

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-1
January 9, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Frank Fernandez
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Samuel Joseph

Agenda Item 2-1 [0:00:00 p.m.]

The School and Community Relations Committee Minutes of November 17, 2017 and December 15, 2017, requesting consideration and guidance from the City Commission on Committee projects and updates

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have a time certain item at 11 am, which is the School and Community Relations Committee Minutes of November 17, requesting consideration and guidance from the City Commission on Committee projects and updates. Good morning, sir.

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Agenda Item 2-1 - The School and Community Relations Committee Minutes of November 17, 2017 and December 15, 2017, requesting consideration and guidance from the City Commission on Committee projects and updates.

Samuel Joseph: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, guests and the whole. My name is Sam Joseph. I'm the Chair of the School and Community Relations Committee. I want to thank you for having us here today...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And he runs very good meetings.

Mr. Joseph: To provide you this update. Thank you. By the way, Mayor, we loved having you at our last meeting. It was a great conversation and you brought a lot to the table that we're still going to be working on over the next few months. Today, I wanted to give you -- because it's been a year since the last time I was here. I wanted to give you an update on what our committee's been doing over the last year and to give you just a window into some of the projects that we've been working on. One of the things that I always like to start off with -- and by the way, I'm ready for the PowerPoint, whoever's working on that. One of the things I always like to start off with this committee is to remind the Commission that prior to 2015, this committee -- although this committee existed, it really existed only in the shadows. Right around 2013 and 14, as we were going through the controlled choice issue with the School District, one of the things that caught me by surprise was that I did not know the School and Community Relations Committee existed, and I don't know how much influence they had in our fight during that time. Since then, though, things have changed a lot, and we appreciate what the Commission has done since 2015 to really strengthen and embolden the committee. What we learned during the controlled choice issue is that our citizens do care about schools and do really want to make sure that we have the very best schools possible for their kids. As you'll see in the first slide, we are -- we count our rebirth as May 15, when the Commission sought to expand the Commission's resolution to really make us more relevant. One of the things that struck me when I talked to the old committee members was that they didn't feel relevant. They didn't know what their roles were, and actually, they were going to vote themselves out of existence in 2014, but they didn't even have a quorum to do that. So, we've changed that paradigm totally, and hopefully, for the better and for the good and forever. What we -- the other thing you did for us

besides just revamping us and giving us that purpose is that you also approved projects, specific projects for us to work on to give us that relevance, our school improvement projects. And from those -- by the way, those projects were not just developed out of the blue. They were developed out of conversations with both the City leadership from the Mayor on down, staff, residents. And also, I met with each committee member as they came on to look at not only what their goals were, but how we could fit their goals with what the City wanted to do with this revamped committee. And so, from that was borne our school improvement project list. Now, we know that our whole goal, our whole purpose is to look at the educational landscape of the City and to make sure that we are providing the best in terms of educational access to our residents. As part of that, you gave us an expanded list of schools. We're now eleven schools that we specifically pay attention to. I'm going to read out the name of the schools, because our school partner -- and I want to thank Miami-Dade County Public Schools for doing this. Our central region director, Mr. Pace, invited the principals from our eleven schools to come out today to be in the audience and support this presentation. That, to me, says a whole lot about how the relationship has changed since 2012, 2014, to today. So, starting with my daughter's school, Coral Gables Preparatory Academy, David Fairchild Elementary School -- by the way if you are here from those schools...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me interrupt for a minute.

Mr. Joseph: Go right ahead, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I want to recognize Mari Tere Flores, who is our School Board representative.

Vice Mayor Keon: Our School Board member.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Who is here? There she is. How are you?

Commissioner Lago: Thank you for being here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And also, if you -- if principals of some of these schools are here, when you introduce the school, if they can stand up...

Mr. Joseph: If you could please stand.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And be recognized.

Mr. Joseph: Thank you. So, Coral Gables Preparatory Academy. That's Cheli Cerra. By the way, Cheli is also the chair of the Business and Education Committee for the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Wonderful.

Mr. Joseph: So, we do a lot of work together. David Fairchild Elementary School.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hello. Welcome.

Mr. Joseph: Frances S. Tucker Elementary School.

Vice Mayor Keon: Welcome.

Mr. Joseph: George Washington Carver Elementary School.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hello.

Unidentified Speaker: Hello.

Mr. Joseph: Henry S. West Laboratory School. We call it West Lab for short. Sunset International Elementary School.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hello.

