

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 5, 2008, 8:00 a.m.
Development Department, 95 Merrick Way, Suite 450, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	COMMISSIONERS
Richard DeWitt	P	P	P	P	P*	P	P	P	X	P	E	A	Mayor Donald D. Slesnick II
Ray Zomerfeld	P	A	P	P	P	E	P	P	X	P	P	P	Vice Mayor William Kerdyk, Jr.
Gladys Diaz Jourdain	P	P	P	E	P	P	E	P	X	P	E	P	Commissioner Maria Anderson
Dr. Al Smith	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	X	P	P	P	Commissioner Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
James Casey	P*	A	E	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	P	E	Commissioner Wayne "Chip" Withers

*Present via telephone.

STAFF:

Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark, Development Director
Jessica Wotherspoon

A = Absent
E = Excused Absence
P = Present
X = No Meeting
() = Special Meetings

GUESTS: Carol Ellis-Cutler, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce

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

Meeting Motion Summary:

Minutes of the October 16, 2008 meeting of the Economic Development Board were approved.

Mr. Casey' meeting absence was excused.

Economic Development Board Vice Chair Ray Zomerfeld called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. A quorum was reached.

I. Approval of October 16, 2008 Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes:

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2008 meeting as presented. Ms. Diaz Jourdain seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

II. Board Meeting Attendance:

Dr. Smith made a motion to excuse the absence of Mr. Casey. Ms. Diaz Jourdain seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Country Club of Coral Gables Update:

Ms. Rivenbark reported that the Commission authorized the City to negotiate with Liberty Events, with whom the Country Club lease will solely be executed, and thanked Mr. Zomerfeld for serving on the Evaluation Committee as the Board's representative. She said that a draft letter of intent would be presented to Liberty Events later today, with the primary issue being sustainability (rather than economics).

Ms. Rivenbark reviewed Liberty's investment in refurbishment and startup costs as well as the City's agreement to replace the HVAC (\$110,000), repair the roof (\$60,000) and exterminate termites (\$40,000). If the letter of intent (LOI), which will be the framework for the lease agreement, is finalized before the November 18 City Commission meeting it will be included on the Commission agenda.

The proposer was asked for additional information related to the membership concept as well as the concept of providing discounted meals for non-profit organizations, suggestions made by the Evaluation Committee. Ms.

Rivenbark expressed confidence in Liberty Events and their proposed business model, and said extensive research indicated they would do an excellent job. A September 2009 opening is currently anticipated.

Expressing sole concern about long-term viability, Mr. Zomerfeld said that special events made this type of venue profitable. Regarding neighborhood intrusion, Ms. Rivenbark advised that the Zoning Code provides a site specific overlay that governs noise and public intrusion and allows the City to monitor these issues. She said that specific financial and lease oversight with all pertinent details was built into the LOI and would later be part of lease agreement provisions.

IV. Affordable Housing Update:

Ms. Diaz Jourdain provided a comprehensive update, highlighting Fannie Mae's uncertainty regarding action on foreclosures, and their desire to dispose of their assets even though they will have to sell at a deep discount.

Miami-Dade County and several cities received several million dollars from the latest housing bill to be used to acquire foreclosed properties, targeted to low and moderate income neighborhoods. Coral Gables' census tract doesn't qualify for funding. One possibility would be to work with the State of Florida, which received \$91 million (the County received \$62 million).

Ms. Diaz Jourdain explained that different municipalities are called PJs, or Participating Jurisdictions, in HUD funding, based on per capita income on population and the number of people within specific census tracts that are classified as low to moderate. That is why, she continued, Coral Gables never receives any federal money for housing. She advised about possible penalties that could affect the City. Ms. Rivenbark added that the City could claim credit for affordable housing compliance within certain conditions.

Mr. Zomerfeld requested additional details relating to dollars for affordable housing funding, and the impact on the City if the City does not meet those requirements. Ms. Rivenbark said she would request information from the Planning Department, and cited examples of how the City could get involved in promoting workforce housing, which generated creative discussion about possible options for developing existing properties.

