



**City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
January 11, 2022**

ITEM TITLE: ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS

MEETING DATE: November 3, 2021

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

QUORUM: Reached in Person

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting commenced at 10:03am

Introduction of new Citizen Advisory – Dr. Jennifer Durocher UM Card

Ms. Palacio introduced Dr. Durocher as a new Citizen Advisory for the board. Dr. Durocher introduced herself and provided information regarding UM Card program.

Ms. Palacio introduced Dr. Laura Olivos, who addressed the Board and explained a little about herself.

Alzheimer’s Month – GUIDE

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised GUIDE is up and running. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised it went live end of October. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated city will commence promoting during November which is one of the months regarding Alzheimer’s and will be discussed at upcoming commission meeting November 9, 2021. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised post cards will be made available for distribution in various forms such as via Senior Citizen Advisory Board, police officers and others.

Winter Wild Camp – Ms. Ericka Kofkin

Ms. Kofkin advised board of pilot program which is being worked on called Winter Wild Camp. Ms. Kofkin stated they are working on being able to host this by creating a small wilderness area in the middle of Coral Gables to provide a true camp site experience. Ms. Kofkin stated this would be a half day camp 9:00am to 1:00pm during the second week of winter camp and at least three of the spots are available to participants who already have active cases in Ericka’s program. Ms. Kofkin advised this program is for teenagers ages 12 to 15.

Ms. Palacio asked if this would be taking place at Youth Center. Ms. Vester explained they currently contacted City Manager’s office to obtain approval to host it at a current vacant Girls Scout house.

Self-Contained Classrooms Coral Gables Public Elementary Schools – Ms. Jennifer Sando

Ms. Sando addressed board regarding this issue and its status. Ms. Sando explained currently at Coral Gables Public Elementary schools there are no self-contained classrooms. Ms. Sando advised of conversations held with members of the school board regarding this issue. Ms. Sando shared this is an important matter and will continue to address this with the school district to assure future families will not have same difficulties as already experienced by others.

Mr. Sando stated one of the arguments is that district determines need of such classroom according to population and since Gables does not really “grow” they feel it is not needed. Mr. Sando explained how this city has grown and believes this is not a valid argument.

Dr. Durocher addressed board regarding experiences families now involved with UM Card have shared about the lack of these classrooms at elementary schools.

Mr. Joseph addressed board regarding issue. Mr. Joseph stated by law, school district should be providing accommodations needed. Mr. Joseph stated this should be available from pre-k all the way to high school.

Mr. Sando stated he believes Advisory Board on Disability Affairs Board can introduce a Resolution regarding Self-Contained Classrooms for elementary schools in Coral Gables which reflects the board's support for this issue. Mr. Sando stated by having Resolution it will be brought up at the next commission meeting and bring attention to this matter.

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised Resolution will be drafted and presented at next board meeting.

Update: GUIDE

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised G.U.I.D.E is live. Ms. Palacio advised it will also be in the newspaper. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised G.U.I.D.E will also be shared with the Senior Citizen Advisory at their upcoming meeting. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised of informative post cards which will be made available for distribution regarding G.U.I.D.E. program.

Recap: Adventure Day for All Event 10/23/21 – Ericka Kofkin

Ms. Kofkin conducted recap of Adventure Day for All Event held on October 23, 2021. Ms. Kofkin advised it has been determined approximately 1,200 people attended event. Ms. Kofkin advised no complaints were received from neighborhood area neighbors.

Ms. Palacio made suggestion that at next year's event, participating food vendors be placed at both ends of resource area. Ms. Palacio also stated having the Autism vehicle made available at a more visible area.

Ms. Elejabarrieta stated everyone seemed to be happy with this new location and they will be evaluating how to address any issues.

Mr. Sando stated it felt like there were more resources participants and congratulated everyone for their support and efforts.

Follow up – Board Goals

Ms. Palacio advised to continue conversation regarding employment for individuals with disabilities. Ms. Palacio advised board unfortunately due to lack of registration, Chamber of Commerce upcoming seminar regarding this subject had to be canceled.

Ms. Dietz asked if city followed up regarding past conversation regarding Project Search program. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised further review is needed due to specific requirements of program.

Ms. Liebl stated City of Coral Gables is part of Communities of Excellence and she believes the Advisory Board on Disability Affairs should be involved with this because they have areas to excel in, one being employment, other quality of life.

Ms. Palacio spoke of how it would be best to proceed with addressing businesses perhaps via Chamber regarding employment. Ms. Liebl stated she believes there needs to be a way to address and deal with myth busters regarding employing people with disabilities. Ms. Milne believes having participants with disabilities who are employed present their story to businesses goes a long way. Ms. Palacio advised Chamber stated they would reconsider having the seminar once again. Ms. Palacio stated perhaps it would be good to remarket the promoting of the seminar to addressing worker shortage and then present the hiring of people with disabilities as a solution to this crisis. Ms. Milne stated perhaps it would be a great idea for board members to create a list of current businesses

who already employ people with disabilities and then ask if they can attend Chamber events, seminars or other, so that they can speak regarding benefits of having such employees. Ms. Liebl stated those business would have to be part of the Chamber. Mr. Blake stated perhaps board members can reach out to local businesses regarding the Business Inclusion Award program and encourage their participation. Ms. Liebl stated an easy way to address these businesses would be utilizing the Chambers social media platform which has a great number of followers, if agreed with by Chamber President Mr. Mark Trowbridge. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised there is already a list available of companies which have employees with disabilities.

Ms. Liebl advised Chamber usually has a monthly designated topic, always how to best improve business and Board needs to figure out which one would be best to incorporate subject regarding hiring individuals with disabilities. Ms. Liebl stated hard data is needed which reflects benefit of hiring people with disabilities. Ms. Moss stated a better way to present this issue at this time is to focus regarding current labor shortage and then present how this pool of people which are willing and able to work.

Discussion also took place regarding how great it was to have both Alan and Alex be present to receive Proclamation at last commission meeting.

Ms. Liebl asked if it would be possible to have flags regarding promoting G.U.I.D.E. and people to register. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised she would look into it.

Ms. Liebl commented Autism vehicle was not very visible during the month of October due to it was mostly circulating at midnight and if that could be addressed for next October so that it would be more visible during the daytime. Ms. Elejabarrieta explained this is an actual working vehicle assigned to a particular officer, however it will be reviewed for next October.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Ms. Lissety Keon

Ms. Keon stated she is a City of Coral Gables resident who has an autistic child and shared the struggles they have had to overcome. Ms. Keon stated she understood what Ms. Sando stated regarding feeling your child is not wanted at a public school. Ms. Keon stated she changed her son from a charter school to Crystal Academy and is very thankful for all Ms. Palacio has done for her son and family. Ms. Keon stated her son attended Coral Gables Elementary and wonders if there would have been access to a self-contained classroom, would it have been an easier transition for her son. Ms. Keon stated she is happy for being a City of Coral Gables resident and their inclusionary programs, however, feels much more can be done.

NEXT MEETING: December 1, 2021

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 11:12am

Motion by Adjourn: Blake Sando /2nd Motion: Philippa Milne / All approved unanimously.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Minutes of the November 3, 2021