Mr. Joseph: George Washington Carver Middle School. Ponce de Leon Middle School.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hi.

Mr. Joseph: Coral Gables Senior High School.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hello.

Mr. Joseph: International Studies Prep Academy or ISPA.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hello.

Commissioner Lago: Good morning.

Mr. Joseph: And last, but not least, Somerset Academy. What you -- what I just read off to you there are three K-8 campuses, two middle schools, two high schools, four elementary schools. Nothing rated lower than a C, national -- among those groups -- this group is national schools of excellence, magnet schools of excellence, STEM designated leaders in all categories. We are very fortunate in the City of Coral Gables to have an excellent educational landscape, and it is because of these folks here. Please give them a round of applause.

(APPLAUSE)

Mr. Joseph: As I mentioned, the school improvement projects are really our guide. They drive everything that we do month to month and every discussion that we work on. I'm going to go through the projects individually and give you some information about where we are currently and what we've done. But, I also want to introduce you to our committee. We don't do this work alone. There are seven of us. And, one of the things that -- when I first met with this group is I told them this is not going to be a ceremonial committee. If you just want to come month to month and attend the meeting and listen to information, it's probably not the committee for you because it is a working committee. We've got a lot of issues that we've got to deal with in order to get our schools to the top or maintain them at the top. And, I will say that to a man all of them, all seven said I'm in, and they have really bought in, as you will see in a few minutes. As part of their requirements, I've asked each of our committee members to pick a project and to pick a school that is their own, that they will manage. And, that school that they serve as a representative for that school on the committee and really bring the issues that that school has to us, so that we can address them as quickly as possible. Let's start with the "City Beautiful" Schools Initiative. This one is actually one that's near and dear to my heart, because one of the things I love about living in Coral Gables is the fact that we are the City Beautiful that we do take and appreciate the aesthetic of being beautiful. And so, one of the things we wanted to do is to make sure that our school campuses also mirror that aesthetic, since it is something that is important to us. So, the "City Beautiful" Schools Initiative is actually led by Theresa Rice, who was appointed by the Commission as a whole. Theresa, if you're here, please stand. I don't know that everybody's going to make it, but we'll -- and the whole goal of this project is to engage the school system, to walk all eleven of our school campuses and to develop punch lists of projects. We only walk on the outside because our job -- as we tell them, we're not educators. At the end of the day, they handle the inside of the school and educating the kids on the inside, but as city folks, we would love to see the outside of the school mirror the beauty of the work that's being done inside. And so, we developed punch lists of -- comprehensive lists of repairs, beautification and any other attention that we think is necessary. And we do this as a group, not us going onto their property, but as a whole group. We include the principal, the PTSA, folks from the central region, even back at the district offices. We've had Commissioners on the tours,

alumni, anyone who wants to; to walk that campus and offer their opinion about what could we do to get this place to that City Beautiful moniker. We've developed project lists, and they are long. There's a lot of issues that we need to work on with our schools, but we're confident that, getting together, we can solve those issues. So, we're going to be putting together some project review groups to set priorities of those punch list items, timelines, and then when are we going to address these issues and get that information out to the community, so that they know what we're doing. We haven't -- with all that, we still had some successes this year with the City Beautiful Initiative thanks to the community -- the Coral Gables Community Foundation, who donated benches to Ponce de Leon Middle School for their middle quad area. They're doing some renovations out there. We appreciate that, Mary, and the folks over at the foundation. So, little by little, we're working to get our schools to that City Beautiful level. The next project I want to talk to you about is the Community Education Initiative. That one's led by Carmen Manrara Cartaya, and unfortunately, she couldn't be here today. Carmen was appointed by Commissioner Mena. As part -- we see this as probably our most important project because, as a group, we feel the pressure of the residents saying to us, get us information. get us what we need in order to make the decisions that we need to for our children. And so, we've generated a lot of information since 2015, and we're trying to find the best methods to get that out to the public. We've hosted a School Board District candidate's forum. We've also hosted a West Lab Town Hall meeting. And annually, we attend any education events, meetings, showcases, you name it. We try to be in that room to make -- to let folks know that education is important to us and our city. We're using social -- our intent is to use social media and other city media platforms to really get our information out. We're very lucky to be invited by invited by the Economic Development group to share their website and to start disseminating some of our information on their website, and we look forward to doing that with them. And we've also collaborated with the Communications Committee to look at all the avenues for getting out information. The last thing that we're going to do is we're looking at participating in more City-led or related events. And actually, I want to invite you to our first event of the New Year, which we're doing. We're going to be at the Coral Gables Women's Club's Fourth Annual Children's Festival. That's scheduled for Saturday, January 27. I want to personally invite the Commission, Mayor, the

