

City of Coral Gables

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



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 9, 2025

8:15 AM

<https://coralgables.zoom.us/j/89943974263>

Youth Center - Conference Room

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:20 a.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Jennifer Marques
Vanessa Gutierrez
Erik Rodriguez
Michelle White

Absent:

Maite Halley - excused
Richard Smit - excused

Attended Through Zoom:

Kirk Menendez - excused, attended via zoom

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The quorum was not met. Approval of the August, September, and October Parks Advisory Board minutes will be deferred to the next meeting.

DIRECTORS REPORT

a. General Updates

Assistant Director Pichardo provided an update on the Coral Gables Country Club. He announced that Lorena Silva has been hired as the new Country Club Director, returning to the City after previously serving as Venue Manager. Staff and members have responded positively to her leadership. Assistant Director Pichardo also noted that Carlos Llompert, longtime Fitness and Pool Manager, has resigned, with his last day scheduled for the upcoming Friday. Recruitment for his replacement is underway, with interest from internal candidates. The position will remain open for two weeks to attract additional applicants with both fitness and aquatic experience.

Assistant Director Pichardo continued by updating the board on contracting and procurement processes for City recreation programs. The department is implementing RFPs (Requests for Proposals) and RTQs (Requests to Qualify) to formalize agreements with high-performing instructors and vendors whose annual revenues exceed \$25,000. The new system is designed to allow popular programs—including theater, gymnastics, STEM, golf, and fitness classes—to continue uninterrupted while ensuring compliance with City spending limits.

The board discussed the need to update procurement thresholds, which have remained unchanged for decades, to better reflect current economic conditions. The RFP and RTQ process will also provide greater flexibility for citywide classes offered at the Youth Center, Country Club, Activity Center, and outdoor parks.

Director Couceyro reported that preparations for the Holiday Park will begin in November. This will be the final year of the park in its current format, as planning for next year's design is already underway. Given the subjective nature of design preferences, issuing a formal RFP is challenging. He noted that staff will meet with 10–12 vendors, typically selecting 2–3 who can provide interactive play elements.

b. Special Events

Aging Like a Pro Mastering Mindfulness Thursday, October 16th at 12:30 p.m., Esports Tournament Saturday, October 18th at 1 p.m., Pumpkin Patch Saturday, October 18th at 2 p.m., AAC Halloween Spooktacular Friday, October 24th at 1 p.m., Gentle Trick or Treat Friday, October 25th at 1 p.m., Country Club Pumpkin Float Saturday, October 26th at 6 p.m., and Nightmare at 405 Haunted House Friday, October 31st at 6:30 p.m.

c. C.I.P Updates

Assistant Director Espino provided an update on the department's ongoing Capital Improvement Program (C.I.P.). She reported that the City successfully met the September 30 deadline for state grant submissions, securing funding for Blue Road Park and Toledo/Dorothy Thomson Park. Each project received \$200,000 in matching funds, totaling \$400,000.

She further informed the board that construction at Phillips Park is expected to begin in November, with substantial completion targeted for spring 2026 and an anticipated opening in early summer 2026. Phase 1 will include the main turf field, playground, and utility upgrades, while Phase 2 will encompass the community center and splash pad.

Assistant Director Espino also noted that grant applications for Rotary and Cooper Parks have been submitted. Community outreach meetings revealed no opposition, and the City is awaiting confirmation regarding eligibility and funding.

Regarding park dedications. Assistant Director Espino shared that the City Commission approved the Blue Road Park dedication in honor of the David Lawrence family. Staff will coordinate with the family and the Communications Office to finalize the official naming language, with a tentative dedication ceremony planned for November 2025.

She also updated the board on Sergeant Enis Veterans Park, formerly Tiziano Park, located at 7700 Old Cutler Road. The park will be renamed and dedicated around Veterans Day (November 11 or 15, 2025). Coordination with the family is ongoing, and the Green Space Division will refresh landscaping, install a commemorative plaque, and review ADA compliance for new benches.

Board members emphasized the importance of maintaining the advisory board's historical role in reviewing and supporting park naming before City Commission approval. It was agreed that all future park naming proposals will be added to upcoming agendas for board discussion and recommendation.

Director Couceyro reported that renovations at Venetian Pool are progressing on schedule, with the facility's systems planned to be refilled and tested prior to December, targeting reopening to coincide with the City's Centennial Concert. He provided additional updates, noting that window replacement and pool deck improvements at the Coral Gables Country Club are underway, with completion anticipated in late 2026. The installation of a second emergency light pole at Maggiore Park, equipped with an AED and blue-button alert, is currently in progress.

Director Couceyro also shared that planning continues for future outdoor Le Park space designs at the Country Club, including the potential relocation of the Gondola Building near the Tennis Center to accommodate new pickleball courts and additional amenities.

NEW BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

a. Update on consideration of adopting a balloon and confetti release ban for pavilion rentals.

Director Couceyro updated the board on consideration of adopting a balloon and confetti release ban for pavilion rentals. He reported staff is in coordination with the Sustainability Department and the City Attorney's Office regarding a proposed ban on balloon and confetti releases for park rentals. The policy is intended to prioritize environmental safety and may include updates to park rental deposits or cleanup fees. Director Couceyro anticipates reviewing proposed ordinance or resolution language at an upcoming meeting.

b. Update on Halloween closure - North and South Greenway Drive.

Director Couceyro updated the board on Halloween street closures, noting that police coordination is ongoing to address potential closures based on neighborhood permit requests, including areas such as Santa Maria. The Coral Gables Police Department will implement street closures only if a neighborhood submits a permit request and covers the associated costs, including the hiring of off-duty officers.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Chairperson Marques noted that the board has experienced quorum issues over the past three meetings and requested that staff include a discussion of meeting dates and times on the agenda for next month's meeting.

Board Member White raised a recent safety concern at Salvador Park, where a child ran through a broken fence. Director Couceyro confirmed that repairs are currently underway and explained that repeated vehicle impacts have caused damage to the same section of the fence multiple times. Board Member White suggested the installation of signage to prevent vehicles from striking the fence, and Director Couceyro indicated that the suggestion will be taken into consideration.

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY

Next meeting date Thursday, November 13th at 8:15 AM

ADJOURNMENT

NOTE