

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-1
May 11, 2010
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II
Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Maria Anderson
Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne “Chip” Withers

City Staff

City Manager, Patrick Salerno
City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Betsy Adams, Past President and Co-Chair of Special Projects, Garden Club

D-1 [Start: 9:28:50 a.m.]

Betsy Adams, past President and Co-Chair of Special Projects of the Coral Gables Garden Club, to discuss plans for the statue of Althea Corilla Fink Merrick to be placed at the Coral Gables Merrick House grounds, 907 Coral Way, Coral Gables, Florida.

Mayor Slesnick: Now we are moving to Item D-1, and we are pleased to welcome Ms. Betsy Adams who is Past President of the Coral Gables Garden Club. She is also the Co-Chair of a new project that she is here with other members of the Garden Club to put before us, and we are very pleased to ask Betsy to come forward and talk to us about the new Merrick statue. Hi Betsy.

Mrs. Adams: Thank you. Good morning Mayor and Commissioners, my name is Betsy Adams, and I reside at 730 Saldano Avenue, in Coral Gables, and I’m Co-Chair with Evelyn Budde on this Special Coral Gables Garden Club Committee, but first before I present this, let me introduce our new President, Kay Murff, Mrs. William Murff...

Mayor Slesnick: Congratulations.

Mrs. Adams: Suzy Amerkan is just the Immediate Past, she’s here but she just went outside. OK. Well, I guess I wanted to see you guys again, but it really is my last, but they will carry on and do other great things for the city, I’m just getting too old I guess. But I had this idea a long time ago that we needed to have Mrs. Merrick somewhere; George and Eunice are over at Merrick

Park, and then George is at City Hall, and so I thought it would be nice – the Garden Club used to keep the flower garden up for the Merrick House that she had, with the sun dial in it, we don't do that anymore, the city does it, but that's where we thought the bench could be that she could have a basket of flowers and sitting on a bench, and people could have their picture taken by her too. So it's a life size bronze, the bench will be bronze as well. So let me tell you what we are doing. We have been designated to develop a partnership with the city, as we have with all of them, to plan, produce and dedicate to the community a bronze monument of Mr. George Merrick's mother, Mrs. Althea Merrick. Our project's purpose is to generate an additional sense of thanks and appreciation to George Merrick and his family for their vision and perseverance that lead to the creation of our world reputation as a city of excellence. Upon the Garden Club's project approval, we presented the mission objective to City Manager, David Brown, when he was here; we propose that the Garden Club and the city form a partnership in order to produce and install a bronze monument of Mrs. Althea Merrick that will be located on the historic Merrick House site on Coral Way. The Garden Club agreed to plan, design, fund, construct, and install a life size bronze likeness of Mrs. Merrick sitting on a bronze bench and a basket of flowers located at her side. The Garden Club agreed to obtain final City Commission approval of the proposed monument details prior to their signing a binding contract with the sculpture and foundry. Mr. David Brown agreed that the city would provide the concrete monument foundation, the Garden Club agreed to strive for an October installation and dedication date that will coincide with the city planned hundredth anniversary day celebration of the Merrick House, and Arva Moore Parks is on our ad hoc group. You know how she knows the Merrick family, and she said George was getting married in October, and that's when Mrs. Merrick had the house finished before the wedding, so it was in October. The City Manager's office directed us to present a project detailed and obtain approval from the Historical Preservation Board, Cultural Development and Arts Advisory Panel, and the Merrick House Governing Board. They all were excited for the project and granted their approvals. So the Garden Club again adhered to the exact strategic plan and process that deployed when we partnered with the city and successfully produced the three entrances and the George Merrick monument. Our first step was to create a community ad hoc committee that consisted of, and the reasons why we had picked these people to be on the ad hoc group, Arva Moore Parks, the historian icon, and Merrick expert; Carol Damian, Director and Chief Curator of the Frost Art Museum at F.I.U.; Bill Dunlap, he's an international acclaimed artist and sculpture, and he lives in Coral Gables; Bill Kerdyk, real estate broker, liaison to the city and Coral Gables Vice Mayor; Rocco Ceo, University of Miami Professor of Architecture; Dona Spain, Assistant City Manager, and she was the Historic Preservation Chairman before she become the Assistant City Manager; so that was good to have her there; Evelyn Budde, these are the three Garden Club members, Evelyn as the Second Vice President, and she is Co-Chair of this project; and Kay Murff the President, and Suzy Amerkan, the Immediate Past President, Nina Norman, is also Past President, and I'm a Past President and Project Co-Chair. The ad hoc team created and deployed the following functions: one, establish valid requirements; two, create objectives; three, identify actions necessary to achieve the project, the objectives; four, determine resources needed to support actions; five, craft a budget; and six, set performance targets and dates; and seven, critique and modify as necessary. Now the events that have happened up to now: a) developed and forwarded Requests for Proposal to two Coral Gables sculptors, and another to a Sanford Florida Foundry sculptor entity, all three