Commissioners, staff and also residents to join us out at the Coral Gables Women's Club for this fantastic event. We'll have a table at the event, where we'll have information about schools, and we'll also be staffing it to answer any questions that you might have about our schools. But this wonderful event really showcases what I think is one of the great nonprofits doing great work in our community, supporting our children. The Coral Gables Women's Club has had this dental clinic that is, by the way, on par with any dental clinic that you will find anywhere in the nation in terms of quality care, where they offer free dental care to students -- needy students and needy families. Please spread the word. We -- they can accommodate a lot of kids, and it is a wonderful facility. If you've not been there, join us on the 27th, and I promise you, Ruth will give you a personal tour of the place and so will I. Our next project is our Community Schools Initiative. This project, which is led by Aileen Ortega, who was appointed by Vice Mayor Keon, and the purpose of this project was to really open up our school campuses. All of our school campuses are community schools, meaning that the campuses really should be accessible to the residents. And so, we have -- Coral Gables field is open nights, weekends, when there aren't events or games. We're looking at Ponce de Leon and other fields in our other schools to, again, provide access so that if residents want to take a walk, exercise or picnics, those kinds of things are available. We also have an agreement with the district where we can use the facilities of the school also, and we have usage and facilities requests, but really opening up those campuses, so that families can get in there and see these places where they're sending their children. One of the great prospects we're looking at for the future is Ponce de Leon Middle school just has a new principal, Mr. Penton, who I met with a few weeks ago and he's very interested in getting a relationship with the Parks & Rec Department, a bigger relationship, and maybe even bringing back tennis courts to the Ponce de Leon school. Early conversations, but I like what I'm hearing from him in terms of looking at what kind of services can we provide to our residents as a whole that's going to influence them to come back into our schools. Please, if you haven't gone to use these fields, if you haven't used these facilities, do it. We don't want to lose access to them again, so we do want to see them used. Actually, I was very pleased this weekend to see a lot of folks walking the track and running the track, even in the cold, so enjoy. The next project I want to talk to you about is our Coral Gables History Tours. This was a promise -- it was borne out of

a promise to Dr. Johnson that was a promise that was made by the City Manager back in 2015. We went to a backpack drive. And, I remember that we were talking to the principal and she said, oh, this is great, but you know what, Sam, we never get across US 1. We never get to go downtown to see the city. And so, I called over the City Manager and said, well, that should be an easy one. We can take care of that one for you. She said done deal. We will get this done. It took two years, but we did get it done. Our first group came here in December. Thank you to the Mayor and also the City Manager for entertaining them, a group of fourth graders from George Washington Carver Elementary School. The students and their chaperones toured the Coral Gables Museum. They came to City Hall and eventually went on to the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And they asked...

Mr. Joseph: Biltmore Hotel.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They asked a lot of very interesting questions, some of them embarrassing that people don't ask, but students did.

Mr. Joseph: You can always rely on students to do that. They're going to give it to you as real as they could give it to you. I bet they asked about how much you make and what you drive. Those are the first two questions: how much do you make and what do you drive.

Vice Mayor Keon: No. They asked if he was married to Cathy.

Mr. Joseph: Well, there you go, okay, alright. I see, I see. Look, in all jest, it was tragic when we heard that they didn't come over US 1. And as we told them, you're a Coral Gables school. You ought to be proud of this city that you live in. There's a lot to be proud of about living in the City Beautiful, and we wanted them to witness it personally. And so, it was great to have access to the Mayor and the City Manager and to really get to see the wonders that are our city. I just wanted to give you an example of what it takes to do these kinds of initiatives, because it

always brings back to me that African proverb of it takes a village to raise a child and it literally does. For this one project in December that took two years, it was funded by the Coral Gables Community Foundation and Miami-Dade County Public Schools, planned and led by the Coral Gables Museum and facilitated by Miami-Dade County Public Schools staff from the district level all the way down to the classroom level, two years, but it can be done. Our goal now is to make this permanent. All of our kids ought to get a chance to know what a great city they live in. And so, one of the things we want to do is we want to add the reopened Merrick House as one of the future stops on our tour. That's very important to us.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Soon to be reopened.

Mr. Joseph: Soon -- oh, sorry.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Not yet, not yet.

