

**CITY OF CORAL GABLES  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Minutes of May 15, 2014**

<b>Members</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>M</b>	
<b>Herb Levin</b> Liana Perez	+	+	+	+	P	P	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	<b>Mayor Jim Cason</b>
<b>Luba De Witt</b> Sam Joseph	x	*	*	*	E	P	*	A	P	P	E	P	A	<b>Commissioner Pat Keon</b> Commissioner Maria Anderson
<b>Les Pantin III</b> Carlos Perea	x	*	*	*	P	P	*	P	A	P	P	E	P	<b>Commissioner Vince Lago</b> Comm. Ralph Cabrera Jr.
<b>Jerry Santeiro</b> (deceased)	x	*	*	+										<b>Comm. Frank C. Quesada</b>
<b>Connie Crowther</b> David Stiefel	x	*	*	+	P	P	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	<b>Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk</b>

\* No meetings

x No quorum

+ Resigned

**Staff in attendance:**

Maria Rosa Higgins Fallon, Public Affairs Manager

**Guests:**

Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Historical Resources Department

Alfredo V. Pereira, Constituent Affairs Specialist, Miami-Dade County, Office of the Mayor

The meeting came to order at 9:30 a.m.

Approval of minutes

The minutes from the April meeting were circulated for approval.

**Motion: Les Pantin motioned to approve the April meeting minutes. Connie Crowther seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

Historical Resources

Higgins Fallon introduced Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Historical Resources Department. Her department identifies and designates historic properties in the City, which includes residential and commercial properties. Her department also oversees the historically designated City properties such as the Venetian Pool, the Merrick House, City Hall, among others, and oversees Pinewood Cemetery located on Sunset Road and the Merrick House which is a house museum. They are also responsible for City archives and historic collection such as photographs, street signs, or light posts. Her office is located on the second floor of the Coral Gables Museum. They also do permits on daily basis, and inspections of historic properties. There are 22 historic districts in Coral Gables.

Kautz wanted to present a couple of projects that may be of interest to the Communications Committee. Coral Gables was awarded a grant from Miami-Dade County to restore single homes in the MacFarlane District in 2004, from which only three homes could be completed

because of the restoration expense. There are many more homes in this district that are still in need of restoration.

Kautz indicated that the MacFarlane area is the only local district that is nationally registered as a historic district. It is the section south of US1, off Grant Avenue, which has homes with Bahamian type of architecture. The City has lost already four homes in that small area due to years of delayed maintenance and this creates an enormous problem for historic preservation.

Through the Building Better Communities Bond, and with the assistance of County Commissioner Suarez, the City has just received another gift of more than \$500,000 to restore additional homes in the MacFarlane District. This funding is estimated to assist in the restoration of another seven homes. These homes need to be single family owner occupied with free and clear ownership. Kautz said that her department will manage the project with the assistance of Public Works.

Crowther added that the MacFarlane District provides an important link to the history of Coral Gables. When George Merrick was a boy, he worked in the farm with young Bahamian men from the Coconut Grove area who had migrated from the Bahamas. Merrick considered these Bahamian workers his best friends. Some of the homes in the area today are in terrible shape.

Kautz said that there are 35 homes in this district, mostly built in the 1930s and early 1940s and is one of the most unique parts of Coral Gables. Her department hopes with this funding to help stabilize these properties in need of restoration.

Crowther said that around World War II, America sent all his young men to war and the Bahamians had a contract to come to our country and work with the American government to help built communities and do the job that our people could not do. Some of the Bahamians went back, but some stayed and settled here. This is how the Bahamian American community was born in this country.

Kautz also said that these homes in the MacFarlane District are family homes that have been passed from generation to generation. Crowther agreed that some pillars of the community like Leona Cooper and Leona Cooper Baker are very involved with this community.

Kautz indicated that the MarFarlane District home renovation project needs to be completed in about two years. They are very excited about this project. Dona Spain is working on getting the construction company selected through a public process, but it may be a good idea to also get materials and services donated through additional community involvement to stretch the funding received from the County.

Crowther suggested fundraising opportunities. Kautz suggested the involvement of key organizations such as the Villagers or the Historic Preservation Association and she will follow up on this.

Chairperson Levin suggested also doing a documentary about the history of the homes. Higgins Fallon agreed that this was a great idea.

Crowther also suggested getting local architects involved, through the AIA (American Institute of Architects). She also said that Arva Moore Parks gives an interesting lecture about the Bahamian contribution to the City's history which may make a good Coral Gables Museum lecture.

Les Pantin also suggested doing a walking tour around MacFarlane with the assistance of Dr. Paul George.

Levin asked if these homes were built with Dade County pine? Kautz said yes. Levin also asked what are the responsibilities with the Merrick House? Kara replied that they oversee the maintenance, provide tours, and coordinate special events such as the Sundays on the Porch with George.

Crowther added that as a matter of personal interest, when she came to the City she noticed the 65 street lights originally designed in 1920 by Denman Fink. They need to be restored and kept for posterity or recreated.

Kara replied that the City does not own the street lights; FPL does. She has provided a quote to purchase them but has not received confirmation. She will follow up on this request.

**Motion: Connie Crowther motioned to rejuvenate the effort to have the City of Coral Gables acquire and restore, in whatever way is deemed best by historic preservation, the Denman Fink-designed, 1925-era street lights in the Riviera District. Les Pantin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

Chairperson Levin also asked Kautz if her department also follows up on applications for historic designation? Kautz said yes, they do. She explained the process of the historic tax abatement.

Communications Committee members thanked Kara Kautz for her attendance and participation.

### Projects & Events

Higgins Fallon briefly updated members of the following projects:

- The reopening of Ingraham Park to take place on Sunday, May 18 at 10 a.m. All members are invited.
- Cuba Libre Block Party on Friday, May 16
- Gables Bike Tour on Sunday, May 18

### CGTV

Higgins Fallon showcased a recent *NewsDesk* produced in Spanish. Members suggested lowering the volume of the music during the report. Higgins will pass on the suggestion to CGTV.

Pantin introduced Alfredo Pereira, Constituent Affairs Specialist for Miami-Dade County. He will be a liaison for the County and will be attending upcoming City Commission meetings. He grew up in Coral Gables.

Higgins Fallon also distributed the latest e-News issue. With no further issues to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.