

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-2
October 14, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Carmen Olazabal

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Coral Gables Museum Director, Christine Rupp

Public Speaker(s)

D-2 [Start: 10:10:00 a.m.]

Presentation of the Coral Gables Museum's accomplishments by Christine Rupp, Director.

Mayor Cason: D-2 – we have with us Christine Rupp from the Coral Gables Museum who will make a presentation on the Museum.

Ms. Rupp: Thank you so much Mayor, Commissioners, City Officials, thanks for having me here. I want to thank Commissioner Lago for approving my request to appear today. I just want to use this time quickly to give you a brief overview of the museum, let you know what we've done, where we are headed, the exciting things we have coming up, and I have a very brief video at the end of my presentation. So, I'd like to use this time just to give a little bit of history about the museum. The museum is run by a non-profit that was founded in 2003, the Coral Gables Museum Corporation. The museum itself represents a wonderful public/private partnership between the non-profit and the City of Coral Gables. The non-profit organization, the Museum Corporation and the City both put funds together to rehab and restore our beautiful building.

After that presentation about the courthouse I want to say how blessed we are in the City to take care of our historic buildings and the museum obviously is no exception having been constructed in 1939, and we didn't have two courthouses, two courtrooms in our beautiful building. So the Museum Corporation raised a little over \$3 million to construct new museum spaces, obviously our beautiful field gallery and also it contributes to the restoration and rehabilitation efforts of that historic building. Now the museum has, as you know, an operating agreement with the City to operate the Coral Gables Museum and what we did when we looked at the museum and decided what it was going to be about, obviously by the terms of that operating agreement we are called the Coral Gables Museum, but we are not just about Coral Gables and it's not a city-run facility. So we had to look at our mission statement that obviously reflected the City of Coral Gables, but yet gave us a little bit broader reach. So the museum focuses on architecture, urban design and planning, sustainable development, and preservation; and preservation on three fronts: architectural, environmental, and cultural. Now obviously that mission statement is painted with a very broad stroke, so we can do a lot of creative programming to bring people into Coral Gables, let them know what the City is about and expand upon that beautiful mission statement. So if you were to go to the Coral Gables Museum today, you would see that mission statement so well represented by a variety of exhibits from a wonderful pictorial exhibit about the history of the building to a beautiful exhibition that we are borrowing from the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York called, "Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow", which reflects upon relationships that were built between Jewish scholars and traditional black colleges that welcomes scholars who were expelled from Germany during World War II. We also have an exhibition called "All Buildings Great and Small" that was done in partnership with FIU, that's about urban planning and the importance of integrating pedestrian-friendly small scale buildings in an urban area, Coral Gables again is a great example of that. And then we are paying tribute to Temple Judea right now with an exhibition about its cultural architectural heritage, as well as a Sister City exhibit that highlights those beautiful relationships that Coral Gables has with cities around the world. So no museum in this region presents such a variety of exhibits all and staying true to its mission statement. So we are very proud of what we do in partnership with the City and we thank you for your support. We couldn't do it without you. Our current exhibits which I just reviewed are going to be joined in November by a wonderful exhibition called, "Miami 2100", which reflects on sustainability and sea level rise. That's not doom and gloom its all solution based and that was funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation and again in conjunction with the wonderful folks at FIU School of Architecture. We are also celebrating the Underline, which Meg is going to present here shortly and we are also celebrating the Grand Fondo, that wonderful Italian bike event that comes here with a week-long exhibition on the history of Italian cycling. So again, we'd like to feel that we have something for everyone and all under our beautiful mission statement, which addresses those facets of Coral Gables. As far as promotions are concerned and what we do to promote both the museum and the City of Coral Gables, the Coral Gables Museum is a member of Visit Florida, a member of the Greater Miami

