

City of Coral Gables

405 Biltmore Way
Coral Gables, FL 33134
www.coralgables.com



Meeting Minutes

Friday, September 16, 2022

8:30 AM

Draft Minutes

Police and Fire Headquarters, Community Meeting Room

School Community Relations Committee

Chairperson Ariel Fernandez
Vice Chairperson Sam Joseph
Board Member Erin Anding
Board Member Dr. Winnie Chang
Board Member Sandy Dimitris
Board Member Carmen Manrara Cartaya
Board Member Cecilia D. Slesnick
Board Member Jennifer Ward Sando
Board Member Sharon Watson

The School Community Relations Committee will be holding its Regular Meeting on Friday, September 16, 2022, commencing at 8:30 a.m. While the Committee is back to live in-person meetings, members of the public may participate in person but are also able to participate via the Zoom platform. Members of the public may join the meeting via Zoom at (<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83893614478>). In addition, a dedicated phone line will be available so that any individual who does not wish (or is unable) to use Zoom may listen to and participate in the meeting by dialing: 305-461-6769 Meeting ID: 838 9361 4478.

To speak on an Agenda Item, please "Raise your Hand" or send a message to one of the meeting hosts using the Zoom Platform. If you joined the meeting via telephone, you can "Raise your Hand" by pressing *9.

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:35 a.m.

ROLL/QUORUM CALL

Present: 8 - Slesnick, Dimitris, Joseph, Chang, Chairperson Fernandez, Manrara Cartaya, Anding and Board Member Ward Sando

Absent: 1 - Watson

A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

School Community Relations Committee Meeting of August 19, 2022.

Attachments: [Cover Memo](#)
[Draft Aug. 19 SCRC Minutes](#)

Minutes approved.

Yeas: 5 - Slesnick, Chang, Chairperson Fernandez, Anding and Board Member Ward Sando

Absent: 4 - Watson, Dimitris, Joseph and Manrara Cartaya

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Daniel Stankiewicz – PTA Capital Improvement Chair at Carver Elementary.

Mr. Stankiewicz provided the board with an update on current projects at Carver Elementary stating that phase one is moving forward with improvements on the fence, front gate and roof. Mr. Stankiewicz also stated he was unsure of what phase two entails.

April Jones – Coral Gables Preparatory Academy on behalf of the PTA.

Ms. Jones stated that school improvement projects have stalled stating that the PTA has not received updates since May. Ms. Jones also requested that the PTA be provided with a point person and timeline for the repairs.

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas provided Ms. Jones with the name Raul Perez who oversees projects for the School District. School Board Member Rojas stated she is aware of the Coral Gables Preparatory Academy upcoming centennial celebration.

School Board Member Rojas informed the Board of a meeting that occurred where schools were invited to discuss maintenance and capital improvement projects. The School Board Member stated that updates regarding capital improvement projects such as exterior painting, historical windows and the auditorium at Coral Gables Preparatory Academy, were provided to the school's administration. The School Board Member also informed the SCRC of delays that have occurred due to lack of human capital, material delays and having to rebid projects. School Board Member Rojas further informed the SCRC that air-conditioning is also a concern being addressed at Coral Gables Prep. Stating that historically the school had issues with the system cooling after being shut off over the weekends, the School Board Member stated she brought up this item at Committee and continues to follow-up.

Board Member Carmen Manrara Cartaya requested an update regarding the air-conditioner at Sunset Elementary. The School Board Member informed the Board Member that she has visited the school to discuss this issue with the principal and that an update will be provided via email.

Vice Chairperson Samuel Joseph brought up the issue of information dissemination to parents and PTAs.

Vice Chairperson Joseph also requested an update regarding Phillips Park. The Vice Chairperson further mentioned that the park is used as the school's physical education field.

Naomi Levi Garcia provided the requested update regarding the renovation of the park stating that the project is still a year and a half away from starting and that a complete renovation of the park is to be expected. Mrs. Levi Garcia also stated that the City conducted legal research to determine ownership of the land currently in use by the Upper Academy, concluded it is city-owned and the City is working with the School District. Mrs. Levi Garcia further stated that the City may look into phasing renovation or assisting with the search of an alternative field for physical education.

