

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C-5
January 10, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Noel Stillings
Charles Davis

Agenda Item C-5 [9:54:13 a.m.]

A Resolution approving the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 Cultural Grants

Mayor Cason: Let's move to C-5 and we have two speaker cards. Who pulled C-5?

Vice Mayor Quesada: I pulled C-5. So C-5, I guess the first comment is for staff. The minutes of the meeting here are sparse. I would love for these types of items, I'd love to see the conversation and discussion back and forth and the recommendation. I know there is the ranking, I know there is a recommended amount, but there really is no discussion. If you look at the minutes of the meeting where the Board was discussing these items and what grants to recommend to us, in the audience there were 30, 40, 50 people, and there is really no – I would like detailed minutes for meetings in the future for Cultural Arts when the allocations are being made and the recommendations are being made. Because a few of these, I read through it and they jump out at me, so let me just point to the one that the reason why I pulled, well the first

reason why I pulled; the second reason why I pulled it is, Bike Walk Coral Gables, the Board did not recommend any amount. It's not included in this amount here. We've spent a lot of money, we talk about traffic all the time, we spoke about it this morning with our State Legislator. We spent \$60,000 a few years ago on a Bike Master Plan; we've talked about putting bike lanes all over the place and this is an event that helps us with that and really promotes biking in the City, and I think it's important. So I'd like to see them get their requested amount; however, it's tough to say who you are going to take it away from, because as I read through some of the others, I know what some of the other do, what they receive, I recall them from years past, but then there are others that I have no idea what they relate to, that's why I was trying to rely on the minutes of the meeting to put that together. Before we go any further, City Manager you have any thoughts on my comments?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I haven't been involved in the awards, but if it's because it doesn't meet the categories of the grants process, because of the cultural festivals, that's something that we could work on from a separate budget and address. I'm happy to meet with the staff to learn what were the associations if for some reason they didn't fill out the application well, or they haven't met the funding requirements that's a different story, but if it's a matter of the nature of the request didn't meet with the criteria for the Board, we would be happy to address it in a separate other than cultural way.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Because I will tell you, at least with Bike Walk, I don't think there was an issue with their submission, because there was a motion. The one thing that was clear in the minutes of the meeting was that one of the applicants did not meet the minimum requirements and there was only one that was bounced out for that reason. I see you nodding your head; do you have more info for me?

Commissioner Lago: Mayor if I may, do you want to maybe table this for the next meeting and then we could potentially review.

Vice Mayor Quesada: We have two speaker cards, I heard your 1-6 may relate to this or it didn't?

Commissioner Slesnick: No, no.

Vice Mayor Quesada: It didn't. OK.

Commissioner Slesnick: But I know that the people that were here for Bike Walk just left.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I know. I saw them.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Was it a criterion in terms of meaning to have a cultural definition and this was another event other than culture?

Historical Resources Officer Spain: I believe it was just the ranking of the Board. There are a lot of applicants, so what we do is ask the Board to come to the meeting with their rankings, and they are of course able to discuss it there. Anybody that's there, if the Board has a question they can ask the organization to come up, but we ask the organizations just there there really for input only if asked, so it was not a matter of them not qualifying, it's a matter of low ranking. Is that your impression?

Ms. Cathers: Yes, and actually this year we had many, many more applicants; we had 44 this year, which is a huge increase from last year. We also funded more organizations this year, last year was 27 and the Board is recommending funding for 33 and the evaluations they initially had a low scores cut off of 80 points, they dropped it during the evaluation process to 77, because they wanted to be able fund more organizations then were already funded through the scoring that they had established and so it was through the evaluation scores.

Vice Mayor Quesada: So it's interesting from our perspective. We get a recommendation from staff, but every time we receive a recommendation related to anything, we have a report; we can read through it, we can understand the rationale behind it. When we look at this recommendation from staff and from the Board, it just gives us a list of organizations; it really doesn't tell us anything else. Like I see South Florida PBS, PBS the channel, what are they going to do with the \$2,700 that has been recommended? I know that there is part of the application process they say what they are going to use it for, because I remember we had an issue last year with an organization that did not carry out what they said they were going to do, which will remain nameless. However, the point is, if in the future –

Historical Resources Officer Spain: What we should put in for your....

Vice Mayor Quesada: The agenda packet – give us a little blurb on what Seraphic Fire is going to spend their \$6,600 – Seraphic Fire, you guys can summarize it. Are you going to use the \$6,600 for “X” event or “X” events, or something simple, so when we are getting ready for the meeting and we are getting ready for this, you have a picture. Like I see IlluminArts, how am I supposed to say yea or nay to IlluminArts the \$2,400? It could be an amazing organization we great to us, to me it means nothing.

Historical Resources Officer Spain: That would be easy to do.

