

City of Coral Gables

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



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 12, 2026

8:15 AM

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

Youth Center - Conference Room

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Present:

Kirk Menendez
Richard Smit
Maite Halley
Jennifer Marquez
Michelle White

Absent:

Vanessa Gutierrez
Erik Rodriguez

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE JANUARY MEETING MINUTES WAS MADE BY BOARD MEMBER KIRK MENENDEZ AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER RICHARD SMIT. ALL IN FAVOR; PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

a. General Updates

Director Couceyro began his report by providing an update on recent staffing transitions within the Community Recreation Department. He shared that Norma Gavarrete, Manager of the Adult Activity Center, retired after nearly 30 years of service to the City. Director Couceyro explained that her decision was driven by family needs, including assisting with her family's business and supporting her parents. He noted that although she has stepped down from her managerial role, Ms. Gavarrete intends to remain involved by volunteering at the Adult Activity Center. Director Couceyro expressed appreciation for her longstanding dedication and leadership.

Director Couceyro reported that Greg Walters has been promoted to Manager of the Adult Activity Center. He explained that Mr. Walters recently participated in an interview process for a managerial position and ranked highly among candidates, reinforcing the Department's confidence in his leadership. Director Couceyro highlighted Mr. Walters' professional growth within the City, noting that he began as part-time staff and advanced through multiple roles before stepping into this leadership position.

He further reported that the Adult Activity Center supervisor position, now vacant due to the promotion, has been posted and interviews are anticipated shortly. Director Couceyro noted that seven internal candidates have applied, representing a range of classifications and experience levels. He commented that the Adult Activity Center remains a sought-after assignment due to its operational structure and programming pace.

Director Couceyro also shared that staff are working with the Senior Citizen Advisory Board to evaluate potential expansion of Adult Activity Center hours. He explained that there is interest in offering additional programming outside traditional operating hours to better serve residents who remain in the workforce. The Department will continue reviewing feasibility, including staffing and budget considerations.

He continued by outlining additional staffing changes across the Department. Katherine Diaz has been promoted into a managerial role, and interviews are underway to fill the resulting supervisor vacancy. Director Couceyro noted that while internal interest remains strong in many divisions, certain vacancies are also being opened to external candidates to broaden the pool.

At the Country Club fitness operation, Director Couceyro reported that following a retirement, Darren who previously served as Supervisor at Venetian Pool and most recently as Interim Manager has been selected as Fitness Manager. He stated that members responded positively to his interim leadership and that the transition has been well received. The vacancy at Venetian Pool has been filled by Oliver Robles, a long-standing employee with approximately ten years of service who is transitioning into a full-time supervisory role.

Board member Halley expressed appreciation for the Department's commitment to promoting from within and maintaining continuity across facilities.

Director Couceyro provided an update on active and upcoming Requests for Proposals (RFPs). He reported that the soccer RFP is being finalized and is expected to be released in the coming week following one final internal meeting. He emphasized that the RFP includes stronger safeguards and clearly defined operational parameters to ensure alignment with City standards and community expectations.

Director Couceyro explained that the Department will maintain centralized registration and administrative oversight through City systems, ensuring transparency and preventing outside payment arrangements. He acknowledged the Board's concerns regarding coaching quality and stated that staff are strengthening language requiring certification documentation and evaluating minimum qualification standards for head coaches.

Board members inquired about enforcement mechanisms should a provider violate contractual terms. Director Couceyro stated that staff are evaluating options beyond immediate contract termination, recognizing that canceling programs mid-season disrupts families and participants. He shared that a meeting with the City Manager's Office is scheduled to explore mitigation tools, including potential financial penalties or structured corrective measures that would protect participants while maintaining accountability.

Director Couceyro confirmed that the Department intends to move forward with a baseball RFP as well. He noted that expectations have been communicated clearly to current providers and that future agreements will establish defined limits regarding field usage, scheduling, and program scale. He emphasized that the City will retain approval authority over participation levels to ensure alignment with field capacity and community needs.

He further stated that additional RFPs are anticipated for art and dance programming. The dance program, in particular, will transition into a formal RFP process due to contract size and the Department's desire to reestablish clear structure and oversight.

Director Couceyro then addressed golf operations. He reported that staff are evaluating maintenance operations, capital needs, and potential structural changes to improve long-term sustainability. He explained that the current operational model has presented recruitment challenges, and the Department is exploring the possibility of transitioning to a management contract model. Director Couceyro indicated that he expects to present more definitive direction at an upcoming meeting.

He concluded this portion of his report by confirming that summer programming preparations and marketing coordination are progressing, with registration timelines

aligned with the Department's March Open House event.

b. Special Events

Director Couceyro reported that the Farmers Market continues to perform strongly, with consistent attendance and vendor participation. He noted that the addition of a mobile driver's license renewal service has significantly increased foot traffic, drawing residents who then remain to participate in the market.

He reviewed upcoming Valentine's Day programming, including recently completed cupcake decorating events and upcoming candle-making and fabric-painting workshops. Director Couceyro shared that Venetian Pool's "Romance Under the Stars" event on February 14 is sold out. He explained that the event was intentionally designed as an intimate experience with themed décor and table service, and staff will evaluate potential expansion in future years based on demand and budget.

Director Couceyro confirmed that the Daddy Daughter Dance is scheduled for February 20 at the Country Club and noted continued strong community interest. He also highlighted the Kids Club Parents' Night Out program Bike and BBQ, Wings for Wishes, Moda Miami and Carnival on the Mile.

Board Members asked about programming during private school breaks, Director Couceyro stated that staff will review feasibility and staffing considerations to determine whether expanded offerings are possible.

He reminded the Board of the upcoming community meeting regarding the proposed dog park at 520 University Drive, scheduled for February 19 at 6:00 p.m. Director Couceyro explained that the meeting will follow a structured format similar to Commission public comment procedures, including speaker sign-in, time limits, and recorded input. Feedback will remain open for a two-week period, after which staff will compile comments and present them to the City Commission for consideration.

c. C.I.P Updates

Director Couceyro provided updates on several capital projects. He reported that the final mechanical component at Venetian Pool, including pump work, is scheduled to begin shortly, and staff will evaluate an appropriate recognition or ceremony upon completion.

He stated that David Lawrence Jr. Park has been operating in a soft-opening capacity, with the formal dedication ceremony scheduled for March 14.

Director Couceyro discussed coordination related to the Underline dog park and its sponsorship. He explained that maintenance responsibilities and sponsorship benefits are being structured to provide tangible value to City operations, including enhanced daily maintenance funded through the sponsorship arrangement. He noted that signage requests will be reviewed consistent with City standards.

He reported that the Country Club pool deck project and golf course shelter construction remain on schedule and that following recent Historic Preservation review, staff are prepared to proceed through a phased implementation approach.

Director Couceyro also provided an update on the gondola building preservation effort. He stated that a state-related letter supporting preservation was received and that the structure will be relocated to a more accessible location near a pathway. He explained that staff are evaluating adaptive reuse options to transform the building into a functional, air-conditioned program space while maintaining its historic façade and meeting current code requirements.

He concluded with updates on Rotary Park, which is targeted for construction commencement in late summer, and Cooper Park, which remains under review due to design considerations involving right-of-way adjustments.

NEW BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY

Next meeting date Thursday, March 12th at 8:15 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:18 a.m.

NOTE