

CORAL GABLES HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING MINUTES
September 18, 2008, 4:00 p.m.
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida

MEMBERS:	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	J#	A	S	APPOINTED BY:
Dorothy Thomson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II
Catherine Stewart	P	P	P	E	E	P	E	P	P	P	E	E	^	Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Ernesto Santos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Comm. Maria Anderson
Gonzalo Sanabria						P	E	E	P	E	P	E	P	Comm. Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Dolly MacIntyre*	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Comm. Wayne "Chip" Withers
Michael Beeman	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	Historic Preservation Board
Joyce Meyers	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	P	P	City Manager David Brown
Lisa Bennett	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	E	E	P	P	City Commission
Shirley Maroon	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	City Commission

STAFF:

Kara N. Kautz, Historic Preservation Officer
 Betty Perez, Historical Resources Department
 Simone Chin, Historical Preservation Administrator
 Rodney Carbonell, Historic Resources Department

A = Absent

P = Present

E = Excused

*** = New Member**

^ = Resigned Member

GUESTS: Tim Plummer, Claudia Puig, Richard Amundsen, Ramon Collado, Mario Garcia-Serra, Kendell Turner, Stanley Davidson, Nati Soto, Oscar Roger, Sergio Esquivel

RECORDING SECRETARY: Nancy C. Morgan, Coral Gables Services, Inc.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lisa Bennett at 4:05 p.m. A quorum was present.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT and DISCLOSURE OF CONTEXT:

Ms. Bennett read for the record the statement regarding lobbyist registration and disclosure. He then stated that if any members of the board had any ex parte communication or contact regarding any cases being heard, it was necessary to disclose such communication or contact. Board members did not indicate that any such communication occurred.

ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON:

Mr. Beeman made a motion to conduct the election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson at the end of the meeting. Mr. Santos seconded the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote.

Roll Call: Ayes: Ms. Thomson, Mr. Beeman, Ms. MacIntyre, Ms. Maroon, Ms. Meyers, Mr. Santos, Ms. Bennett. Nays: None. (Mr. Sanabria had not yet arrived at the meeting.)

MINUTES: MEETING OF August 21, 2008:

Ms. Thomson made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 21, 2008. Ms. MacIntyre seconded the motion, unanimously approved by voice vote.

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DEFERRAL:

Ms. Kautz reported the following deferral: the Historical Significance Determination for 645 Madeira Avenue.

SWEARING IN THE PUBLIC:

Nancy Morgan swore in members of the audience who planned to testify during the meeting.

BOARD MEMBER RESIGNATION:

Ms. Kautz announced that Ms. Stewart had submitted her resignation in writing from Board service as a result of her relocation outside the City of Coral Gables.

LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION:

CASE FILE LHD 2008-09:

Consideration of the amendment of the local historic district designation of the “Country Club of Coral Gables Historic District” to include the property at 1125 North Greenway Drive, legally described as Lot 18 and 19, Block 15, Coral Gables Section “C”, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 8, at Page 26, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida, as a contributing structure.

Ms. Kautz relayed the history of the house, its location within the historic district and photographs, both current and historic. At the time of the district designation, the house had not yet met the 50-year benchmark. In April 2007, the homeowner received approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness, and is ready to proceed with improvements, now requesting a change from non-contributing to contributing within the district for eligibility to apply for ad valorem tax benefits. Ms. Kautz stated staff’s recommendation of approval as a contributing structure.

Mr. Santos and Ms. Kautz engaged in discussion about previous house alterations. In response to Ms. Meyers request, Ms. Chin and Ms. Kautz reviewed alterations made since the original drawings. When the COA was approved, it was staff’s intention to recommend designation at the appropriate time. Ms. Chin recalled that Mr. Santos had commented on the terrace addition in the back of the property with concerns about the setback. However, the architect revised the drawings to ensure that variances were not necessary for the rear addition. Ms. Meyers and Mr. Santos commented that the windows did not appear to be like those in the original drawings, and that the front door appeared colonial.

Homeowner Claudia Puig stated that the old shutters had been removed as the windows were being replaced with hurricane-proof windows that would be the same as original windows. Ms. Meyers advised that the new hurricane-proof windows needed to have the same pattern of horizontal muntins in the same location where the awning windows would have been.

