

CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Meeting Minutes of May 8, 2023, 8:30 a.m.
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, 2nd Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	M 22	J 22	J 22	A 22	S 22	O 22	N 22	D 22	J 23	F 23	M 23	A 23	M 23	APPOINTED BY
Ana Lam	P	N O M E E T I N G	N O M E E T I N G	P	P	P	P	N	E	P	#	P	P	Mayor Vince Lago
Barbara Reese	P			E	P	E	E	O	P	#	P	#	P	Vice-Mayor Michael Mena
Bonnie Seipp	P			P	E	P	P	M	E	P	P	P	E	Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	A			E	P	P	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Mary Beth Burke	P			P	E	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Alexis Ehrenhaft	E			E	P	E	E	G	P	P	P	P	P	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Joanne Meagher	P			P	P	P	P		P	P	P	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole

LEGEND: A = Absent; P = Present; E = Excused; * = New Member; ^ = Resigned Member.
 - = No Meeting; # = Late meeting arrival.

STAFF: Kara Kautz, Acting Historic Preservation Officer; Gay Bondurant, Docent Coordinator.
 RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Yvelisse Bonilla, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Meagher at 8:42 a.m. and attendance was stated for the record.

Peggy Groves is observing meeting, interested in serving on the board.

A motion was made by Ms. Meagher and seconded by Ms. Reese to excuse Ms. Seipp from the meeting.

The motion was unanimously approved.

OPENING STATEMENT:

Preface to Opening statement: Ms. Meagher: In West Virginia last week and while driving back to New York City I observed the following sign: *Because of her many talents her parents encouraged her to go to college. But instead of sending her to a girl’s school which is a normal path for college bound women her parents sent her to Lebanon Valley College. A rare coeducation institution located 225 miles away in Annville PA. On August 26, 1879, 19-year-old Althea Fink boarded the train for Annville. Within a day of her arrival, she would meet another freshman Soloman Greesly Merrick who 6 years later would become her husband and change her life direction. The college was in Annville, a picturesque innocent sort of town that prided itself on having few distractions. Its population was predominately Pennsylvania Dutch, sober, industrious and friendly. Although LBC offered some scholarship most of the students like Solomon and Ally came from families that can proudly afford the \$180 tuition which also covered room and board. In addition to classroom studies the college required the students both male and female to participate in Friday afternoon oratoricals. At which they wrote essays and read them to the group. Once a month several students gave an oration at the chapel on Saturday night, a popular event, that was always crowded to the doors. Ally’s father would often jump on the train and surprised her with a visit. Always seeking ways to encourage her. He arrived on one of these excursions with a life size bust of Athena, the goddess of wisdom and presented it to the Cleonians Society at their Friday night meeting. The presentation, “was a total surprise to nearly all of the members of the society,” the Annville gazette reported, adding “the doctor seems to be especially talented in surprising others.”*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ms. Meagher and seconded by Ms. Cason to approve the minutes of April 17, 2023, with corrections.

The motion was unanimously approved.

HOUSE REPORT:

1. **Coral Gables House Report for May 2023:** April began with 2 prospective docents being no shows for initial interviews. Good news is we have 10 active docents (including Gay).
2. **Group Tour:** On Friday, April 21st a call was received from Loews Hotel at the new Plaza development, asking for a tour for 30 guests of hotel. No docents were available due to short notice, but Ms. Meagher conducted a brief overview talk on the lawn. They arrived on bicycles and planned to continue to tour the city. Tour was on Sunday, April 23. Lowes contact person advised they will be sending tours their way.
3. **Merrick House Matters:** During tours on Saturday April 22nd, water was seen coming through the ceiling in the living room, through the security light fixture, and to left of fireplace and chimney. Water also seen coming through hairline cracks in the ceiling plaster. The AC drip pans upstairs were overflowing. The repairs were made on Sunday, but the dripping started again during the week. Public works removed the rug. The AC company was called back and tracked the issue to a root obstructing the drainpipe under the house. Ms. Kautz will check on rug cleaning before it is returned to the house.
4. **Sales:** Tallies for the month: visitors 139, 1 poetry book, 4 postcards, 1 box of large notecards, and 1 poster totaling \$714. Receipts from the Tea event (not including Eventbrite) \$975, Total for the month is \$1,689.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Villagers Grants:** Will reschedule the presentation of the check by Kelly Shield. Ms. Shield provided the grant for the Althea Merrick watercolor “Sweetwater” and “Sweetwater Down.”
2. **Sunroom:** During the Summer, Ms. Meagher will work on determining how we move forward on this oil painting.
3. **Garden Tea:** Ms. Meagher will process the donation paperwork with Amanda Levasser, City Archivist.
4. **Philip Church** – Ms. Meagher is still in contact with Mr. Church, who is moving forward with the play.
5. **Eventbrite:** Reconciliation for all events this season will happen today. Working with Coral Gables Community Foundation - Mr. Romero.
6. **Staff Tours:** Ms. Burke will work with the city to schedule city staff by department to house for short tours, possibly have lunch. Possible title “Lunch on the Porch with George.”
7. **Men of the Magical Isles:** Ms. Meagher and Ms. Bondurant working on this. Ms. Kautz to contact city Attorney.
8. **Dishwasher-** Ms. Kautz is working on purchasing the new dishwasher.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **“100 Voices”:** This event was on Sunday, August 6th. Very pleased and interesting. We had a lot of walkups. Will provide us with a copy of the presentation. Board would like to do it again September, October and November.
2. **Fall Festival:** Will move forward with 100 Voices. This is more in line with our mission.
3. **Holidays:** Don Slesnick, Jr. almost sure the parade will be on Friday, December 10th. Suggestions for the party on Saturday the 9th. Christmas tree lighting is on December 1st. Villagers Christmas party is on December 2nd.

A motion was made by Ms. Meagher and seconded by Ms. Cason to hold the Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 9th.

The motion was unanimously approved.

4. **Decorations:** Board discussed using a faux tree this year. It was agreed to start holiday decorations on Friday, December 1st. The Garden Club has agreed to assist.
5. **Repairs:** Ms. Meagher working to find vendors to make repairs necessary to the house.
6. **Driveway:** Pit next to driveway needs to be filled. Ms. Kautz will call Public Service.

A motion was made by Ms. Meagher and seconded by Alexis to approve no meetings in June and July.

The motion was unanimously approved.

Coral Gables Merrick House Governing Board Meeting
May 8, 2023

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None

CITY COMMISSION ITEMS: None

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY: None.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:21 am.

Respectfully submitted,


Anna C. Pernas
Historic Preservation Officer