submitted responses; b) the ad hoc team evaluated the proposals and scored them based on relevance of sculpture renderings, reviewed pictures depicting quality of life completed within the last five years, timeliness of delivery, installation, and the cost. The three proposal costs for production, delivery, and installation range from \$40,600, \$86,100, and \$140,000. The ad hoc team selected American Bronze, Inc. located in Sanford, Florida, they are the Foundry that did the casting, delivered and installed the George Merrick monument. So the American Bronze let me tell you this, has agreed that all rights to the statue, anybody wanting to copy it, are ours, and that will pass on to the city when we dedicate it to you. So I'll appreciate any questions and comments.

Commissioner Anderson: I wanted to say, I love the sketch. As being a former docent at Merrick, there is a photograph that still exists there of Mrs. Merrick with her glasses, and it's sitting in the living area, that's one of the most beautiful pictures of her that's available, that's a nice model from which to do it. I love the scale; as I envision it, it's a very delicate kind of quiet blending into the scene of the Merrick House. So thank you very much, I appreciate it.

Mrs. Adams: And you can see the statue from the porch as you walk around, and also we are thinking of facing the house from the street, it would be on the right side of that garden.

Commissioner Withers: Betsy would this be subject to watering, the water hitting it?

Mrs. Adams: Water?- just like any bronze.

Commissioner Withers: No, no, I don't mean rain, I mean sprinkler water. I don't know if the affect of the water on the bronze will have any issue with/

Mrs. Adams: You have the rendering, right? Well we noticed and talked about this with her feet being on the grass, and how you going to cut the grass around her feet. So we determined that possibly it would be maybe some small gravel around the whole event so that lawnmowers and edgers and all that stuff would not have to be involved in that at all. I don't know, I haven't seen where the sprinklers go, I haven't looked at that.

Commissioner Withers: I would just hate to see a negative – I have no idea the chemistry of well water onto bronze, I don't know. I'd hate to see it....

Mrs. Adams: It's probably everywhere in the country, it must happen somewhere, so we'll find out from the Foundry about that, and they are very good people to work with.

Commissioner Cabrera: Good morning Mrs. Adams.

Mrs. Adams: Hello, how are you?

Commissioner Cabrera: You know, every time I get to see you in a public venue it gives me great pleasure to thank you for all the wonderful things you've done for our city.

Mrs. Adams: Oh, listen it's the Garden Club, I just mentioned it, they made me Chairman and I did my job.

Commissioner Cabrera: When I speak about the Garden Club, or excuse me, when I mention these things about you, I see the two together, so I just can't imagine you not being part of the Garden Club.

Mrs. Adams: Oh, I'll always be a part of it, till I die.

Commissioner Cabrera: Absolutely.

Mrs. Adams: Unless they throw me out.

Commissioner Cabrera: That's a good fifty years away. You know, you are going to have my support on this. I just wanted to clarify a couple of things.

Mrs. Adams: Absolutely.

Commissioner Cabrera: I believe we already, and I need staff to clarify this for me, do we not already have a statue of Mrs. Merrick here in the city at 55 Merrick Way?- and this will be a completely different pose.