Mayor Cason: And I've always had a problem with the money that we are giving to organizations that own their own, collect millions of dollars. I'm thinking of Fairchild, they have thousands of people. It's a great organization, we work with them on many things, but to give almost \$10,000 of our limited cultural money to an organization that's awash with money compared to some of the others, they are always here competing; they got squeezed out because they ran out of money.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes - \$9,900 could be whether they have an event or not.

Mayor Cason: Right.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Which would be something that would be great for the City.

Mayor Cason: I just think that the organizations that get the money should be Coral Gables, do things in Coral Gables. A lot of these, I don't know what they are, they are all over Miami-Dade.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So Mr. Mayor from a procedural standpoint, would you like me to withdraw this item, we can have an annotated listing of the programs, and then we can resubmit it at the next meeting?

Mayor Cason: Yes, I think – I want to hear the two people; we have two people from St. Patrick's, I think they were here last year as well didn't get funding, but I think in the end we gave them some funding by going back and relooking at the process, but let's hear from them and then I think we can hear a little bit more about what they are going to do with the money, why they got it, and if they want to reconsider any of their allocations based on what....

Commissioner Slesnick: As former Chair of the Cultural Affairs Board, I recognize and I respect the members and we really don't want people to come back and ask for more money after it's been decided by people that have reviewed all of these for hours and hours to go over the grants, and usurp somebody else's funds for other ones. However, I also agree with Vice Mayor Quesada that I went back and tried to find anything regarding discussion, so I'm getting all conversations that some people discussed like the St. Patrick's Day Festival were praised for the work that they do and the Bike Walk and so forth, and yet when the voting actually came they were ranked lower than anticipated for all the praise that they got at that meeting. Then the Bike Walk and the St. Patrick's Day Festival are two organizations that have been here for a long time in Coral Gables. They are free and open to the public and that makes a big difference to me. I love Fairchild, but you have to pay to get into Fairchild, and so they have funding for that, but the Bike Walk and the St. Patrick's Day Festival supply a lot of entertainment for the citizens to get out and it's just a nice cultural event. So maybe there could be some differentiation for those

that are open for the public where you don't have to pay. I noticed on the list three-fourths of those you have to buy tickets for the events or more; and maybe we could have another \$25,000 or more to put in the kitty next year.

Mayor Cason: And also, I think that some of the money, like for Fairchild, just goes to general operating expenses, not particular programs, is that correct, City Manager is that correct?

Commissioner Slesnick: We don't know.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: It is. It's a cultural development grant level which is general operating support. There are certain groups that are year-round organizations in Coral Gables and they are given at least in their recommendation, general operating support, so they can use it for whatever is appropriate for their operation. The other funding levels are for specific uses.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor if I may. For example, the \$10,000 for Fairchild; I enjoy Fairchild on a monthly basis, I'm a member there, and I would hate to take monies away from Fairchild, but your argument, your statement makes sense, especially with so many needy organizations that don't have an endowment similar to what Fairchild has and I think they have close to a thousand volunteers that work in that facility for free and give of their time. Maybe we can, I'm asking if this has ever been done, maybe we can ask Fairchild to spend that money to bring in students from Miami-Dade County Public Schools that don't have the necessary means to be exposed to such a beautiful facility like Fairchild Tropical Gardens. Again, I'm just speaking amongst us, I don't know, because the last thing I would want is for that money to go into General Fund and be used for salaries. Again, we are supporting Fairchild which is the right thing to do, but maybe we can allocate those monies to a....

Vice Mayor Quesada: Coral Gables Public Schools.

Commissioner Lago: Coral Gables Public Schools – I mean again, I would love to see a day like what Vice Mayor mentioned right now, maybe a day where Coral Gables schools get to enjoy Fairchild once, twice or three times a year, and that money is allocated to pay for the entrance fee for those young kids.

Commissioner Slesnick: Free admission.

Commissioner Lago: Yes, free admission, but again, they've got to cover tour guides. I know a lot of them are volunteers, but it still would be a good thing that those monies are used directly, we can pinpoint that those monies are used to educate the students of this community who live in our backyard on what is this great place that we have that we call Fairchild.

Commissioner Keon: I would through the Mayor, I don't really know what your criteria is as to who you fund and why you fund them. It could be that there is something in your criteria that asks that it be local, or that there be some local benefit, or it's a countywide benefit, I don't know that. So I think if you could just give us a quick summary of the criteria and what you are looking at, and then what the allocation is, and what it's for. It's not the whole length of all the criteria, but why this particular thing scored high. I mean I think as far as things that are paid admission, we fund Actor's Playhouse, we fund the Gables Stage, because we know that the ticket prices do not alone support these programs, you cannot support them on just the ticket price. So they do need additional funding in order for them to exist and to be available and to bring that experience to our community, so the fact that you pay to get in is fine. You know but, there are some of them that, if it's for a countywide purpose; the County has a very large cultural...so that's why I think it's important that you tell us that so when this item comes up that the public can also see it and we can express if asked about it that there is criteria for the local benefit and what the local benefit is; and so it's not really to undermine the work of the Cultural Grants Committee in any way, it's just to help them to ask them to share with us why that recommendation is what it is.