Ms. Bennett announced that Mr. Sanabria joined the meeting (4:22 p.m.)

Ms. Thomson commented that a letter dated September 17, 2008 from Arturo and Carmen Ferreira, 1133 North Greenway Drive, suggested that 1125 North Greenway was not similar to other historic structures in design and didn’t appear to be as worthy of designation in the district. Ms. Kautz responded that many different architectural styles were included in the realm of significance along with those built in the 1920s, explained different styles, and said the architecture of this structure was compelling enough to be included.

Mr. Santos recalled the booklet published by the Department of the Interior that defined architectural styles and were included in Board packets a few meetings ago. There followed a discussion about standards of architecture, history and cultural associations that are applied when researching and evaluating properties. Regarding the subject property, a history of previous homeowners was discussed, among them Dorothy Cox, an associate of Sir Freddie Laker. As the discussion concluded, Ms. Puig stated her appreciation of preserving her home and converting it back to its original style, adding that she had ordered new plans for the property, but hadn’t yet obtained a permit.

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Ms. Meyers expressed concern about the plans, pointing out that different standards applied for non-contributing versus contributing properties and asked to have an opportunity to review the plans. To accommodate the request, the case was temporarily deferred until plans could be brought into the meeting. The case reopened for discussion at 5:42 p.m.

After review, staff and Board members discussed the windows, shown as large plate glass windows on the right side of the house instead of awning windows as in the original drawings.

Ms. Turner, 1106 Alhambra Circle, spoke as a neighbor and encouraged the Board to be sympathetic to applicants who came forward to designate their newer-style homes as time moved forward, incorporating the new styles of architecture among older preserved homes. As a lifelong resident in the neighborhood, she related the history of the people who had lived in Ms. Puig's house, closing with her support for the applicants and staff in their recommendation.

Ms. MacIntyre said that Ms. Turner made an important point: that time does not stop and our communities evolve. She also mentioned that a workshop would be given by the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation in early November in Gainesville, Florida on preserving mid-century architecture, and suggested that Board members attend as the issue was growing in importance. She said the Villagers might fund a small stipend for staff to attend.

Mr. Santos made a motion to approve the application. Ms. Thomson seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Maroon, Ms. Meyers, Mr. Sanabria, Mr. Santos, Ms. Thomson, Mr. Beeman, Ms. MacIntyre, Ms. Bennett. Nays: None.

SPECIAL CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS:

CASE FILE COA (SP) 2008-08:

An application for the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the property located at 475-495 Biltmore Way, a non-contributing structure within the "Coral Gables City Hall Historic District," legally described as Lots 20-24, and 25-26, Block 4, Coral Gables Biltmore, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 20, at Page 28, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The applicant requested design approval for the construction of an addition, and alteration of the structure. Variances from the Coral Gables Zoning Code have been requested for: the minimum required drive aisle width as required by Article 5, Division 14, Section 5-1402 (A) (3) (f) and (g); the minimum allowable width of ingress and egress driveways as required by Article 5, Division 14, Section 5-1402 (C) (2) (a); the minimum front setback as required by Appendix A – Site Specific Zoning Regulations Section A-12 (C) (5); the maximum allowable roof parapet height as required by Article 5, Division 16, Section 5-1604; and the maximum permitted height of a structure as required by Article 4, Division 3, Section 4-301 (D) (1) (a) and (b).

As photographs of the property were shown, Ms. Kautz oriented the Board to the non-contributing property, consisting of two buildings, within the City Hall Historic District. She recalled the meeting a year ago when the property was reviewed the Board for design approval for façade alterations and some interior alterations. As the applicant was proceeding through the review process, it was noticed that multiple variances were needed. Therefore, the applicant returned to seek approval for the variances.

Ms. Kautz described the major changes, advising that both the building owner and architect were present to augment her comments and to review the deviation in design that brought about the need for variances. The first time the applicant came to the Board, they had not yet gone through zoning, and now, as part of the zoning process, a full analysis of the property is required, which revealed the need for variances with this design.