Mrs. Adams: Well, yes.

Commissioner Cabrera: Maybe potentially it could be at a different age. I tell you, the 55 Merrick statue, it's beautiful, and it portrays Mrs. Merrick, I believe, in her younger years perhaps, she is wearing glasses, or she has her glasses in her hand.

Mrs. Adams: Oh, I know, Paul Florickson did that, and we took a look at that, took pictures, and also Arva worked with him on that, and I think it's a perfect statue for that building, the Merrick Building, I guess it's called, but this – we talked about the age, and the dress, and the clothes, and all of that, and we felt we should put it in 26, I believe, or 21, anyway it would be the age that she would have been there at the House.

Commissioner Cabrera: And that was my point; my point is that whatever you end up doing you'll get my support, but it would be really special if it would be somewhat different from that 55...

Mrs. Adams: Yes.

Commissioner Cabrera: And incidentally, that statue from what I understand, my recollection of that project, was supposed to not be inside the parameter of the project, it was really supposed to be out because we were going to have a traffic calming circle or a round-about there, and from

an engineering standpoint we weren't able to achieve that. So that statue was moved inside the property, but nonetheless; and then the second commentary about statues and specifically Mrs. Merrick's – the Village of Merrick Park may have an informal or unofficial rendering statue of her, I mean, I don't know, maybe it's my imagination and it could be, there are a couple of statues in there and I'm not sure if one of them....

Mrs. Adams: Merrick – his wife, not his mother.

Commissioner Cabrera: Oh, OK, OK, I wasn't sure.

Mrs. Adams: That's Eunice and George is....

Commissioner Cabrera: So many Merricks everywhere.

Mrs. Adams: I know, I know.

Commissioner Cabrera: Museums, garages...

Mrs. Adams: They deserve it; they did a great thing for the city.

Commissioner Cabrera: Thank you ma'am.

Mrs. Adams: Thank you, thank you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I just wanted to – I share the same sentiments of the other Commissioners that spoke. Certainly Mrs. Adams and the Garden Club, you've done a lot to improve the quality of life for the city over the past twenty years, I mean, when you raise \$1.2 million to do three fountains, and the statue of Merrick, that says a lot about your commitment to our community, and that's what we are all up here for, is to make the community better, and you certainly have done your part in that. Is there anything that we need to do from the city's perspective to get this statue to fruition? I know that you are raising the funds and you...

Mrs. Adams: I mentioned that there will have to be a slab. The Foundry will install this bench, and they will tie it into a slab that the city can pour, you don't have curbs and you don't have all of the other things that you've done for the entrances and everything, this is just a poured concrete slab.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Mr. City Manager we won't have problems with the slab, pouring slab will we?

City Manager Salerno: I don't believe so, but we'll look at it in due course.

Mrs. Adams: So that's the only thing that we ask you guys, if you can pour the slab and then the Foundry is charging us to install it, but they know how to make it stay, so with hurricanes and

that kind of thing, so they will install it, but they will need a concrete slab – the size of the bench used over at Merrick House, because he took a bench from the Merrick House to bronze it, that's the size that it would be. So the picture, the rendering that you have, there are a couple of things that we want to change and we will go to the Foundry as they make it up in wax and then we will say, hey, the mouth is a little too wide, the basket is a little small, and then we will go back to make sure that its right before we sign the contract and pay them the rest of it.

Commissioner Cabrera: Mrs. Adams we just talked about slabs – lighting?

Mrs. Adams: I'm sorry?

Commissioner Cabrera: Anything on lighting on the statue?

Mrs. Adams: Well, I mentioned that; I was talking to Kara about it, and she said, well you know, what kind of lighting, I said, well I don't know yet, but we have money to deal with better lighting on the Merrick statue right here, and we could do the same thing at the same time, and Kara said, well you know, I don't know about the electricity at the House, whether it could support it. So that's what I don't know; the electricity may not be good enough, I don't know.

