

CITY OF CORAL GABLES ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS
 CORAL GABLES YOUTH CENTER – CONFERENCE ROOM
 WEDNESDAY, November 7, 2018, 2018 8:00 A.M.

- MEETING MINUTES -

MEMBERS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	APPOINTED BY:
	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	
Blake Sando	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Vince Lago
Shedrick Boren	*	A	P	E	P	E	P	P	E	E	P		Mayor Raul Fauli-Valdes
Patricia Sowers	*	P	E	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	A		Patricia Keon
Richard Whittington	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P		Frank C. Quesada
Marie-Ilene Whitehurst	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P		Michael Mena

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

STAFF:

1. Raquel Elejabarrieta, Director of Labor Relations and Risk Management / ADA Coordinator
2. Eglys Hernandez, Labor Relations and Risk Management

STAFF GUEST:

Stephanie Throckmorton, Assistant City Attorney
 Carolina Vester, Assistant Director Parks & Recreation
 Ericka Kofkin, Special Populations Coordinator

CITIZEN ADVISORS:

Debbie Dietz

PUBLIC GUEST:

Ms. Pilar Gomez
 Ms. Phillipa (Pippa) Milne

CALL TO ORDER:

Meeting was called to order 8:04 am

MEETING ABSENCE:

Board Member Ms. Patricia Sowers

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:

October 3, 2018

Motion by: Ms. Marie-Ilene Whitehurst / 2nd: Dr. Richard Whittington / All approved unanimously

SECRETARY’S REPORT:

None

BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

Recap of Adventure Day for All Event – Ms. Carolina Vester

Ms. Vester advised Board final cost of event being twenty three thousand dollars (\$23,000.00), which fell in the approximate estimate predicted amount. Ms. Vester stated that there were approximately 200 participants registered at event, 40 vendors between resources and activities (which attended without paying a fee), as well as 43 tents set up. Ms. Vester discussed perhaps changing time of event, possibly charging a fee for vendors who wish to participate, as well as expanding some of the activities such as Zumba. Ms. Vester welcomed the input of the Board.

Ms. Whitehurst stated that it may be best to consider changing event time to earlier in the day due to participants may have more energy during the morning hours. Mr. Sando stated that he has no concern regarding the time of event. Mr. Sando feels it was appropriate that this time around vendors were not charged however, perhaps there can be a charge of fifty dollars for next year's event and he also feels that if possible lowering the expectations regarding formalities.

Ms. Vester advised that for future events, they will work with Food Trucks in order to have them provide nutritional facts so attendees can have information regarding allergens.

Ms. Vester explained that in order to maintain down both cost and time required, they try to work only with 10 x 10 tents as well as a raiser stage, which neither require permits. Ms. Vester stated that participants also expressed interest in purchasing event t-shirts and they are considering having them available at next year's event.

Review of Advisory Board on Disability Affairs Annual Accomplishment Report – Ms. Elejabarrieta
Board was emailed report for their review and approval. Motion to approve report was done.

Motion by: Ms. Marie-Ilene Whitehurst / 2nd: Dr. Richard Whittington / All approved unanimously

Supper Club Update – Ms. Debbie Dietz

Ms. Dietz advised that the last Supper Club event held was a very active lively group. Ms. Dietz stated that for the last two months they have partnered with the FIU (Florida International University) Embrace Project and several of their members have joined in. Ms. Dietz also stated that at this last event, a representative from DeMoya Foundation was present and will be advising their members of upcoming future dates as well as having met with representatives of Best Buddies who stated they would be placing information on their website. Ms. Dietz stated that they are in the works of preparing new schedule for the next year and will provide information to Board.