Mr. Joseph: I'm sorry. I thought it was January. Soon to be reopened.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But we look forward to it.

Mr. Joseph: Alright, soon to be reopened. We want to expand the program to all of our fourth graders in our four elementaries, and then we want to sustain the program in perpetuity. Because, really, every year we should see kids going through these buildings and facilities. I want to thank Dona Spain, whose office was very helpful in us putting this together, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the Coral Gables Museum and everybody else who's helped us with this because those kids had an amazing time. As I told them, I'm jealous. In fourth grade -- I didn't meet my Mayor until I was an adult, and I didn't get to visit City Hall until I was an adult. So, that was -- that one was a really great thing for them. There's the Mayor and our City Manager taking care of our kids, letting them know we're not together. We work together, not together. Financial Literacy Initiative, this one is led by Ariel Fernandez, who was appointed by

Mayor Valdes-Fauli. This actually was a project borne out of our past member, David Bianchi, who had actually written a book called Blue Chip Kids. And we used it, really, as the basis to talk about financial literacy with all of the age groups in our schools. What we've done since then is we've gone out and established relationships -- our Coral Gables Senior High has actually one of the highest-rated finance academies in the country. And so, we're teaming up with them, Ms. Anna Carranza and that finance academy. And, we've also had not only Coral Gables Chamber members, but community members -- I've had City staff come and say, I would love to go out and teach about financial literacy. And so, we're gathering all those folks, all those stakeholders together. We're going to do a financial literacy needs review with the schools, see what they want, and then let's put those volunteers in those schools and get those kids, and also, hopefully, staff and teachers educated, because we all could get -- use a primer on financial literacy. Internship/Mentorship and Community Service Programs. I'm leading this effort. I was appointed by Commissioner Lago. Our whole goal here was to provide, again, real world access for our kids, not only to government, but to our city as a whole. How does it work? One of the things that I talk about all the time with not only the committee, but also with our school partners, is we're very fortunate in that we do -- our kids get the best in terms of education. They go off to the best schools and get an even better education, but a lot of them don't see their fortunes back here. After they go to those Ivy League schools, those great schools, a lot of them make their futures elsewhere. We want them back here in the Gables. We see them as the future of the city. And so, we want to show them today, as they are youths, where the access is for them to make a difference in their community. So, we've signed an agreement with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. We are accepting interns and have been since the middle of last year. We are -- we've participated -- and you all, actually, Commissioners, have participated in career day activities, principal for a day activities, and we've increased that -- staff has also gotten heavily involved in that. And then, just recently, the community -- the Coral Gables Community Foundation awarded funding to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami to start our City's Bigs in Blue program. That Bigs in Blue program will take officers into -- and they've already started going -- into our schools and mentoring students one on one, one hour a week. I can't tell you how unbelievably amazing this program is, so I'm not even going to tell you. I'll just show you.

And, I'm going to read the statement that came back. The Chief -- by the way, we've not officially started the Bigs in Blue program. We're also going to have a -- what we call a Bigs in Red, where the Fire Department will also be participating. You should know we will be the only municipality in the country that will be doing both programs, so we're very, very excited about that. We're starting the Bigs in Red here, in Coral Gables, in South Florida. Here's what mentoring does -- and this was from one week, one week of, I believe, it was six officers, including the Chief. The Chief didn't just throw the assignment out to others. He actually goes himself -- of them going into George Washington Carver Elementary School, just to pilot test it. We are -- this, by the way, is a statement from the principal. "We are so grateful for this partnership. I cannot express how much our students have valued this experience. Just from one visit, Officer Valdivia's mentee brought his grade up in reading from an F to a C. Mentoring works and we hope that the officers can stop back in January to check in on their assigned students who are very much looking forward to sharing with them how they are progressing. All the best to each and every one of you." One week, F to a C. Thank you very much, Chief, and thank you to your officers. We're going to do more and more of this. And, I'm actually going to be speaking -- and he doesn't know this yet -- Gale Nelson, the new -- the president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters, there's one other level that that we need to go. We need to go Bigs -- Bigs in Government Service. So, we're going to start a new initiative, Bigs in Government Service, in the future years, where we will have staff and others can be involved in this, because the more folks we can get in working with our kids, the greater the assurance of success for those students. School Library Initiative. I'm leading this one. Again, I was appointed by Commissioner Lago. This is actually the very first project that was proposed to our committee. It was actually proposed by former Mayor Cason and Commissioner Slesnick. And they both and very well -- and were very rightly to be concerned. They were both very concerned about our school libraries, and again, they rightly should be. Our school libraries are having a lot of trouble right now. Part of it is technology driven, trying to figure out how do we make this technology thing work and technology mandates. I don't know if you know this, but all testing now in schools is done on the computer. There are no more paper tests, and so it's put an undue burden on the school libraries and media centers to really be equipped and prepared to deal with