Commissioner Cabrera: Could we look into that. Commissioner, members of the City Commission, would you be in support of asking the City Manager's office through Public Works to look into possibly lighting the statue?

Mayor Slesnick: As long as its polite lighting; it's in the middle of a residential.

Commissioner Cabrera: Yes, but remember, the kind of lighting that you are going to have is the same lighting that many residences have, so it's an up light.

Mayor Slesnick: Yes, an up light, that's what I meant. Here we need like brighter lights...

Mrs. Adams: It goes two ways; we are going to fix that lighting, we'll pay for it, for the monument.

Commissioner Cabrera: You always do, you always find a way to do it.

Mrs. Adams: Pardon?

Commissioner Cabrera: You always find a way to do it.

Mrs. Adams: Well, we're going to get a lighting expert to help us do it.

Commissioner Cabrera: You are amazing.

Mrs. Adams: We'll get our own, you guys are busy, you have enough things to do, but....

Commissioner Cabrera: I know a guy that knows some people at FPL that might be able to help you with that.

Mrs. Adams: Oh, you do? Well maybe so.

Commissioner Cabrera: You might have to cook for him though.

Mrs. Adams: Well – maybe, but I have one living with me, so I don't think I have to go far.

Commissioner Cabrera: Oh, that's the guy I was thinking of (laughter).

Mrs. Adams: Yes, you are something else.

Commissioner Anderson: I don't have any problem supporting the lighting. I almost envisioned, and this is just a point of view and a vision, that it would be quiet and it wouldn't have any lighting, that was something that you could see during the day quietly, but whatever, I'm sure it would be beautiful.

Mrs. Adams: Well thank you, thank you. Thank you for your time.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Thank you very much for the update.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: And I just....

Mrs. Adams: Pardon?

Mayor Slesnick: Well, I agree that nice lighting would be polite and nice; it needs to be in the taste of the garden.

Mrs. Adams: Yes, I agree with you.

Commissioner Cabrera: Well you know what I was thinking of?- I was thinking of low voltage. So low voltage is very soft and adds some shadows.

Mayor Slesnick: Maybe we can support low voltage...

Commissioner Cabrera: Oh, if you can't support low voltage you might as well demolish the house.

Mayor Slesnick: Excuse me, strike the last....

Commissioner Cabrera: No, no, no, no.....

Mayor Slesnick: Commissioner Cabrera did not suggest demolishing the house.

Mrs. Adams: Mr. Manager or whomever, if we could work with the Public Works Department, the Foundry did send me a plan, the way that they are going to install it into the concrete base, and they might want to see that so they can know what we are talking about, OK. Should I contact them or?....

City Manager Salerno: We'll contact you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: He'll take care of that.

Mrs. Adams: I appreciate that, so we'll know what to do, and it will be about four months, they should have it here in September. So it would be ready to install in October hopefully, dedicated to you guys, OK, to the city.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Thank you very much.

Mayor Slesnick: Good to see you. Thank you – thank the Garden Club, Kay, Suzy, thank you all. Please take our thanks and appreciation back to the Garden Club members and to all of the people that work so hard for so many things in the city; and Larry we don't forget you, we know that you are an inspiration to....

Audience: [Inaudible...off mike]

Mayor Slesnick: I picked out a few words in Betsy's presentation that I thought sounded like Larry, so. Now, Mr. Manager, I know that we have, I believe, approved this previously and that's why they moved forward; is there any need at this time to take any action that you see? Tell you what?- why don't I just get a motion for a voice vote for continuing support for the project, that would close this, I think, and Mr. Kerdyk since you are the representative to this committee, would you like to make that motion?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes, I'd like to make that motion.

Mayor Slesnick: OK, can I have a second.

Commissioner Cabrera: Second.

Mayor Slesnick: We have a motion and second that we are just showing our continuing support for the project of the Coral Gables Garden Club, and the Althea Merrick statue at the Merrick House. All those in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mayor Slesnick: Opposed like sign. Well, we unanimously give you our whole hearted support again. Go forth and do good.

[End: 9:47:27 a.m.]