Ms. Diaz Jourdain suggested working on a plan of action to identify sites owned by the City but located in other census tracts, and examining an inventory of properties in Coral Gables that could be eligible for affordable housing subsidies.

Dr. Smith asked if there was an arrangement with developers wherein they would contribute either money or space toward affordable housing. Ms. Rivenbark said that concept was proposed in Coral Gables to satisfy the requirement, and offered to verify the status and details with the Planning Department. Dr. Smith expressed concern about protecting collected funds that are supposed to be dedicated to affordable housing. Ms. Rivenbark will invite Javier Betancourt, Planning Department to meet with the Board to provide an update.

Board members expressed interest in revisiting these issues, recognizing that it is important to determine and remain focused on the economic impact to the City.

Prior to conclusion of discussion, Ms. Diaz Jourdain raised the issue of abandoned houses in Coral Gables, stating that many are scattered throughout the community, and that many have been subject to mortgage fraud. These houses create expenses for the City as they are not maintained by owners and cannot be sold as property taxes and liens are greater than the value of the houses.

V. Palace at Coral Gables Update:

Ms. Rivenbark reported that the Palace design is tied up with the Board of Architects at present. Meetings with Palace representatives are ongoing, and construction financing is solid. A January possession date was originally intended, but progress needs to occur before it can move forward to the Planning Department.

VI. Additional Business:

- a. Urban Land Institute (ULI): Ms. Rivenbark reported that the national conference of the ULI was in Miami last week (attended by 5,000 people), during which time the City received excellent exposure. Among activities, a local mobile tour was conducted. Steve Bittel (major Miracle Mile property owner) participated as did Randy Hill, Allen Morris, Mari Molina and a panel of experts who were part of the tour. The Senior Housing Product Council, an interest group of ULI, heard a presentation from the City about infill housing strategies for seniors. Staff participated in a panel for urban mixed-use projects, which examined the Village of Merrick Park as a case study on the approval process. Ms. Diaz Jourdain helped staff the City's booth. Informational materials collected at the conference were distributed to Board members on topics of interest to economic development, which will be used to augment public promotional pieces. From a corporate investment viewpoint, Ms. Rivenbark stated that the City was "holding its own."
- b. Signage: Because of Board interest in difficulties new businesses face regarding signage, Ms. Wotherspoon spoke with Tom Grabowski when staff learned that Peterbrooke Chocolates was experiencing crippling bureaucratic delays in securing a sign for its small business on Aragon Avenue.

Mr. Grabowski said that the Board of Architects appeared to render opinions about applications rather than observe provisions of the Code. Definitions are confusing and difficult to interpret, and design guidelines are unclear. In the case of Peterbrooke Chocolates, Mr. Grabowski spent more on time to create the sign than the sign itself cost, and added that he did not feel treated well by the Board of Architects. It took several weeks to make an appointment, calls were not returned and he had to pay a runner to sit in the Building and Zoning Department for one storefront sign. He ultimately had to convince the Board of Architects that his design complied with Code and they finally approved it.

During discussion, Ms. Rivenbark advised that the Board, in past actions, called for a City ombudsman and facilitation with Building and Zoning. She suggested inviting Tom Grabowski to meet with the Board along with Mayor Slesnick, who expressed interest in the issue.

Mr. Zomerfeld stated that the Board of Architects needed oversight. Ms. Diaz Jourdain suggested that Tom Grabowski meet with Mayor Slesnick and the City Architect to develop guidelines. Ms. Rivenbark suggested that Ms. Wotherspoon and Tom Grabowski initially talk with the Mayor about specific examples, to be followed by a tri-board workshop, hosted by the Economic Development Board, that includes the Board of Architects and Planning Board to discuss the "broken" parts of the process," and to develop solutions. A specific agenda and objectives will be developed.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Next Economic Development Board Meeting: Wednesday, December 3, 2008, 8:00 a.m., Development Department conference room.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Swanson Rivenbark
Development Director
Secretary to the Economic Development Board