this, and they are not. Even at our school, at Coral Gables Prep, we're doing the best we can and they do a yeoman's task to get it done, but we are far behind where we need to be in order to get the access that the kids need. So, what we're doing is we did do a library needs review in 2016. We're going to need to redo it because a few -- a lot of the schools did not respond, and I think a lot of them are going through what we're trying to figure out, is what does a library in the 21st Century look like that's relevant, that means something to kids. And so, we'll redo it. We have - - we'll convene a school library needs review team. And part of that team -- we're going to partner with our Coral Gables Library, Miami-Dade County Public Libraries, and also, our Library Advisory Board to get as many different ideas and opinions as we can to see how we can tackle this issue, but it is one that's still on our plate. We're looking at book drives. And actually, one idea that came up is a children's book fair with our Books & Books friends there and Mitchell Kaplan and our wonderful international book fair. Maybe we could have a satellite children's fair somewhere here in the Gables. Those are the kind of ideas that are being bounced around. Last, but not least, our technology initiative. I mentioned to you earlier that technology is an issue with our schools, and it is a huge one. We did a technology needs review and we learned what we knew, is that they do -- they need a lot of help. And so, we're working with and partnering with the South Florida Digital Alliance -- by the way, the Technology Initiative is led by Sandy Dimitris, who's right here, who was appointed by the City Manager. We're partnering with the South Florida Digital Alliance. What they do is refurbish technology and then distribute it into our schools and nonprofits. We've already had some donations into our schools. And then, we're trying to establish contacts and relationships with our businesses, our local businesses, especially tech businesses, to look at how they can -- whether it's an adopt-a-school program or something where they can really provide those schools with the technical support that they need in order to fulfill these mandates. Now, those are our projects, but we've also had events and other recognitions, whether it be backpack drives -- we've honored our schools folks. And actually, you have honored our school folks here at Commission meetings for achievements, students, all the way up to our administrators. We've hosted -- we actually still host satellite office hours for School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas in City Hall, so that folks don't have to drive all the way downtown if they have any questions or issues. That's been fantastic, by the

way. Thank you. We hosted the District 6 student art exhibition in Coral Gables City Hall. That was wonderful, walking around seeing the kids' art. And then, of course, we're still doing our fulfillment of school wish lists where we can through partnerships. You all have done back-to-school events. I've seen at least three or four of you at different back-to-school events, and then Mayor and Commissioner for a day events. So, we really have, I think...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You skipped the Special Needs.

Mr. Joseph: Did I skip -- thank you, Mayor. I appreciate that because that's -- not only is that my project, it's one of the most important ones, too. Alright, special needs. Let's go back to special needs. There we go, Special Need Initiative. Special Needs Initiative, I'm leading that effort. And, this one is to really look at making sure that we fulfill our promise, meet up on that -- and you gave us that mandate or promise by passing the resolutions declaring the principles of inclusion for individuals with autism and special needs, with, by the way, a special endorsement for our committee and for the Special Needs Initiative, which we really appreciated. The prior attorney, Commissioner Leen -- Attorney Leen was very thoughtful in including us in that process so early on. As part of that, what we did -- that was passed in April of 2016. What we did is met the next month and put together a Special Needs Initiative planning group, consists of -- and actually, I'll be naming a lot of the organizations in a little bit, but consisting of all sorts of stakeholders throughout the community to look at how can we, one, make sure that special needs services can be brought closer to home. That was one of the big issues that residents brought to us is that they're driving very far away to access special needs services. Two, to be a clearinghouse for information about special needs program, services and access through our Parks & Recreation Department, which, by the way, they have been the ones who've really put the principles of inclusion into action for the City. In every single one of their practices, they are looking at providing meaningful, inclusive access to our residents no matter your ability. That has been amazing, amazing to watch, and that's what we use as our mantra as we look at new programming and new services to bring in. And, then the last thing we wanted to do is that we know our schools have a pretty high population of special needs students, and so we wanted to

