

# City of Coral Gables

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

## Meeting Minutes

### Parking Advisory Board

*Chairperson Javier Betancourt*  
*Board Member Blanca Famadas*  
*Board Member Ada Holian*  
*Board Member Vicky Rua*  
*Board Member Carlos Xiques*

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Wednesday, April 27, 2022

5:30 PM

Police and Fire Headquarters,  
Community Meeting Room

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#### GUESTS

- City of Coral Gables Economic Development: Director Julian H. Perez and Assistant Director Belkys Perez
- Block by Block Team: Gene Kowalski-Operations Manager, Sully Silva-Operations Manager, Maria De Los Rios-Team Lead Supervisor.
- The Biltmore Hotel: Tom Prescott, Executive Vice-President

#### CALL TO ORDER

The PAB began at 5:34 P.M.

#### ROLL CALL

**Present:** 5 - Board Member Holian, Board Member Rua, Board Member Xiques, Chairperson Betancourt and Board Member Famadas

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

- No Public Comments.

#### 1 APPROVAL OF MARCH MEETING MINUTES

- On a Motion by Member Rua, Seconded by Member Xiques, the PAB approved the March Meeting Minutes.

#### 2 SUPPORT OF BUSINESSES DURING MOBILITY HUB CONSTRUCTION

- Parking Director Kinney introduced Economic Development staff to speak on the City's plans once the demolition of Garage 1 and construction of the Mobility Hub began. Director Julian Perez spoke about the cost and community impact the construction will create and mentioned the city will:
  - i. Ensure Freebee continues to be available in the area; and to shuttle the public from Garage 4 and the Palace Garage.
  - ii. Make sure the construction site is secured and safe to pedestrians.
  - iii. Have Project Information Office (PIO) to work with the BID, Chamber of Commerce, and impacted businesses to keep the communication lines open throughout the project.
  - iv. Potentially offer Valet services on 200 Andalusia.

- Member Rua asked what else the city can do to help the businesses. She suggested helping landlords with rent subsidy and feels the city should help the small businesses that are likely to suffer the most loss during construction. She suggested to hire an artist to do something attractive to bring in customers and referenced the colorful umbrellas once hung over Giralda Plaza.
- Member Holian suggested prefabricated hedges to be placed on the curb that could act as a barrier for outdoor seating.
- Director Kinney said the impacted businesses are forming a committee called "Andalusia Committee." The city will meet with this committee and work with them to create a construction plan for the street.
- Chair Betancourt suggested valet vouchers and a station on the 200 block of Andalusia Ave. for a shuttle to and from the other municipal garages. He mentioned the city should look at other municipalities such as City of Miami-Flagler Street project as an example of a grant program to provide rent abatement to impacted businesses during beautification projects.
- Assistant Director Perez gave a brief history on Chocolate Fashion from an early start at a city Farmers Market to the thriving business it has become. She said the city will utilize the electronic Kiosks on Miracle Mile and social media to promote businesses in the BID.
- Director Kinney said there are discussions about allowing businesses the opportunity to pay for the space in front of their restaurants to extend the sidewalk and convert it into outdoor seating.
- Director Perez mentioned since the COVID-19 pandemic began thirty-six (36) new restaurants and thirty (30) retail stores have opened in the city. Another twenty (20) restaurants are scheduled to open in the future.
- Director Perez will report back to the PAB in the next few months once there is more information available in terms of what kind of assistance the businesses (Andalusia Committee) will request and how the city will manage the request.

