

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
 WATERWAY ADVISORY BOARD
 HYBRID MEETING AT CITY HALL/ZOOM
 WEDNESDAY, October 4, 2023 - 5:30 P.M.
 MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS	District	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	APPOINTED BY:
		22	22	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	
Manny Chamizo	2	*	P	A	P	A	P	A	P*	*	*	P	P	Vince Lago
Pat Nolan	1											P	P	Melissa Castro
Juan A. Galan Jr	3	*	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	*	*	P	P	Rhonda Anderson
Kevin Ritzenthaler	1	*	*	*	A	A	P	P	P	*	*	A	A	Kirk Menendez
Nancy Sanabria	7											P	P	Ariel Fernandez
Douglas Yoder	CR	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	P	Peter Iglesias
Bertram Goldsmith	7	*	E	P	P	P	A	P	P	*	*	P	P	Commission-As-A-Whole
Levi Meyer	6			A	P	P	A	A	P	*	*	P	P	Board-As-A-Whole

P – Present
P*- Present (zoom)
E – Excused Absence
A – Absent
R – Resigned
(-) – No Appointment

(*) – No Meeting

STAFF:

- Lorena Garrido, Central Administration Division Manager
- Yanissey Solivera, Administrative Assistant
- Sergeant Guido Antezana, Marine Patrol

GUESTS:

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mr. Yoder. The roll call was done, and quorum was met.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:

Mr. Galan made the motion to approve the minutes of September 6, 2023, seconded by Mr. Goldsmith, all were in favor, and adopted unanimously.

SECRETARY UPDATE/COMMENTS

Ms. Garrido brought up the subject of the notices mailed to the residents along the waterways. She stated Public Works received calls regarding the notices relating to questions about compliance, the vegetation and maintenance along the waterways. Mr. Galan said that the notice didn't provide specific information such as location and height of the address numbers. Ms. Garrido replied that the code specifies the height of the numbers, and this is more for education and reiteration purposes. Mr. Galan suggested for a link to the City's website be provided. Ms. Sanabria suggested for a QR code to be placed directing residents to the specific City Code and providing information for DERM as well as the link to the City of Coral Gables website.

Ms. Garrido stated that the City's Communications and Public Affairs Department is working on additional educational notices and are looking for the Board's guidance. She mentioned that they want to touch on the fertilizer ordinance, the plantings, and clippings from properties onto the waterways and overall maintenance of their property.

Ms. Garrido reported on the force main replacement project and stated that the contractor is getting ready to mobilize the week of October 23rd.

DISCUSSIONS:

Ms. Sanabria brought up the subject of mangrove trimming. She stated that as per code, the canal width is between 75', 45' and 30'. She inquired about the width that will be required from the individual homeowners.

Mr. Yoder stated that when the Board made their recommendation to the Commission, the City Manager was not in favor of the City taking full responsibility of mangrove the trimming and considered this to be a Homeowner Association issue which leaves individual property owners who may not be part of a Homeowner Association on their own. Ms. Sanabria stated that assisting the homeowners with the process is important, and as a Board, they can help by providing information and resources.

Mr. Galan stated that that when Cocoplum was created, the mangroves on the left side as you enter the canal, and the mangroves that provide access to the properties, are part of a corporation named Cocoplum Conservation Inc. He said that no one knows who owns it and the City should not take on a piece of conservation left by the developer.

Mr. Yoder stated that the Board's recommendation was to explore the possibility of having a systematic way of maintaining the mangroves, and on a regular basis, evaluate the safety and navigation needs rather than leaving it up to Code Enforcement. Mr. Galan said that the City would be more agreeable on moving forward once the "conservation owner" issue in Cocoplum is resolved.

Mr. Chamizo requested an extension of his term as Chairman of the Board for the time the meetings were suspended due to COVID. There was a discussion on the extension and the Board decided to table the motion until the next meeting to obtain legal clarification.

A motion was made by Mr. Yoder to re-appoint Levi Meyer as a Board as a Whole member. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sanabria, all were in favor, and adopted unanimously.

Mr. Nolan stated that individual homeowners lack knowledge and need to be educated. He suggests that an official message goes out to the homeowners that live on the waterway regarding their responsibilities. Mr. Chamizo said that the Board has been providing educational information to the residents that live on the waterway for years.