be a demonstration city for how to approach programming and services for students with special needs. And so, we're looking at -- learning disabilities are the largest -- 75 percent of all special needs is learning disabilities, so we want to develop a learning disabilities demonstration classroom through our feeder pattern, where we would look at the best practices for working with this group, and then disseminate that information throughout the district and to other schools on how they can do it well also. Thank you, Mayor. I appreciate you not letting me skip that one. So, events, some pictures for you. It has been an amazing -- amazing and filled two years, but we know there's still a lot of work to do in order to get to where we want to go. This is the one page, Commissioner that I'm going to ask for your indulgence, where I'm going to read literally each of these names out. None of what we've done here have we done alone. Seven people couldn't have done it by themselves, and I should say eight because our unsung hero, who's not here with us today because she had her baby, Naomi Levi-Garcia. This committee could not have done half of what you've seen here without our staffer, Naomi Levi-Garcia. She is everything, our rock. She keep -- make sure that we stayed true to the Sunshine law. She made sure that we are following the parameters of the projects, and she really is our liaison to you and to find out how we can best serve you and serve the residents. We miss you, Naomi. Thank you, Mitchell, for taking over, and we look forward to seeing you soon. But we couldn't do it alone. These folks did it for -- with us. Besides Naomi -- who is amazing -- the rest -- I think the folks in the City of Coral Gables should be very, very proud that you have public servants and staff that go above and beyond the call of duty every single day, every day, and we really appreciate it. Our patron saint for our committee is Vice Mayor Keon, who, at any moment of the day, you can give her a call and she's there to support you. The Mayor was at our last meeting. We see you; you're present. That makes a difference to our school partners to know that when we say that we didn't -- for probably 50 years, we were a little absent when it came to schools, but not now. Now, we do believe in schools -- in our schools and we want them to be the best, and we're going to invest what it takes to get there. I want to thank School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas and the District 6 staff. Again, you would think -- this is a political official. She could easily just blow us off, put us off to somebody else, give it to staff. She deals with it personally. She's there all the time. And if she says it's going to get done, it

gets done. I appreciate that, and I know for the rest of my committee members, that's made a huge difference. Iraida Mendez-Cartaya, who could not be here today -- she's in Tallahassee. God bless her. And, I also want to thank Mr. John Pace and the folks over at the Central Regional Office. Again, these are large entities. They could all put you off, but they all find a way to serve. And, then I also want to thank all the other district administration and staff, some of which I'll be meeting with later today, who every day do their best to try to make this relationship work. The Coral Gables Community Foundation, the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, the Coral Gables Museum, the Beacon Council, Best Buddies International, Big Brother Big Sisters of Miami, the Coral Gables Women's Club, the Coral Gables Garden Club, City of Coral Gables Communications Committee, the Economic Development Board, the Landscape Advisory Board, the Coral Gables Senior High PTSA and Alumni Association, Crystal Academy, MomsRising.org, Nature Links, South Florida Digital Alliance, Triumph Steps, UM/NSU CARD, and last, but not least, our local schools, administrators, staff and students. It takes a village to do this work, and we appreciate all that you've done. Looking forward, we want to continue our progress on the school improvement projects. We're going to come back to you about expansion on the committee. We've had a lot of interest of folks to volunteer and be a part of this, and so we do want to look at expanding it so we have as many people to get the work done as we can. We're going to -- we look forward to updating the education compact with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and then implementation of some new projects that you'll be hearing about. Cavalier National Pride 2020 -- we intend for Coral Gables Senior High to be a nationally ranked high school, one of the top 100 high schools by 2020. "City Beautiful" Education Awards, where, again, we want to highlight those folks who are doing the best of the best work for us and our students. And last, but not least, the Coral Gables Leadership Council, where we bring in leaders from the education in the city to every year look at how are we doing by our kids and what could we do to do better. And last, we're going to do some outreach to our other educational facilities, private, home schools, colleges and universities. At the end of the day, all we want to do is fulfill our mission and we have two. Leave it better than we found it and leave a lasting legacy. Thank you for allowing us to do that.

Thank you for your support in making that possible, and we look forward to seeing you, third Friday of the month, 8:30, second floor in the Coral Gables Planning Department now.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very, very much, Mr. Joseph. It was a very comprehensive and beautiful report. This is -- it should be an example of a committee that is working. And, thank you for bringing such distinguished guests to our Commission. And in order for me not to waste this opportunity, I want to invite you all to our staircase here to have a group picture with the Commission. It would honor us to be in a picture with you all...

Mr. Joseph: Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Our educators. Let's go downstairs, and then we'll adjourn the meeting until after lunch.