



**City of Coral Gables  
CITY COMMISSION MEETING  
May 20, 2025**

**ITEM TITLE: ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS**

**MEETING DATE: April 2, 2025**

**SUMMARY OF MEETING:**

**QUORUM:**

**STAFF:**

Raquel Elejabarrieta – Human Resources Director

Eglys Hernandez – P/T Administrative Assistant Labor Relations & Risk Management

**GUEST:**

**CITIZEN ADVISORS:**

Debbie Dietz, DIG – Disability Independence Group, Inc.

Jennifer Durocher, Director of UM-NSU Card (Via Zoom)

**PUBLIC GUEST:** None

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Meeting was called to order at 11:01am

**MEETING ABSENCE:**

Bonnie Blaire

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:**

March 5, 2025

Motion by: Jennifer Ward Sando / 2<sup>nd</sup> Vanessa Bedoya / Approved unanimously.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** None

**BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Chairperson Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike addressed the board and thanked the members who attended the flag raising event and all the effort made by city staff putting this event together.

**Update G.U.I.D.E. Program – Director Elejabarrieta**

Director Elejabarrieta advised Chief Hudak was not able to attend the meeting due to having to be at a police graduation class taking place today at the same time as the board meeting. Director Elejabarrieta stated perhaps at the next board meeting Chief Hudak will be available and provide an update regarding G.U.I.D.E.

Director Elejabarrieta stated regarding the Fight Like a Girl program, the Chief advised they are working on something, which perhaps can be presented at the next board meeting. Director Elejabarrieta stated that due to it being more difficult to come up with a program because individuals of different ages and disabilities, the Chief is envisioning a program which will be more of a preventative one, such as how to prevent putting ourselves in a vulnerable situation. Ms. Dietz stated she feels whenever training is being developed it is very important that people with disabilities have some input. Ms. Chichester stated perhaps it would be good to also have people as part of the committee who are trained with neuro specialties. Director Elejabarrieta stated if it would be ok to schedule a meeting with Chief Hudak, Ms. Dietz and Ms. Chichester to further discuss.

Director Elejabarrieta advised regarding the legislative side; the city is working with Senator Garcia to amend the statute. Director Elejabarrieta advised Mr. Fernando Weiner, Governmental Affairs Manager, is working directly with Senator Garcia. Director Elejabarrieta advised she had spoken with Mr. Weiner yesterday who advised there was no further update. Director Elejabarrieta stated that we are trying to amend the statute by adding to the current definition for assault and battery of the elderly to include individuals with disabilities.

Ms. Bedoya stated when it comes to awareness, learning and changing how people perceive things, she wishes there was a way to tap into the younger generation. Ms. Bedoya shared a situation she encountered with the board.

The board discussed the location where the training being developed could take place at.

Ms. Dietz spoke of HB1273- Autism Spectrum Disorder Training and stated she believes Chief Hudak is involved with it. Ms. Dietz said it would be great if Wallet Card could be added to that as acceptable training. Director Elejabarrieta stated she was going to email information to Mr. Weiner.

**Crosswalks GPS Mapping – Director Elejabarrieta**

Director Elejabarrieta shared her screen with the board of the GPS mapping created showing all the ADA improvements that are needed in the Central Business District. The consultant conducted a study of everything in area such as bus benches, crosswalks, sidewalks, etc., and put together a huge report. Director Elejabarrieta provided samples to view on screen of GPS mapping.

Director Elejabarrieta advised a similar report has been conducted for all city buildings to address any issues present and shared samples of information which can be obtained from these reports. Director Elejabarrieta stated at this time issues at City Hall and Youth Center are currently being addressed. Director Elejabarrieta stated it is going slower than expected but at least there is a guide in place for the city to eventually get there.

**Board History 100<sup>th</sup> Centennial – Director Elejabarrieta**

Ms. Palacio-Pike asked if Ms. Bonnie Blaire had done her video. Director Elejabarrieta stated she was not aware of Ms. Blaire doing video. Director Elejabarrieta advised the board history has been gathered and will be provided to

Ms. Blaire.

**Update: Parks & Recreation – Director Elejabarrieta**

Director Elejabarrieta stated Ms. Catie Hastings was currently attending the Reel Abilities Event, which is something the city is still considering for the future. Director Elejabarrieta shared with the board information provided by Ms. Hastings regarding upcoming events such as Autism Teen Night at Brickell on April 25, 2025, Ages 13-18, Gentle Easter Egg Hunt, April 19, 2025, and Adventure Day they are looking into making it officially November 8, 2025. Director Elejabarrieta stated they are once again looking at November due to October being overwhelmingly busy with so many other events taking place. Director Elejabarrieta stated how adamant the board is regarding having Adventure Day during the month of October, she can always go back and let the department know the Board's preference. Board members discussed among themselves regarding what would be the best date and agreed November 8, 2025, would be a good day for the event. The board discussed the upcoming literacy festival.

**Summer of Success – Mr. Eddy Martinez**

Ms. Palacio-Pike asked Mr. Martinez to provide information regarding his program Summer of Success. Mr. Martinez shared with the board information regarding an upcoming fund-raising event he is working on. Mr. Martinez stated the event is called "Taste of Success" where restaurants will be providing a tasting event and have speakers come in to provide nutritional information. Mr. Martinez stated this event will take place Thursday, May 22, 2025, at the Coral Gables Women's Club. Mr. Martinez stated he will be meeting with the City of Coral Gables to discuss the possibility of this event pairing and becoming the kickoff for the Taste of the Gables event. Mr. Martinez stated he would be providing information to be shared with the board.

Mr. Martinez shared information with the board regarding the ongoing county KLA program provided at Miami-Dade College regarding employment.

Ms. Chichester asked regarding Taste of Success May 22, 2025, event, if it was a fundraiser and if open for anyone to attend. Mr. Martinez advised all are welcome.

**Terms Limit – Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike**

Ms. Palacio-Pike stated she was not sure who received an email from the city regarding terms. Director Elejabarrieta advised it seems that everyone will need to be re-appointed and the best way to do so is for each one to contact their commissioner and express their interest to continue as part of the board.

**Board Goals – Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike**

Ms. Palacio-Pike stated she would like board members to take some time to evaluate where board has been and accomplished. Ms. Palacio-Pike would like to have a goal identified which the board can focus on. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated it would be great if Mr. Martinez presence and assistance, the Chamber can be more involved regarding employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Mr. Martinez shared his ongoing efforts at the Chamber with the board.

Ms. Dietz advised of a training program which was conducted with the Chamber a few years back regarding benefits of hiring people with disabilities and perhaps it would be great to do one again. Ms. Dietz stated this training was done by the Chamber and not by this board.

Ms. Bedoya asked if there was a list which identifies the benefits of hiring someone with disabilities, could it be something the Chamber would share with others. Ms. Dietz stated this information is already available for anyone to utilize. Mr. Martinez stated he would bring it up to the Chamber and perhaps one of the board's objectives should be to have the Chamber more involved.

Director Elejabarrieta asked if there were any instructions which the board wanted to provide to Mr. Martinez, and they suggested perhaps try to figure out the Chamber's agenda for October. Ms. Dietz suggested perhaps if October was not ready, it could be brought up during another month, such as during the tax season.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 12:05am

Motion to Adjourn: Vanessa Bedoya / 2<sup>nd</sup> Justine Chichester / Approved unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**NEXT MEETING:** May 7, 2025

**ATTACHMENT(S):** Minutes of April 2, 2025