### **3 QUARTERLY REVIEW OF BLOCK-BY-BLOCK SERVICES**

- Gene Kowalski spoke about the ambassador service BBB provides and reviewed the monthly reports provided to the PAB.
- Director Kinney described BBB daily activities which include cleaning bodily substances, trash, dead animals, and scraping gum etc. off the sidewalks. In February 2022, BBB staff picked up 1800 lbs. of trash and 1300 pieces of gum off the pavers on Miracle Mile.
- Chair Betancourt spoke about the initiation of BBB and thanked their staff. He asked if there are plans for future expansion of the program service area. Director Kinney said there have been discussions about it with the BID and City Management. However, any expansion is contingent on additional funding; as the only funding currently available is \$500K (funded from a .50c parking surcharge) allocated to the program each year.
- Member Rua asked if it is the restaurants responsibility to clean up their storefronts. Director Perez confirmed the restaurants are supposed to

clean and maintain the alley, sidewalks, and store fronts adjacent to their businesses.

•Chair Betancourt asked about “Sra. Martinez” Restaurant - Chef Michelle Bernstein’s project which is soon to open on the ground floor of Garage 6. Director Kinney said the project will require a major renovation of the space and additional maintenance to keep up with the number of customers it will draw.

#### **4 STAFF AMBASSADOR OF THE MONTH**

- Director Kinney asked members to read two emails recognizing Ms. De los Rios exemplary service.
- Mr. Kowalski provided Ms. De los Rios history with BBB and thanked her for her service.
- Chair Betancourt presented the certificate and gift card.

#### **5 REVIEW OF ACTION PLANS FOR PARKING**

- Director Kinney presented the city-wide goals and objectives for the period 2023 - 2025 as well as the specific action plans related to Parking.
- Action Plan Increase and Integrate Alternative Mobility and Parking-
- Member Xiques asked how the transit mobility services will increase. Director Kinney said it will increase with the use of additional Mobility Services startups such as Bird and Spin.
- Member Holian asked if scooters are allowed to be driven on the sidewalk. Director Kinney said the scooters are allowed to be stored on the sidewalk but are specifically prohibited from being used on several sidewalks.
- Action Plan Transit Mobility Expansion--Chair Betancourt asked if there is a need to discuss helping small businesses during the construction. Director Kinney said he will raise managing construction as a key item on the strategic plan.
- Member Holian expressed concerned the city is favoring a specific group of people who are charging their electric vehicles for free. Members thought the city should begin charging a fee for this service. Director Kinney indicated that our current EV charging system can collect payment for charging services and that conversations about how much to charge and when to begin collecting have begun.
- Chair Betancourt suggested TPO should be asked about potential grants for the Mobility Hub.
- Action Plan Parking Lot Upgrades-City recently upgraded Lot 7, 20 and 30. Upgrades included repaving, installing new drainage, lighting, and landscaping. The construction took more than seventy-five days. The contractor convinced Public Works to close all three lots at the same time to shorten down time, but the project ran over and missed the deadline.
- Action Plan Transit Expansion-City is currently seeking grant money to expand Trolley services to Sunday. Trolley currently runs Monday to

Saturday 6am - 10 pm. Trolley ridership is recovering well with a 30% increase over 2019 ridership.

- A question about where funding for Trolley service came from. Director Kinney discussed the half-penny sales tax, and that property tax is not currently used to fund Trolley. Chair Betancourt said the city could help fund the trolley should it choose to.

- Action Plan Trolley Freebee Transactional Survey--Director Kinney discussed the need for surveys from freebee and trolley riders. He shared some statistics with the PAB from two city-wide surveys conducted to gauge resident satisfaction with city services. Questions related to the Parking Department were about Street Cleaning and Trolley-Freebee Services. Eighty-one percent (81%) of the people polled rated these services at "Excellent/Good." The goal is to obtain a satisfaction ranking higher than ninety percent (90%).

- Member Holian asked if Freebee operates in another city. Chair Betancourt responded yes, it operates in various cities of Miami-Dade County including Miami Beach and Hialeah.

- Member Rua asked if Trolley drivers attend refresher courses on customer service and driving skills. Director Kinney responded they do and expressed most have remained with the city for many years and are great employees.

