

**CITY OF CORAL GABLES
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COORDINATING COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting of October 18, 2011

Members:	S	A	J	J	M	A	M	F	J	D	N	O	Commissioners
Carolina Rendeiro	P	P	E	P	P	P	X	P	E	X	P	P	Comm. Maria Anderson
Nancy Sanabria	P	P	E	P	P	P	X	P	P	X	P	E	Comm. Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera Jr.
Steve Edelstein	E	P	P	P	P	E	X	P	P	X	P	P	Vice-Mayor William H. Kerdyk
Lourdes Cuzan	P	P	P	P	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	P	Mayor Jim Cason
David Duckenfield	P	P	P	P	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	P	Comm. Frank Quesada
Art DeNunzio	P	P	P	P	E	P	X	P	P	X	E	E	Patrick Salerno, City Manager
Paul Posnak	P	P	P	E	P	P	X	P	P	X	P	P	Council-at-Large Appointment

Ex Officio:

Marco Ibarra

Business Affiliation:

Vice Chair, Int'l. Division, CGCC

A = Absent
P = Present
E = Excused
X = No Meeting

Staff in Attendance:

Evelyn Paz, Secretary, IACC

Guest:

Claudio Ramirez, Consul and Trade Commissioner/Investment, Consulate General of Canada

Georgette Pepper, Academic and Cultural Relations Officer, Consulate General of Canada

Chairperson Carolina Rendeiro called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion was made by Lourdes Cuzan to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 20, 2011. David Duckenfield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mr. Edelstein began the meeting by reporting on Aix-en-Provence, France. Mr. Edelstein met with French representatives beginning on September 1, 2011. He says they raised several issues which they wanted him to cover and that they took copious notes which they subsequently sent him. Copies of the notes were distributed to all board members. *See notes from Aix-en-Provence.* They indicated that they would like to have information provided to them before the Christmas market in order to organize a delegation of about 20 people for the opening of the Sister City exhibit at the museum. They would also like an itinerary plan which is to include hotel prices and activities and events we would have planned for them. His meeting included the president and the executive representative from the Jumellas and also a representative from the Mayor's office. They were also very interested in setting up student exchanges; they discussed various potential age groups including college-aged students. Mr. Edelstein also mentioned the French International Program in South Dade which is fully accredited by the French government and the Florida

Department of Education. They asked for more information about these exchanges. The last item they discussed was the economic delegation that was cancelled due to the Icelandic eruptions. They wanted to know if there was any possibility it would occur this year. These were the main issues the representatives were interested in during their meetings with Mr. Edelstein.

Ms. Rendeiro asked if there is a set date for this spring. Mr. Edelstein said there wasn't. Last time he spoke with Ms. Parker from the museum he got the impression that Ms. Rendeiro was awaiting more information from the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Edelstein advised that the board plan the event for the end of April or beginning of May, after the high season, so the prices of hotels will be more economical. To reiterate, Mr. Edelstein said the French representatives would like to get information by the day after Thanksgiving.

Ms. Rendeiro said she will be going to France in June with the Beacon Council and that may be something the Chamber wants to piggy-back on.

Mr. Posnak thanked Mr. Edelstein for his presentation and discussed his own experiences teaching in a conservatory in France. He said if we host students from Aix he can definitely arrange for some topnotch musical performances for them.

Mr. Edelstein said Caroline Parker, the Director of Program for the Coral Gables Museum, wants the board to decide on dates as soon as possible so that the museum can block out dates because their calendar is filling. Ms. Rendeiro said she and Marco Ibarra have been on it but the issue is trying to work around everyone's schedules and seeing when people are doing the Consulate Corps etc. She said, between October and April there are events nonstop. She said if we highlight our Sister Cities at the museum event the Consulate Corps will feel comfortable in attending.

Mr. Posnak reported he did not have additional information on the International Festival. He again emphasized that one easy segment of the festival will be getting some of our top students to knock their socks off with a musical performance.