Update on City of Coral Gables / Commissioner Sosa Autism Center – Ms. Raquel Elejabarrieta

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised that at this time there is no update and would address this matter again at December meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion on Proposed Plastic Straw Ban – Ms. Stephanie Throckmorton – Assistant City Attorney

Ms. Throckmorton stated that the City is currently not considering banning plastic straws City wide, instead are looking into the implementation of a plastic straw ban prohibiting City contractors and special events permittees from giving plastic straws without giving them as an accommodation. Ms. Throckmorton stated it mainly will affect Venetian pool and special events such as Adventure Day for All Event. Ms. Throckmorton stated that this however does not prohibit vendors from providing any other type of straws such as paper, pasta, silicone or other material not being plastic. Ms. Throckmorton stated that an exception has been built that does not prohibit the vendors from providing plastic straws as an accommodation.

Mr. Boren asked in regards to the City considering banning straws at City restaurants. Ms. Throckmorton advised the City is currently working on a green business initiative, including a program called Skip the Straw which would be similar. Ms. Throckmorton stated that the City will promote the availability of alternatives.

Ms. Dietz expressed her concern with this issue. Ms. Dietz stated that she feels that this goes against the spirit and all the hard work the City has put into becoming disability friendly. Ms. Dietz asked what would happen when during an event a vendor chooses not to bring straws and someone is in need of one. Ms. Dietz feels that this is making a rule which excludes a group of people. Mr. Sando expressed his concerns regarding the accessibility to straws as well. Mr. Sando emailed Board members article provided by Ms. Dietz titled "The Last Straw" (Exhibit A) (copies of article were also provided at meeting).

Ms. Throckmorton stated that most vendors at events distribute beverages in other vessels such as bottles, cans, etc. Ms. Throckmorton advised this is only in the working stages and would be presented to Commission in December, therefore would like to receive feedback from the Board prior to that. Mr. Sando stated that due to the absence of a Board member, they will refrain from voting or making a motion to support or not the ordinance as currently written until the next meeting in December.

Ms. Throckmorton advised that they will be able to provide updated version to the Board at next meeting of December 5, 2018.

Community Bocce Morning Free Event – Ms. Kofkin

Ms. Kofkin advised regarding upcoming Community Bocce morning which will be held on Wednesday, November 28, 2018 from 9:00am to 11:30am at the Youth Center which was set up with Jackson's Brain & Spinal Cord program. Ms. Whitehurst expressed her concern of event hours and asked if there would be an opportunity to hold an event perhaps in the evening hours. Ms. Kofkin advised that the time for this particular event was requested by Jackson and they will be looking into the possibility of having an evening event at a later date.

Agenda Items not addressed – Mr. Sando

Mr. Sando stated that due to the amount of items discussed, the remaining items on the agenda would be addressed at the upcoming scheduled December 5, 2018 meeting.

NEXT MEETING:

December 5, 2018

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 9:05am

Motion by: Mr. Shedrick Boren / 2nd: Dr. Richard Whittington / All approved unanimously

EXHIBIT A

Hernandez, Eglys

From: Blake S. Sando <Blake.Sando@csklegal.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 06, 2018 4:41 PM
To: Hernandez, Eglys; 'drdickw@bellsouth.net'; 'Marie-Ilene Whitehurst'; 'Patricia Sowers'; 'Shed Boren'; Elejabarrieta, Raquel; Bonnieblaire01@gmail.com; debbie@justdigit.org
Subject: RE: Plastic Straws Ordinance - First Draft
Attachments: image001.jpg.html

Hi everyone. Below is an article that Debbie Dietz cited to me, and I think would be helpful for our discussion tomorrow on considering this proposed Straw-Ban:

See you tomorrow!