Commissioner Slesnick: And maybe on the report when the event is held and where it's held so that we know that they are in Coral Gables.

Mayor Cason: Let me ask before we, I guess we have a sentiment to defer this for next meeting and then come back with the information.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Yes or I can withdraw the item, but the staff has the information, it's a matter of putting it in the report. It is a very extensive application process, there are measured criteria and they'll communicate that as well as a snapshot of what is going – what the funding would result in. So we'll pull that from – we can defer it Mayor to the next meeting or I'd rather just withdraw it and resubmit it in the agenda process.

Mayor Cason: And before we do that let's ask Noel Stillings and Charles Davis that wanted to say something about the St. Patrick's and then we'll move onto C-7.

Ms. Stillings: Good morning, thank you Commissioners, my name is Noel Stillings, I believe I sent you a letter on this, again I'm here for the same time that I was here last year and we did not get scores to merit funding. The only things that I'd like to emphasize besides what I put in my letter is that we still don't know why we are not worthy of funding. As the Vice Mayor points out the meeting minutes are a little sparse in detail, but our President Charlie Davis who was there can tell you that they did ask, one of the Board Members did ask for a long time about what

we do. Mr. explained we got pretty much 6 hours of free entertainment put on to the Public. We are a very small grant funded organization, we cannot compete with Fairchild, but we were just hoping we can get some type of a grant funding so we can continue to put on the festival, and after Mr. Davis explained what we do at the Festival, that we have been in Coral Gables a long time; the Panel Members seemed to satisfied with that, but did not add any additional recommendations for us to improve, more ideas for us to any things differently, and they did not change their score, so we did not get the funding, because we had a low score, we still would like to put this Festival in the Gables and we respectfully ask either at this meeting or if it comes back that we do get granted our grant funding.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Mr. Davis: Hello City Commissioners, City Attorney, City Manager, thanks for having us. As you know, you've had this festival in Coral Gables for almost 15 years and it's been funded before. I did go to this meeting and one of the gentlemen who ranked us lowest asked us some questions and I got some very good feedback from it, but during that process and it's not reflected in those minutes, because that part is not there; every organization that was there was given an opportunity to answer questions that the Board members had. Once those questions were answered, the question was asked to the Board; does anyone want to change their scores? - and no one changed their scores after any of the comments. So they went there and held that meeting and had no change of heart or change of mind, they were set in what they were going to do; and your right to us we have a \$28-\$30,000 budget, all those funds are raised, are event is truly a non-profit event. We are not raising money for a charity; we are raising money to put on the event, so that we can put it on next year and put it on again. We have six hours of free entertainment of Irish entertainment. It's as cultural as you can get. One of the gentlemen said he thought there was a lot of drinking that goes on. Are bar tab at the end of the event is about \$700. When you've got 3,500 to 5,000 people there, \$700 buck is not a lot of money, there is not a lot of drinking going on, it's a family event. And there are some new, not regulations, but just criteria that has come about that has actually raised our expenses, we have to have and a lot of that I am going to work out with City staff and we can work through some of those new requirements, so that we can make it affordable and have it. We don't know why we are being funded. There was one grant committee member that made some comments that were very positive – it's a great event, so we don't have any negative comments, we just have some good ones that we answered in our questions and everybody was happy, and we still didn't meet the criteria.

Mayor Cason: Cathy maybe it would be at the very least worthwhile for the committee to say why they didn't approve.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We'll have an annotated report submitted at the next meeting.

Mayor Cason: That will help answer the questions why they did not approve certain groups.

Mr. Davis: Thanks for your time.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Thank you. I don't know if that's necessary, I don't want this to take forever either to get this done.

Mayor Cason: There are only five, I think, that didn't get out of the group.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: It's a very painful process for the Board, they work really hard.

Historical Resources Officer Spain: There were actually ten. There were ten organizations that weren't funded this year, and I just need to say as far as the St. Patrick's Day not being funded, there were four organizations that weren't funded that were higher in ranking than they were, and that's after being lowered to 77 instead of the 80. That was typically done. For your information. We'll have all that information next...

Mayor Cason: Alright. Let's bring it back then, you'll withdraw it and then bring it back. Thank you.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm withdrawing it. Thank you sir.

[End: 10:13:22 a.m.]