FRIENDSHIP CITIES:

Ms. Rendeiro reports that she received an email from Mr. Roy Gonas a Coral Gables lawyer, interested in looking at a Sister City in the Ukraine. The Mayor and Ms. Rendeiro explained to him that the board has already approved two Sister Cities but can consider Friendship Cities. Ms. Rendeiro would like to table this topic for the next meeting because a lot of board members are not present. She said as always, people are asking us to consider new Friendship Cities; they pop up on a weekly or daily basis. She advises them to put their requests in writing at which point she can bring it up to the board and follow the proper procedure.

SISTER CITY REPORTS:

Ms. Rendeiro updates the board on Curitiba, Brazil. Mayor Cason has extended a letter in Portuguese to Brazil and the Mayor of Curitiba is very happy to have us on board. The only thing is that the City of Orlando has to approve it because they were the first Florida City to have Curitiba as a Sister City. They approved Jacksonville so she does not foresee a problem with getting the approval for Coral Gables. She informed the board that Jacksonville and Orlando see the Sister City program as more of a business opportunity than an opportunity for cultural education so they will likely be happy to have Coral Gables as a Sister City to Curitiba because it will benefit trade between Brazil and the state of Florida. Ms. Cuzan thinks it will be great for Florida strategically because the state will have a relationship with Curitiba from the north to the south.

Ms. Rendeiro brings Mr. Ibarra up to speed on the dos and don'ts of the Sunshine Law. She tells him all board members should channel through Evelyn Paz on all IACC issues.

Ms. Rendeiro reports that Mr. DeNunzio e-mailed from Italy on his meeting with the Mayor. Although he doesn't have good internet connection he was able to send a short message. *See message from Art DeNunzio.* Ms. Sanabria was also unable to attend today's meeting and sent her Sister City Report via e-mail. *See message from Nancy Sanabria.* Ms. Rendeiro was in La Antigua, Guatemala a few weeks ago, and the tourism is amazing. She says it's like a little Utopia compared to Guatemala City, although they are only forty minutes apart.

Ms. Cuzan had a call from Dunia Miranda-Mauri the Trade Commissioner of Guatemala and informed her she was meeting with the honorary Consul General of La Antigua and was concerned about a rumor going around that Coral Gables is going to terminate its Sister City relationship with La Antigua. Ms. Cuzan told her she had heard the rumor but that it was completely untrue and to the contrary the City is very much interested in maintaining that relationship. Ms. Cuzan asked that the board do what it can to diffuse this rumor.

Mr. Duckenfield asked if the board discussed Granada in its last meeting. Ms. Cuzan says she brought up the Spain Florida Foundation and provided literature on the organization. She stated that becoming involved with this organization would be a great link to Granada, Spain. Furthermore, they have been scheduled to attend the November 15th, board meeting. Ms. Rendeiro said she is going to reach out to Granada one more time possibly through Mayor Cason. Mr. Duckenfield said his next door neighbor is from Granada, Spain and her mom knows the Mayor very well. Her take was that politically he cannot come over here unless it's under a business pretense. The board says if that was the issue it would be easily accommodated. Ms. Rendeiro said the issue was the Mayor of Granada wanted to fly first class, so we got him first class tickets, then he wanted to come during Art Basel, but we couldn't get him accommodations at the Biltmore during Art Basel or anywhere else for that matter. She said maybe we can get him here through the Spain Florida Foundation but the fact remains we went out of our way to get him the airline tickets and they were never used.

Ms. Cuzan has nothing to report on Cartagena, she is sorry to say that she has not heard from anyone at the City Manager's office. It's still unclear exactly what is happening with the Shoes sculpture.

Ms. Rendeiro informs the board that the Miami Today's newspaper has provided some publicity to City Hall and the Sister City program. Next she introduces Mr. Claudio Ramirez the Consul and Trade Commissioner, Consulate General of Canada.

Claudio Ramirez gave a brief introduction of himself; he has worked at the Consul General's Office for three years and prior to that worked at the embassy. Most of his responsibilities are on the business development side of things. He gave a brief overview of Canada's relationship with Florida in terms of trade, tourism, policing, and border protection.