Mr. Sanabria and Ms. Meyers requested clarification from the City Attorney about the Board's power to grant variances for a non-conforming building. Ms. Kautz said that because the building was in a historic district, it had to be presented to this Board. Mr. Sanabria requested that the City Attorney either be present at each Board meeting, or to request that she write a memorandum stating why the Board could conduct a quasi-judicial meeting without City counsel.

Mr. Garcia-Serra, attorney representing the applicant, reviewed the Board's approval of the design a year ago. He stated that the zoning analysis identified the variances that would be required, and explained the evolution of DRC procedures. When the applicant attempted to be heard by the Board of Adjustment, they were advised that it was necessary for them to meet with the Historic Preservation Board.

Mr. Garcia-Serra discussed how the application of the variances would improve the historic district with changes that would be more compatible with the neighborhood. He responded to multiple questions from Board members regarding building height, style, proposed changes to the design, parking facilities, reviews by other City boards for compliance and parking lifts.

Ms. Kautz advised the steps she recommended the applicant take, including the Parking Department, Fire Department, Public Works Department and Public Service Department, ensuring that all issues were addressed. She said that the variances, which an applicant within a historical district had the right to request, would need to be weighed against the criteria for the historical district. Mr. Sanabria stated that he would continue to listen to the presentation, but would not vote on the case without advice from the City Attorney.

Mr. Garcia-Serra stated that he represented Biltmore LLC, owner of the two office buildings. He introduced owner Oscar Roger, architect Nati Soto and traffic expert Tim Plummer, stating that the owner's intent was to make the buildings more aesthetically pleasing and more functional. Three significant modifications from the design approved last year are:

- The height of the 475 building was last year proposed as four stories. The current plan leaves it at three stories.
- The layout of the parking garage had to change due to location of structural columns in the buildings, and included new entrances/exits and mechanical lifts.
- The arcade along Biltmore Way was extended so it would be continuous.

Architect Nati Soto reviewed plans, showing how the two buildings were being consolidated, how parking lifts were not visible, and why the variances were needed to enable better circulation within the building and to the lifts. She confirmed that the project was approximately 3,000 square feet less than the previous year's application, and responded to Board questions about various aspects of the design. She said the renovations were anticipated to take between six and eight months to complete.

Mr. Santos made a motion to approve the plans as submitted with the recommendations of staff.

Ms. Maroon seconded the motion.

Mr. Davidson addressed the Board, also pointing out that he had submitted his comments in writing. He questioned why the building, a non-contributing structure in a historic district, should be considered by this Board. He stated that the proposed changes were appropriate for the zoning board, and called the variance requests "unbelievable." Mr. Davidson asked the Board to deny the application, stating that it would create a precedent.

Ms. Thomson said that Mr. Davidson's concerns were also some of hers, enumerating them as the alleyway, ingress/egress, zero setback, vehicle turning radii, urging prudence and caution. Ms. Kautz assured her that the plans had been extensively reviewed by multiple departments for all those issues prior to being presented to this Board. Mr. Santos told Mr. Davidson that the Board shared his concerns, but said they had created the district and needed to have a certain degree of control in all districts. He explained the Board's power to grant deviations and variances, and reviewed the proposed design changes, terming the variances as not dramatic and pointing out that the size of the building had been reduced and made more proportional with the land. He recommended that Tim Plummer, present at the meeting, address some of his concerns.

Mr. Sanabria stated that developer Oscar Roger had a good track record in previous developments, though he had trepidations because he was not present when the design was approved. For the benefit of backup information, he said he would request the Commission to clarify whether or not a City Attorney should be present at Board meetings. Mr. Sanabria said he hoped for clarification by the next Board meeting.

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Mr. Garcia-Serra described the variances in detail, those related to parking both pertaining to the aisle way and entrance way. He said that valet-operated parking would be available for building tenants only.

Mr. Plummer explained his meetings with Parking Director Kinney and Public Works Director Delgado, stating that with technology and software, the proposed system worked and was presented to both directors. Turning radii and vehicle exits worked well also.