Mr. Meyer stated that it doesn't seem like the Board has regular communication methods with the residents that live on the waterway, and this is an item that would take up a lot of time and effort to coordinate; however, it can be done. Even if it's just basic interviews with the City Manager where they go over important topics, doing a video recording of such and having it on the landing page. He said that he would be happy to do it' however, he thinks that the biggest challenge the Board has is the short amount of time. The Board meets monthly and as Ms. Sanabria stated during the previous meeting, a one-hour meeting is not sufficient time to cover everything which is why he suggests that the Board have workshop meetings between their monthly meetings. Mr. Galan said that he has a different view. He stated that he has been on the Board for over 5 years, and they have spent a lot of time going to the City Commission; however, people forget that this is a manager run City, it is not a strong Mayor City and the Board needs to work with a bureaucracy within the City to get their work done and make progress. Mr. Galan added that this why he feels the Board needs a change and suggested to appoint Mr. Yoder, as the Chairman. Mr. Chamizo added that the Board has gone before the City Manager twice and that they will bring the items before the next City commission meeting and will take whichever approach gets the job done.

Ms. Sanabria asked if the Board can have meetings outside of the regular meeting with the City Manager or the Commissioners. Mr. Chamizo said yes that she can go as an individual Board member or as a resident. Ms. Sanabria suggests that the Board prioritizes the list of priorities, and each Board member chooses a topic to address individually.

Mr. Galan brought up the subject of quasi-judicial boards. He stated that quasi-judicial boards have the power but no knowledge and the City created the advisory boards that have the knowledge but no power; however, the City has failed to create a cross link between the Boards. He said that he met with the City Manager and the City manager will take his suggestion to build a cross link between the quasi-judicial board and advisory boards into consideration.

Ms. Sanabria inquired about derelict vessels. Mr. Meyer stated that this topic was discussed with Code Enforcement in the April meeting and the conclusion was that it is very difficult to police; however, residents should report if they see a derelict vessel and allow Police and Code Enforcement do their jobs. Mr. Chamizo said that Police uses the same criteria that is used with a vehicle. Mr. Galan stated that there are rules that Police can follow such as having a current FL number and it must be in operable conditions.

The Board reviewed the list of priorities and agreed to prioritize the list, identify the responsible department for the area of concern, and Board Members will each choose a topic to address individually.

Mr. Meyer requested that Ms. Garrido identify the responsible department for each area of concern and provide their contact information at the next Board Meeting.

Ms. Sanabria asked Sgt. Antezana if the Police Department continued to take Code Enforcement to the waterway monthly. Sgt. Antezana responded that the Police Department took Code Enforcement out to the waterway last month and are scheduled to go out again this month. He also stated that he believes that Code Enforcement is continuing to ride with Public Works and now they are riding with the Police Department as well. Ms. Sanabria inquired about the type of violations that the Police Department and Code Enforcement are focusing on. Sgt. Antezana said mainly on any navigation issues and Code Enforcement violations.

Mr. Gallan requested the police department to create an analysis of vessels that do not have an FL number sticker.

A motion was made by Mr. Galan to inform the Building and Zoning Department that given the increased water levels they should consider changing the height standards for docks by at least 1'. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yoder, all were in favor, and adopted unanimously.

Mr. Yoder inquired about the survey identifying the areas that create safety and navigation problems on the waterways. Ms. Garrido stated that she has a draft map that is not finalized yet; however, she could show the Board what staff is working with. She stated that the map only reflects the areas in Cocoplum. Ms. Garrido also stated that the areas that need to be addressed as far as mangroves or vegetation are identified with dots, and some of those areas are under the Code Enforcement process. She said that the areas in red need to be maintained by the homeowners and the areas in blue need to be maintained by the City of Coral Gables; however, at this time there are no funds to proceed. Mr. Galan stated that a few of the areas in blue are unidentified parcels and the area in white belongs to the Cocoplum Conservation. Ms. Garrido said that Public Works will continue to update the map and we will bring it back periodically to be reviewed. Ms. Sanabria asked if the City has contingency funds in the current budget to trim the mangroves. Ms. Garrido said not at this time.

OLD BUSINESS:

The appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman.
List of priorities review.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

MARINE PATROL REPORT:

Sgt. Antezana reported on two significant accidents on the bay. He stated that they were investigated by FWC and they are still under investigation. They also had a moderate oil spill in Gables by the Sea. They responded several times; however, they were unable to find a source. Sgt. Antezana stated that there continues to be a significant amount of migrant smuggling offshore. He said that they ran into a vessel which they strongly believe was the lookout vessel for one of these smuggling operations.

Sgt. Antezana shared that the Police Department acquired body cameras.

Mr. Chamizo shared his concerns with the overabundance of jet skis speeding through the canals and inquired about the rules for Jet skis. Sgt. Antezana said that the rules for jet skis are the same as boats; however, one of the problems they find with jet skis is that they have an idle button and on some of them a no wake button and the reality is that even when they press that button, they are still kicking up a wake so Police has to stop them and educate them.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, November 1, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.