Mitchell Zuriarrain from the Community Recreation Department informed the SCRC that the only action that has taken place regarding Phillips Park was a meeting to garner community input for a grant pursuit.

Board Member Cecilia Slesnick suggested the city write the editor of the Coral

Gables Magazine urging the publication to highlight public schools.

Board Member Sandy Dimitris informed the SCRC of a few issues at Carver Middle School, one of which is security, stating that she had recently volunteered at the school and had walked right in. Board Member Dimitris also stated that Carver does not have a full-time nurse and requested an update regarding a bathroom under construction. Board Member Dimitris also stated that she has emailed the principal regarding the issues mentioned above with no response stating that multiple websites have different emails for the principal.

School Board Member Rojas responded to Board Member Dimitris' concerns stating that she will ensure a meeting between the principal and board member occurs to address the security issue. The School Board Member stated that Carver Middle School has a nurse on campus three days a week but due to human capital shortage the nurse is at a different school the remaining two days of the week. To address the maintenance issue the School Board Member will invite the Chief Maintenance Officer Karl Niccolo and Chief Facilities Officer Raul Perez to the SCRC to discuss schools in the Coral Gables area.

Estelle Lockhart – Vice President of Advocacy and Community Relations for Carver Elementary PTA.

Ms. Lockhart was following up regarding a School Safety workshop which was scheduled to take place in June. Chairperson Ariel Fernandez informed Ms. Lockhart of the discussion that took place at the August SCRC meeting where both the Miami-Dade County Public School Chief of Police and Coral Gables Chief of Police had addressed security topics. Chairperson Fernandez also informed Ms. Lockhart that she could view the discussion online. Ms. Lockhart stated that she had watched the August SCRC meeting, and all the information provided was in regard to planning for after a tragedy while her question was regarding what initiatives were being rolled out to prevent a tragedy.

C. NEW BUSINESS

C-1 Miami-Dade County Public Schools Update (Facilitated by Mari Tere Rojas, School Board Member)

School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas expressed to the SCRC that safety and security are the School Board Member's top priority, stating that she has proffered over 20 school board items related to the topic some of which are confidential. The School Board Member addressed Ms. Lockhart's concern by stating that the School District has a myriad of protocols in place to attempt to prevent a tragedy from occurring. The School Board Member also stated that a district wide safety and security meeting is held on a continuing basis with various community stakeholders to discuss and address school safety.

School Board Member Rojas addressed an item brought up during the August SCRC meeting - parochial schools offering teachers lifesaving training and the SCRC suggestion to the M-DC Schools to do the same. The School Board Member informed the SCRC of an item she proffered in 2018 called Stop the Bleed, which would train teachers and students to perform life-saving skills. The School Board member stated that the City of Miami Beach funded kits in schools in their municipalities. Chairperson Winnie Chang informed the SCRC and the School Board Member of the Stop the Bleed the app, which is free and easy to use, as it guides the user on what to do during an emergency.

Board Member Sandy Dimiris inquired about the teacher shortage. Board Member Mari Tere Rojas stated that personnel shortage is a big concern for the district. Further stating that the district has positions open and is implementing initiatives to fill said positions. School Board Member Rojas attributed compensation as a big factor for the lack of human capital causing the School District to lose teachers to other professions. The School Board Member also stated that most of the district's schools are fully staffed but the district has deficits in certain subjects. School Board Member also stated that substitute teachers and interventionists are areas of concern.

School Board Member informed the SCRC of her upcoming District 6 Townhall meeting regarding the GOB referendum which will take place at Coral Gables High School's auditorium on Oct. 11, 2022, from 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM.

Board Member Winnie Chang raised the concern of a bell schedule modification that School Board Member had no updates at this time, but she will follow up.

C-2 Election of SCRC Chairperson

Board Member Dimitris nominated Board Member Chang for the position of Chairperson. Current Chairperson Fernandez seconds the nomination. The motion passed by the following vote. Dr. Winnie Chang is elected the new Chairperson of the School Community Relations Committee.

