has expressed interest in doing this for the first time in the United States at their gallery located here in the Gables and the theme would be City of Coral Gables Centennial Celebration. Ms. Chichester asked if it was only for children and Ms. Elejabarrieta stated it is for anyone between the age of 0 to 99.

Dr. Durocher asked when they are stating cognitive, if there was someone in the autism spectrum but have average intelligence, does it mean they could not participate? Ms. Palacio-Pike stated while working with them at the gallery last year, this was for all disabilities. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated she was advised it is limited to people with cognitive disabilities. Board members further discussed and asked to receive clarity regarding their definition of the requirement reference cognitive disabilities to assure who will be eligible prior to decimating information to everyone and have some be disappointed due to not able to participate. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated she will be contacting them to get better clarification as to who will be able to participate.

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised city staff met with them in December and will do so again regarding this event. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated April 2025, is a very busy time, perhaps look for dates after that, however prior to Art Basel. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated the foundation will oversee the event and has asked the city for help in getting the word out. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised this event is not just limited to the City of Coral Gables participants; it will be worldwide. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated she will check if they will be able to attend the board's February meeting.

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised board that at the 2nd commission meeting in January on the 28th, the City of Coral Gables Chamber has requested Mr. Eddy Martinez, Summer of Success be appointed to the City of Coral Gables Advisory Board on Disability Affairs as it's ex-officio.

Update: ReelAbilities – Ms. Elejabarrieta

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised the city has decided to postpone at this time. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated the city feels more internal meetings are needed to ensure if it is brought to the city, will be a successful event. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated it was determined that the city does not have at this time the staff needed.

Ms. Palacio-Pike asked Ms. Justine Chichester to share her thoughts regarding having been part of the committee for this event and how to make it successful. Ms. Chichester stated reviewing the films was great and suggested next time there should be a more descriptive role of what the committee's responsibility would be. Ms. Chichester stated if this had been provided, she feels perhaps there would have been a lot more participation. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated this information is appreciated and will be taken into consideration.

Ms. Espino stated she agrees to having the event postponed, she believes the city does not have the resources at this time to ensure such an event is successful.

Ms. Ward Sando asked if there is a time frame to when this has been moved to. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated they feel that it would be best to partner with one of the cinemas. Ms. Espino stated that there needs to be some type of partnership set up. Ms. Hastings advised board she will be attending the complete program this year in New York and will be able to experience the various stages of the event, start to finish.

Santa's Visit – Fire Fighters – Ms. Palacio-Pike

Ms. Palacio -Pike spoke regarding the families' impact from the visit. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated how one of the families visited, the young man loves fire trucks and was super happy. Pictures of the visit were shared with the board. Board members expressed how wonderful this event is.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 11:03am

Motion to Adjourn: Vanessa Bedoya / 2nd Jennifer Ward Sando / Approved unanimously

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

NEXT MEETING: February 5, 2025