- Chair Betancourt expressed the challenge the County and Municipalities are facing to keep drivers employed. Many qualified drivers are resigning to join Amazon who offers competitive salaries and contact-free deliveries.

- On a Motion by Member Rua, Seconded by Member Holian, the PAB unanimously support the Parking Department action plans.

## **6 MOBILITY HUB GRANT APPLICATION**

- Director Kinney announced to the Board the city applied a \$25M dollar grant to help cover the cost for the Mobility Hub and said all regional agencies are competing for these funds.

- Member Rua asked if there is a contingency plan if grant is not awarded. Chair Betancourt said city would have to pay for it.

- Director Kinney said Mayor Lago and others are lobbying in Tallahassee and Washington DC to try to get additional funding.

## **7 DISCUSSION REGARDING UPGRADE OF FREEBEE VEHICLES**

- Chair Betancourt clarified at the last meeting he suggested city should "explore" the Tesla vehicle option; he was not asking to move forward with conversion.

- Director Kinney said the city does not currently have the funding to make this change. He mentioned there is a consultant (WSP) studying Freebee usage that can look further into the Tesla option.

- PAB asked Director to have the Consultant include the possible conversion to TESLA vehicles as part of their current study.

## 8 BILTMORE WAY DISTRICT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Director Kinney said City Commission approved the contract Dover, Kohl & Partners at the April 26th meeting and is trying to get consensus on the issue.

## 9 BILTMORE HOTEL WEST PARKING LOT UPDATE

- Director Kinney said that we are still looking for answers to the five questions raised by the board. Currently, there is no proposed Resolution for the management of the Biltmore parking lot.

- Chair Betancourt restated the five questions they requested answers to: Who controls the parking lot? Who should manage the parking lot? Should there be a parking fee? Where should funds (revenue from paid parking) be directed? and Who should be eligible to receive discounted parking at the lot?

- Member Rua suggested there not be any change in how the lot is managed and no charge to park in the lot.

- Mr. Tom Prescott said they are still waiting on a resolution. He explained the challenges the Hotel is facing as it strives to accommodate displaced guests who cannot find parking while using their amenities. The major problem with parking in that lot comes from people leaving their vehicles parked while they travel or are using it as storage. On behalf of the Biltmore Hotel, he said the business is not looking to make a profit, but rather use the funds from the charge to put back into the landmark. The purpose of the charge (\$3.00 per hour) is for upgrades to the lot such as asphalt and landscaping and to deter abuse.

- Member Holian asked if it is mostly hotel guests and members (golf, athletic club) who complain about not finding free parking and having to pay for valet. Mr. Prescott said yes. She mentioned the people who are there with trailers shooting videos, movies etc. and asked if it was possible to install a gate at the Lot and validate free parking to patrons. Mr. Prescott responded they established a gateless system thru an app to charge and that it was working. Management thought it would be a best option to not have equipment installed and charge thru the app.

- Member Rua asked if it would be possible to validate two-hour parking. Mr. Prescott responded the Hotel offers valet parking at their garage, but the number of spaces is limited.

- Chair Betancourt asked why city residents must pay the fee. Mr. Prescott responded there is still some abuse noted and would not be able to exempt city residents due to privacy issues (license plate numbers).

- Member Xiques asked what is the current course of action? Mr. Prescott responded the app has been inactivated until further notice.

- Member Rua suggested that if the Biltmore is allowed to charge a fee at this lot, the signs must follow city branding.

- Chair Betancourt asked on average what percentage of locals

(Miami-Dade County) are parking there? Mr. Prescott said between 40-50% of the guests are local (Miami-Dade County).

•Chair Betancourt asked to add the item back to the agenda when there is a development.

## 10 OPEN DISCUSSION

•Chair Betancourt announced he will be resigning his position as PAB Chair effective 4/28/2022. He said he has enjoyed the time spent with the PAB and helping the community.

## ADJOURNMENT

The PAB adjourned at 7:23 P.M.

## NOTE