Sincerely,

Blake Sando

The Last Straw

I need plastic straws. Banning them puts a serious burden on people with disabilities

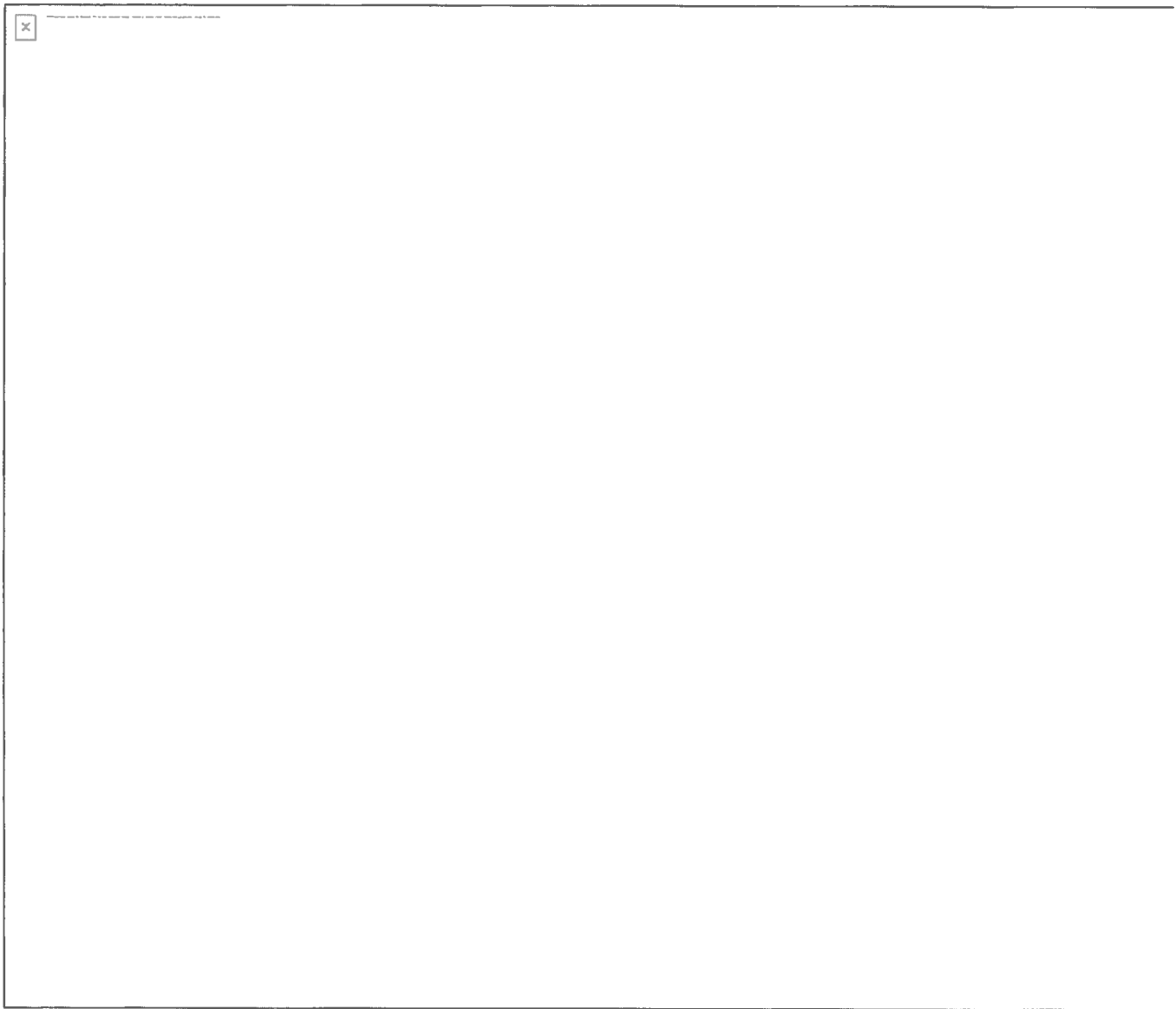
by [Alice Wong](#) Jul 19, 2018, 10:04am EDT

Illustration by [Sarah Robbins](#)

[Share](#) [Tweet](#) [Share](#)

[Share](#)The Last Straw

[tweet share](#) [Pocket](#) [Flipboard](#) [Email](#)



I live in the Mission District of San Francisco, where delicious taquerias, bakeries, cafes, and bars are everywhere. And as a disabled person who uses a wheelchair to get around and a ventilator to breathe, the pleasure of eating and drinking is mediated by a number of factors. When I leave my home for a latte or burrito, a number of calculations go through my head: Will the place have their door propped open so I can enter? If the door is closed, will someone exiting or entering open it for me? Is the counter low enough for the server to see me? Can they hear and understand me with the mask over my nose if it's incredibly noisy inside? Will I be able to sign my name on the touchscreen or receipt, depending on the counter height?