Yeas: 7 - Slesnick, Joseph, Chang, Chairperson Fernandez, Manrara Cartaya, Anding and Board Member Ward Sando

Absent: 2 - Watson and Dimitris

C-3 Election of SCRC Vice Chairperson

Chairperson Fernandez nominates Vice Chairperson Joseph to continue in the position as Vice Chairperson. Board Member Manrara Cartaya nominates Board Member Dimitris. Neither nomination is seconded and the item is deferred to the Oct. 21 meeting.

C-4 Approval of 2021-2022 SCRC Annual Report

Attachments: [Draft SCRC Annual Report 2021-2022](#)

A motion was made by Vice Chairperson Joseph, seconded by Board Member Slesnick, that this matter be approved. The motion passed by the following vote.

Yeas: 7 - Joseph, Chang, Chairperson Fernandez, Manrara Cartaya, Anding, Slesnick and Board Member Ward Sando

Absent: 2 - Watson and Dimitris

C-5 Presentation on Cultural Passport program by the Coral Gables Art Cinema (Facilitated by Brenda Moe, Executive Director - Art Cinema)

Item deferred to future meeting.

D. OLD BUSINESS

D-1 Gables Family Literacy Festival Post Event Wrap-Up and Future Planning (Facilitated by Mitchell Zuriarrain, Community Recreation Administrative Operations Supervisor)

Mitchell Zuriarrain from the City of Coral Gables' Community Recreation Department provided the SCRC with an update on the Family Literacy Festival, stating that the festival which occurred on May 28 was very successful. Further stating that 55 vendors contributed to the event and an estimated 2,000 participants attended. Mr. Zuriarrain stated he does not see the event growing due to the hosting neighborhood's wishes. Mr. Zuriarrain informed the board of 2023's Family Literacy Festival which is currently schedule for May 27, 2023 - Memorial Day weekend.

Vice Chairperson Joseph, expressed his desire to have full participation from the school community within Coral Gables and the future involvement of local private book sellers and businesses. Vice Chairperson, expressed his concern regarding the scheduling of the event during a holiday, stating he has encountered people who would have liked to participate but were out of town. Mr. Zuriarrain replied to the Vice Chairperson's concerns on the timing of the event stating that the event provides families with an event within the city during the holiday weekend.

Board Member Cecilia Slesnick suggested working alongside the Coral Gables Branch Library to expand event and moving book readings to inside the library, in order for the children to be within an air-conditioned space. Board Member Slesnick also stated that consistency is key when it comes to events, if the event is consistently hosted during Memorial Day weekend people know exactly when the event is hosted.

Vice Chairperson Joseph expressed the option of expanding the event to a second day to be focused solely on educators via a parade and awards celebration which could possibly be hosted at the Country Club. Board Member Cecilia Slesnick agreed with the Vice Chairperson for an event to kick off event for the literacy festival and invite all stakeholders.

School Board Member Rojas echoed the concerns of some of the SCRC Board members regarding the timing of the event due to school stakeholders being on vacation during Memorial Day Weekend and praised the idea of recognizing school staff from instructional to support staff.

E. ONGOING BUSINESS

E-1 General Updates (Facilitated by Naomi Levi-Garcia, Staff Liaison & Solanch Lopez, Secretary)

Update provide on the start of Project Victory at City Hall. Students are doing an amazing job.

F. ANNOUNCEMENTS

F-1 Next SCRC Meeting - Friday, October 21, 2022

Questions/Comments: scrc@coralgables.com

F-2 Join a local PTA or subscribe to their newsletters using the following links:

- F-3 Park(ing) Day - Sept. 16, 2022
- F-4 International Coastal Cleanup 2022 - Sept. 17, 2022 | 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- F-5 My Squad - Movie in the Park - Sept. 20, 2022 | 6 to 9 p.m.
- F-6 Paws in the Pool - Oct. 2, 2022 | 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- F-7 Lamar Louise Curry Park Ribbon Cutting - Oct. 15, 2022 | 5 to 7 p.m.
- F-8 My Squad - Saturday Splash - Oct. 15, 2022 | 12 to 3 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

NOTE