Mr. Garcia-Serra then discussed the variance requested for the height of the parapet to make it consistent with the roof line because the building was being brought forward slightly, and cited examples. He, Ms. Soto and Board members continued to discuss details of the design.

Ms. Thomson recommended an amendment to add that the parking be valet-operated and restricted to tenant use only, and that gates would be erected at entrance and exit points. Mr. Santos and Ms. Maroon accepted the amendment.

Roll Call: Ayes: Ms. Meyers, Mr. Sanabria, Mr. Santos, Ms. Thomson, Mr. Beeman, Ms. MacIntyre, Ms. Maroon, Ms. Bennett. Nays: None.

CASE FILE COA (SP) 2008-13:

An application for the issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the property located at 1029 Milan Avenue, a local historic landmark, legally described as Lot 12, Block 23, Coral Gables Granada Section Revised, according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 8, at Page 113, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The applicant requested design approval for the construction of an addition, and alteration of the structure.

During a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Kautz discussed the history and architecture of the property, displaying photographs and drawings. She stated that the applicant wanted design approval for an addition to the rear of the property. Plans and drawings were displayed that included a master bedroom, closet, bath, covered terrace and some kitchen alterations. Variances were not requested. The project was reviewed by the Board of Architects and was approved with the condition that the covered portion of the terrace be a flat roof with a parapet. Staff deferred opinion to the Board of Architects and the Historic Board.

Mr. Esquivel stated that he and his wife would prefer to move forward with the plans as they were designed, and spoke with the architect to find a solution because they believed their design added more appeal and blended better with the front of the house. He also addressed drainage issues.

Mr. Santos expressed his view that the Board of Architects' comments were good, but said if the applicant's preference was for a different roof, the Board had the authority to grant it. He clarified information about the construction of the roof, as exposed or with trusses, stating that if trusses were used, the Board of Architects' comments would stand. However, if the roof were exposed, Mr. Santos said it would be necessary to have steel beams, a very costly application, and rafters. Mr. Santos explained the differences between the two and suggested Mr. Esquivel decide which application he would prefer.

Mr. Sanabria made a motion to approve issuance of a Special Certificate of Appropriateness for the property at 1029 Milan Avenue, including approval of allowing the owner the opportunity to determine the roof issue between those discussed as he chooses. Ms. Maroon seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes: Mr. Santos, Ms. Thomson, Mr. Beeman, Mr. Sanabria, Ms. MacIntyre, Ms. Maroon, Ms. Meyers, Ms. Bennett. Nays: None.

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ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:

Ms. Kautz distributed a list of Board members and their terms of service, and explained term limits of present Board members.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Ms. MacIntyre suggested sending a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Ferreira relaying that history is evolving and thanking them for their interest as a gesture of goodwill.

NEW BUSINESS:

Election of Board Chairperson:

Ms. Maroon made a motion to nominate Ms. Bennett. Ms. Thomson seconded the motion.

Mr. Beeman made a motion to nominate Ms. MacIntyre. Mr. Sanabria seconded the motion.

Ms. Bennett withdrew her name from nomination as her term of office will expire in 2009.

Ms. Thomson made a motion expressing her willingness to serve as Board Chair. Ms. Maroon seconded the motion.

The roll call vote resulted in the election of Ms. MacIntyre as Board Chair.

Election of Board Vice Chair:

Mr. Sanabria made a motion to nominate Ms. Thomson. Ms. Maroon seconded the motion.

Ms. Bennett made a motion to nominate Ms. Meyers. Mr. Santos seconded the motion.

The roll call vote resulted in the election of Ms. Meyers as Board Vice Chair.

Florida Trust Conference:

The Florida Trust Conference will be held May 14 to 16, 2009. The restoration of the Palm Beach County Courthouse as a museum will be featured. After giving a history of the property, Ms. Kautz showed a video of the \$18 million restoration that was videotaped over a four-year period. Board members agreed that the project was amazing as was the effort to memorialize it.

Lamppost Bases:

Regarding the interest in restoring the bases of lampposts, Ms. Kautz reported that she was trying to identify a craftsperson capable of creating a mold. She said it was suggested that the Villagers might have some grant money available to help fund the project.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kara N. Kautz
Historic Preservation Officer