Convention and Visitors Bureau, a member of the Florida Association of Museums, the American Alliance of Museums, of course the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, and our Business Improvement District. We feature a Smithsonian Museum Day every year that gives two for one admission and we are also a part of Small Business Saturday in conjunction with the Chamber and American Express and our wonderful gift shop. Two weeks ago we opened the official Visitor's Center for the City of Coral Gables. That was a wonderful event, Mayor Cason was in attendance and we brought in all the Miami attractions. The museum is also a part of Miami Attractions Month and Miami Museum's Month. So we do a lot to promote the museum, get the word out and that in turn does promote the City of Coral Gables. Programs that benefit our community presented by the museum include, Family Day, the second Saturday of every month, and we do that in partnership with Books and Books and the Coral Gables Art Cinema. Something that we are very proud of that we've done from day one is, to partner with City institutions and non-profits and other organizations around the area. Again, bringing additional notoriety to the museum in the City. We have Gallery Night, of course the first Friday of every month, we have Saturday morning walking tours every Saturday that highlight the architecture and history of downtown Coral Gables and during our walking tours we partner with Like a Camera and also Seasons 52. We have monthly bike tours in conjunction with Bike-Walk Coral Gables, those are sponsored by Boss Water and also Pardo's Chicken, another wonderful Coral Gables based business; and recently we added a monthly commute tour down the Coral Gables Waterway in conjunction with Miami-Dade Parks. So I'm happy to say because of all of our efforts, attendance, membership, grants are all on the increase at the museum. We recently received a grant from the Florida Humanities Council to fund a video tour or an audio tour of the museum. We received a grant from the Coral Gables Community Foundation for Family Day, we received a grant, a lovely grant from the Abraham Family Foundation to fund school tours at the museum for kids in underserved areas, these are all Title 1 schools kids that get to come to Coral Gables, they never come here for any other reason; and something that's very exciting, we received funding from the State of Florida's Department of Education this year to create a sustainability program teaching kids about the importance of sustainability, about green design, about proper urban planning, and being good environmental stewards. In our short three-year history we've done a lot and again, we so appreciate your support. It's important that we have your backing and you get what we are about because you as the Commission and City Officials are our best voices in this community for what the museum does. Other upcoming events – in conjunction with the BID and Holiday on the Mile, we have a fabulous doggy costume contest at the museum, it's hilarious, it's on Halloween Night. We have our Young Associates Group Party on the Plaza on November 8th, and we have a wonderful event coming up on November 15th, which is our main fundraiser. This year it's called, An Evening on the Plaza and in an effort to increase our outreach efforts, we are honoring four individuals who have contributed to not just the Coral Gables community, but to Greater Miami in a number of ways, and we have a short video that talks, speaks to these honorees and their thoughts on the Coral Gables Museum. We

are honoring Thelma Gibson, David Eventsky, H.T. Smith, and Judy Weisel. So CGTV we are ready for the video.

[Note for the Record: A short video was presented by the four honorees]

Ms. Rupp: So again thank you. I hope to see you all at the museum soon and certainly at our November 15th fundraiser.

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much. You've done a great job there. So many exhibits – I'm looking forward hopefully too an exhibit with Paraguayan architecture as well, we've talked about this.

Ms. Rupp: Absolutely.

Mayor Cason: There is some wonderful architecture from the 1850's that we are trying to bring together with an exhibit for their bi-centennial and not too long ago they've agreed to send it up here if we can find space.

Ms. Rupp: Great. Thanks again.

Commissioner Lago: Let me just interject one second off of what the Mayor was saying. I think it's important that we have Christine come up and the representatives from the museum because I think a lot of the individuals in this community don't really have an understanding or are not aware of what the incredible programming that's coming forth by the museum and not only just for adults, but also for the young children. If you go by the museum you see so many young kids that are involved in the museum and there is a real educational avenue that's completely dynamic from what you see in other museums. Some other museums focus on contemporary art and modern art, on certain religious art or maybe architecture and design, but this museum really encompasses a multitude of different types of avenues for learning. So when you talk about the museum as a whole you have to also understand that you are talking about walks in regards to history of the City of Coral Gables, our waterways, which I know Commissioner Kerdyk has mentioned on a multitude of occasions. It's a lot of different things that really encompass what the museum is doing, so when you make an investment in the museum you are really making an investment in this community, so I want to thank you and the Board as a whole, it's an honor to serve and I'm very grateful for being involved.

Ms. Rupp: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Let me just add one quick thing and I just want to follow up what Commissioner Lago said. This so far exceeds what we came up with in 2003. This is just on another planet from what we initially came up with. You should be commended because I thought it was going to be a tribute to Merrick, this is basically what we thought the museum was going to be, what happened in the 1920's in the City of Coral Gables, but this is just – you have done such a fine job reprogramming it and really bringing this museum into something that we can very, very proud of, so congratulations to everybody.

Ms. Rupp: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Really a cultural and community...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Except for the Chairperson by the way...(Laughter)

Ms. Rupp: Well I have to say that all we do with a staff of 7 people; 3 fulltime and 4 part-time individuals, and so we are all very passionate about what we do. The staff there is very talented, we are all multi-taskers and we really believe in what we are presenting to the public. Again, we couldn't do it without your support and we thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you very much.

[End: 10:24:20 a.m.]