The board members introduced themselves to Mr. Ramirez one by one and everyone exchanged business cards. Following intros Mr. Ramirez asked how the board came to select Quebec City as a Sister City. Ms. Rendeiro said it was based on a few factors. She said, we always get requests because everyone wants to be Sister Cities with Coral Gables. She said, we look at the cultural and educational side of it and then at the business component. Canada is one of our largest trade partners, that was a huge factor but we were also interested in finding a city that was more in tune with the culture and arts scene like Coral Gables. She said there are just so many reasons including the relationship that we have with the Canadian Consulate down here.

Mr. Ramirez asked if there was one particular champion in the group who really wanted Quebec City. Ms. Rendeiro said it was pretty much a consensus to choose Quebec City and it was approved by the Commission. Mr. Ramirez asked how close is the Mayor's office to the IACC board. He asked because in his experience, if the Sister City Organization is too separate from the Mayor's Office there is difficulty garnering support for agreements made between Sister Cities. On the other hand, if the two offices are too close then when there is a change in government the Sister City relationships tend to fall apart because the new Mayor wants to pursue his own avenues.

Ms. Rendeiro said both our last mayor and our present mayor believe in the Sister City program focus. Maybe more so even with Mayor Cason being a former ambassador and really understanding the Foreign Service. Ms. Rendeiro said we don't have money to operate the program so we form relationships with the Chamber of Commerce and other groups in order to have support for events and other things. Mayor Cason is quite open to new businesses and relationships on an international level. Ms. Cuzan said a sister City has never been dropped because of political reasons. Mr. Ramirez said he was actually alluding more to neglect than anything else. He said JFK put it best on his trip to Canada in 1961 when he said, "geography made us neighbors, history made us friends, necessity made us allies, and economy made us partners." He also pointed out that when Canadians visit the U.S. they are not referred to as foreigners but as Canadians, and the same is true when Americans visit Canada. This small nuance is a testament to the kind of relationship between our countries.

Mr. Ramirez began his presentation on Quebec City. Quebec City is the capital of the province of Quebec. It is like Montreal's little sister but it's actually doing much better than Montreal right now economically and culturally. Quebec means, "Where the river narrows" and is one of the oldest cities in North America. It celebrated its 400th birthday in 2008. His presentation to the board included a map, the coat of arms, statistics, and pictures. The slogan on the coat of arms translates to "I shall put G-d's gift to good use" which shows the Christian undertone of the history of Quebec and its aspirations.

Quebec City has always been a government city, which provides a strong bulwark against recessions. But it has also become so much more than just a city of bureaucrats. Mr. Ramirez went over the business centers that make up Quebec including Insurance, life sciences, and the food industry; he also emphasized the three T's "technology, talent and tolerance". The City has one of the highest educated labor forces in Canada, highest concentration of research spending per capita, and is home to many universities. Its large international airport is probably one of the reasons Ft. Lauderdale is interested in becoming Sister Cities with Quebec as well. But Mr. Ramirez doesn't think this will affect Coral Gables' chances of forging a Sister City relationship with Quebec City.

Ms. Rendeiro asked if Quebec Invest has had an influence on the City's growth over the past few years. Mr. Ramirez said Quebec Invest is the equivalent to Enterprise Florida and Quebec International is the equivalent to the Beacon Council; they both have a deliberate method of attracting foreign business into the Province. He observed that Canada has a great story to tell right now, this year Canada was number one in Forbes ranking for best country for business (the U.S. was number ten). Mr. Ramirez said it's a myth that Quebec City is very bureaucratic and Canada is just a socialist country.

He continued speaking to Ms. Rendeiro and said, to answer your question, these organizations really created the right environment for companies to grow. For example one of the reasons Quebec is a hot bed for the gaming industry is that programmers and software creators are not just nerds, otherwise companies would just go to India and have everything done for a lower cost. Instead they are artists who are looking for quality of life and that is something Quebec City can offer. Mr. Ramirez continues to go through the accolades of Quebec and ends the slideshow with a picture of Quebec's Mayor.

The board ends Mr. Ramirez's visit by discussing the next step in the Sister City program and thanking him for his time and presentation.

The board unanimously agreed that it is now time to get the ball rolling on the Sister City paperwork for Quebec City.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS:

The next meeting is scheduled for November 15, 2011.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Evelyn Paz

Secretary, International Affairs Coordinating Council