At one of my favorite neighborhood places, when I make my order, I feel comfortable asking for and receiving assistance. I'll ask the barista to bring my drink to my table since I cannot reach the high counters or carry a full cup. I'll even ask for help adding sugar when I'm feeling indulgent, because a glass dispenser is too heavy for me to lift. Two items I always ask with my drinks are a lid and a plastic straw, emphasis on plastic. Lids prevent spillage when I'm navigating bumpy sidewalks and curb cuts; straws are necessary because I do not have the hand and arm strength to lift a drink and tip it into my mouth. Plastic straws are the best when I drink hot liquids; compostable ones tend to melt or break apart.

It's not easy or pleasant asking for help in public spaces like restaurants, because you never know what attitudes you'll encounter: indifference, pity, or outright rejection. I don't see these types of help as special treatment or inspirational for someone to surreptitiously post on social media as feel-good clickbait; they're simply examples of excellent hospitality.

Plastic is seen as cheap, "anti-luxury," wasteful, and harmful to the environment. All true. Plastic is also an essential part of my health and wellness. With my neuromuscular disability, plastic straws are necessary tools for my hydration and nutrition. Currently, plastic single-use straws are the latest target by environmentalists in the move toward zero waste. Major restaurant groups such as Union Square Hospitality Group and companies such as Starbucks and others in the travel industry announced plans to phase out single-use plastics.

Starbucks's announcement — and the news that Vancouver and Seattle recently banned plastic straws, with other cities, like New York and San Francisco, contemplating proposals — struck a raw nerve with me for several reasons (and I won't even get into the problems of recyclable plastics and greenwashing):

1. Plastic straws are considered unnecessary items used by environmentalists as a "gateway plastic" to engage the public on a larger conversation about waste. According to Dune Ives, executive director of the Lonely Whale Foundation, "Plastic straws are social tools and props, the perfect conversation starter." But one person's social prop is another person's conduit for nutrition. It's as if people who rely on straws — older adults, children, and disabled people — don't matter and that our needs are less important than the environment. I feel erased by these attitudes.
2. Plastic straws are ubiquitous, whether we like it or not. Once you have something that provides access, it is difficult and harmful to take it away from a marginalized community that depends on it. I live in a world that was never built for me, and every little bit of access is treasured and hard-won. Bans on plastic straws are regressive, not progressive.

The plastic straw ban is symptomatic of larger systemic issues when it comes to the continual struggle for disability rights and justice. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) turns 28 next week, on July 26, and yet people with disabilities continue to face barriers at eating establishments. The ADA is considered by many small businesses (and the National Restaurant Association) as a source of frivolous lawsuits brought by greedy lawyers and clients. Ableist attitudes that cast disabled people as "fakers" or "complainers" obscure the very real and painful experiences of not being able to eat and drink freely.

As demand increases for alternatives to plastic, so do the voices from the disability community sharing their concerns about how these bans will create additional labor, hurdles, and difficulties. On social media, many disabled people have been sharing their stories and keeping it 100 percent real. I observed and experienced all sorts of microaggressions and outright dismissal of what disabled people are saying online.

People have told me online that I still have access to biodegradable straws at Starbucks, despite my reasons for using plastic ones. People have told me to bring my own reusable straws without thinking about the extra work that entails. Why would a disabled customer have to bring something in order to drink while non-disabled people have the convenience and ability to use what is provided for free? This is neither just, equitable, nor hospitable.

