

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Communication Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 18, 2016, 8:30 a.m.
War Memorial Youth Center
405 University Drive
Coral Gables, FL

MEMBERS	F	M	A	M	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	COMMISSIONERS
	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'15	'16	'16	
Herb Levin Margarita Delgado	P	P	*	*	P	R	P	P	E	P	P	P	Mayor Jim Cason
Luba De Witt Derrek Space	P	P	*	*	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	E	Commissioner Pat Keon
Les Pantin III	P	P	*	*	P	P	A	E	A	P	P	P	Commissioner Vince Lago
Connie Crowther						P	P	E	P	P	E	E	Vice Mayor Frank C. Quesada
TJ Villamil						P	E	P	A	P	P	P	Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

A = Absent
E = Excused Absence
P = Present
R = Resigned
* = No Meeting

STAFF AND GUESTS:

Maria Rosa Higgins Fallon, Public Affairs Manager
Sam Joseph, Chairperson, School and Community Relations Committee

Chairperson Margarita Delgado brought the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. Mr. TJ Villamil joined the meeting via phone.

Motion:

**Mr. Les Pantin made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 2016 meeting.
Mr. TJ Villamil seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

Chairperson Margarita Delgado welcomed Mr. Sam Joseph, Chair of the School and Community Relations Committee.

Mr. Joseph thanked members for their invitation. The previous set up of the School and Community Relations committee was managed by the Police Department. It has now been reconstituted under the City Manager's Office to work directly with the public school system. Mr. Joseph said that Coral Gables has 12 public schools with nothing less than a "B" status, so residents are extremely fortunate that they have an excellent educational portfolio.

The Committee has recently evaluated seven projects that they are going to tackle. The Mayor's Office has added another project to this list. The purpose of his visit is to make the Communications Committee aware of these projects and see how they can get involved to assist in their mission.

Chairperson Margarita Delgado agreed that this collaboration among boards is aligned with what the Mayor's Office was looking for in her involvement with the Communications Committee. We are here to support each other, she said.

Mr. Joseph listed these projects as follows: "City Beautiful" Schools Initiative: A public/private partnership to help renovate and maintain the school's grounds and facilities. He would like the outside of schools to mirror the beauty of what goes inside the schools. The plan is to walk around all the public schools in Coral Gables and make a punch list of maintenance that needs to be done and work on repairing them.

"Community Schools" Project: A project to open school campuses and/or facilities for public usage and access. The idea is to make the schools open to citizens after hours, such as having access to the track fields so that residents can exercise on these campuses.

Financial Literacy Initiative: A financial literacy project to be implemented at middle and high schools. As an example, Mr. Joseph mentioned that published author David Bianchi will incorporate lessons about kids learning how to manage money through a curriculum program. Chairperson Delgado thought this was a great idea.

Mentorship/Community Service Programs: Career/"Principal for a Day" Participation for elementary schools; Civic/Service Programs for middle schools and Job Shadowing/Internship Programs for high schools. There are many professionals in our city and this is a great opportunity to give back to the community. The goal is to keep the talent here in the City of Coral Gables.

Coral Gables History Tours: This is a project to reinstitute annual Coral Gables History Tours with schools. The Committee would like for every third or fourth grader to have a tour of Coral Gables so that they can be proud of their city.

Special Needs Services/Programming Initiative: A public/private partnership to help bring special needs services and programming to the City of Coral Gables. Mr. Joseph said that there are about 400 special needs students that come every day to our schools, and about 100 or so are autistic adults living in our City who are currently driving to Hialeah or Broward for services. This creates a great burden for their families.

Community Education Initiatives: The Committee is seeking out different methods for educating the public on issues related to education. Mr. Joseph said there is a lack of information in the community about our schools and about education in general. The Committee really wants to get the word out about public school issues. Ms. Higgins Fallon said that Vice Mayor Quesada had spoken to the City Manager regarding incorporating information about the public schools in the City's weekly *Herald* ad that is being published. She had emailed the information to the secretary of the board and to Chair Joseph so that they can channel information to her office. The ad is available beginning in March. Mr. Joseph will have a meeting with his committee tomorrow and will discuss a process so that the information is provided, and approved by the school district.

Mr. Joseph said he would like to discuss which venues of information the city has to facilitate any school information. Ms. Les Pantin said that parents are younger now and using the city's social media like Facebook or the City app would be effective, because of the immediate connection. Mr. Joseph said that they have collaborated in the past to promote news like the Little Carver book drive, or student Briana Lewis' recognition in the Values Matter Award which was featured on Facebook.

School Libraries/Book Drive Initiative: A public/private partnership to help support school libraries and other literacy initiatives. This project was added by the Mayor. Currently the school media libraries are being run by volunteers and there is limited access. Mr. Joseph said his committee would like to get involved to make library accessible the full hours they should be.

Mr. Joseph concluded by asking Committee member to help spread the word about these projects. Members thanked him for his presence.

Status of Development Projects

Chairperson Delgado wanted to discuss the information posted on the city's website regarding upcoming development projects. She found that there are 23 projects in building and permit process, seven in the DRC process, and three that require Commission approval. In the website there are four projects that are being permitted and will be starting soon. She would like the information to include a timeline of construction, which is essential for residents.

Ms. Higgins Fallon said that the website is managed by Development Services and the challenge will be that information about a current and updated timeline would have to come from contractors, and the city will always lag in putting this information to the public. This also presents a challenge of available resources. She will contact Development Services to discuss how this task can be accomplished without overwhelming existing resources, and will report back to the Committee.

Public Affairs Report

Ms. Higgins Fallon distributed copies of a door hanger that was produced by her office in collaboration with Public Works, Public Service and design services from Parks and Recreation.

It is bilingual, English in the front and Spanish in the back, to communicate with residents when city crews have been at their homes working on various projects. Ms. Higgins Fallon also showed members the approved design for the upcoming green fleet cars, which will have a new brand logo of “Green Fleet” on their passenger doors. She also informed members that she is currently working in the next issue of the magazine for the May issue. Lastly, she informed members that staff from CGTV attended the Farmers Market during two weekends to promote the City app, but they had very few customers. She informed that they will attempt to promote the City app and Facebook at the upcoming Carnival on the Mile to see if they have more success.

Current events

Ms. Higgins Fallon reported that the first discussion series hosted by Commissioner Pat Keon on sea level rise was very successful. Upcoming talks are scheduled for March 8 and April 13 and her office will work on publicizing these events.

Commissioner Slesnick is hosting today her second citizens’ forum at the Biltmore Hotel, from 6-8 p.m. Her office is also involved in promoting the purchase of the historic 2506 Ponce building and a community event is being planned for next month.

Chairperson Delgado learned about Ms. Connie Crowther’s absence due to illness. She would like to send her a “get well” message on behalf of the Communications Committee. Ms. Higgins Fallon will take care of this.

Mr. TJ Villamil made the announcement that he will be participating this weekend on the Rotary Club’s Chili Cook-off and invited members to attend and show their support.

Ms. Higgins Fallon distributed the latest copy of e-News

With no further issues to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.