This is the experience of living in a world that was never built for you: having to explain and defend yourself while providing infinite amounts of labor at the demand of people who do not recognize their nondisabled privilege. There are days when I want to put this on repeat: "Believe disabled people. Period." I refuse to apologize or feel shame about the way my body works and how I navigate in the world. Everyone consumes goods and creates waste. We all do what we can to reduce, reuse, and recycle. We should recognize that different needs require different solutions. I'm not a monster for using plastic straws or other plastic items that allow me to live, such as oxygen tubes.

Restaurants are theater; they are also highly politicized, contested spaces. There are times when I go out and the waiter asks my companion for my order instead of me. I've gone through creepy, dirty side entrances just to get into a restaurant. I've been called "the wheelchair" by front-of-house staff when they commiserate on which table to place

me, since I apparently take up too much space. I also love the places where I feel welcomed and respected. As they provide thoughtful and authentic hospitality, I respond by being a loyal customer who appreciates the little touches that make a visit enjoyable.

The ban in Seattle comes with an exemption for people with disabilities, where restaurants can provide plastic straws upon request for medical reasons. This is optional for restaurants, so they may choose to not to make any available. What people don't understand with bans like this is that having to ask for a plastic straw puts an unfair burden, and scrutiny, on people with disabilities. They should not have to prove a medical need or even disclose their disability status when having a fun night out with friends. This is not hospitality.

So where do we go from here? How can we cultivate accessible and hospitable environments while reducing waste? Until someone invents a compostable straw with the functionality of a plastic one, I have a modest proposal for establishments that have banned plastic straws and those that are considering it:

- If you are an establishment with straws at a counter, provide both types, clearly labeled, for people to choose from. If a cafe or restaurant wants to provide straws by request, have the server offer plastic and biodegradable versions, just as they would give any customer a choice of still or sparkling water. Customers can choose what is best for them without alienating an entire group.
- Re-examine the kinds of plastic you use in your establishment (e.g., plastic wrap, containers) and find additional ways to reduce your consumption.
- Expand your ideas about hospitality and accessibility; they are one and the same.
- Think about the intentional and unintentional barriers your establishment sets that may keep people from visiting your place. Listen and learn from your customers' critiques, including disabled customers. Don't wait for protests or boycotts before engaging with the disability community (I see you, Starbucks).

If cafes can offer four types of milk for espresso drinks and restaurants 50 types of wine and beer, small businesses and large corporations can manage offering two types of straws. The key is to have the same level of access for all items. You can accommodate all your customers while reducing waste at the same time. Customers respond to choice and flexibility.

Because in the end, isn't it all about welcoming everyone into your space with authentic and inclusive hospitality?

Related

Why the World Is Hating on Plastic Straws Right Now

Alice Wong is the founder and director of the Disability Visibility Project. She is a passionate lover of coffee, pie, ice cream, and fried chicken. Sarah Robbins is a freelance Illustrator and Printmaker based in Baltimore, MD, inspired by folklore and traditional printmaking
Editor: Erin DeJesus



Blake S. Sando, Esq.

Blake.Sando@csklegal.com
Tel: 305-350-5365 | Fax: 305-373-2294
Cole, Scott & Kissane Building
9150 South Dadeland Boulevard, Suite 1400 | Miami, Florida 33156



Confidentiality Notice: This communication is covered by the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 2510-2521. It is legally privileged (including attachments) and is intended only for the use of the individual(s) or entity(ies) to which it is addressed. It may contain information that is confidential, proprietary, privileged, and/or exempt from disclosure under applicable law. Any review, retransmission, dissemination or other use of, or taking of any action in reliance upon this information by persons or entities other than the intended recipient is strictly prohibited. If you have received this communication in error, please notify us so that we may take the appropriate action and avoid troubling you further. If you are not the intended recipient(s), please destroy this message, and any attachments, and notify the sender by return e-mail. Thank you for your cooperation.