

# City of Coral Gables

405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134  
[www.coralgables.com](http://www.coralgables.com)



## Meeting Minutes

Friday, October 16, 2020

8:30 AM

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

## School Community Relations Committee

*Chairperson Ariel Fernandez*  
*Vice Chairperson Sam Joseph*  
*Board Member Erin Anding*  
*Board Member Winnie Chang*  
*Board Member Sandy Dimitris*  
*Board Member Carmen Manrara Cartaya*  
*Board Member Cecilia D. Slesnick*  
*Board Member Mary Snow*  
*Board Member Sharon Watson*

In accordance with City of Coral Gables Code Section 2-30, Chapter 286.011 Florida Statutes, Governor DeSantis' Executive Order 20-69, as extended by Executive Orders 20-112, 20-123, 20139 and 150, 20-179, 20-193, 20-246, the School Community Relations Committee will be holding its Meeting on Friday, October 16, 2020 VIRTUALLY, commencing 8:30 a.m., wherein all interested persons may be heard via the Zoom platform used by the City for live remote comments.

Members of the public may join the meeting via Zoom at (<https://zoom.us/j/91876985231>). In addition, a dedicated phone line will be available so that any individual who does not wish (or is unable) to use Zoom may listen to and participate in the meeting by dialing: (929) 205-6099 Meeting ID: 918 7698 5231.

To speak on an Agenda Item, please "Raise your Hand" or send a message to one of the meeting hosts using the Zoom Platform. If you joined the meeting via telephone you can "Raise your Hand" by pressing \*9.

## CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 8:34 a.m.

## ROLL/QUORUM CALL

**Present:** 9 - Chairperson Fernandez, Vice Chairperson Joseph, Board Member Anding, Board Member Chang, Board Member Dimitris, Board Member Manrara Cartaya, Board Member Slesnick, Board Member Snow and Board Member Watson

### A. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

School Community Relations Committee Meeting of September 18, 2020.

**Attachments:** [Cover Memo.docx](#)  
[School Community Relations Committee Sept. 18 Minutes.pdf](#)

This Matter was approved.

### B. PUBLIC HEARING

**Comment by Estelle Lockhart, PTA President of Carver Elementary:**

- Issue with the Wawa being built across the street from school.
- Only recently found out about the project being built.
- Notification was given to MDCPS, but not to the school itself.
- There was no public comments regarding the process.
- Missed 30-day opportunity to go to City Attorney's Office to discuss the matter which would have happened in January.
- Concerned about traffic, air quality and crime.

**Comments by Joshua Goodman:**

- Speaks in support in support of Estelle Lockhart's comments.
- Finds there to be a lack of creativity in regard to how to solve the issue.

**Comment by Marson Cunha:**

- Unacceptable that the Wawa project was approved.

**Comments by Jackie Kellogg, Past President of PTA at Coral Gables Senior High:**

- With return to schools there have been issues with masks. At Gables High they are at 1/3 capacity and there should be supported to maintain virtual learning and support for teachers.
- There was a promise for a tent by science building and the 900 building due to ongoing construction. Request for that tent to be placed.

**C. NEW BUSINESS**

**Time Certain 8:40 a.m. (Agenda Item C-2)**

**C-1 Reopening of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (Facilitated by School Board Member Maria Tere Rojas)**

**Comments by School Board Member Maria Tere Rojas:**

- States for the record that she has been at several of the schools she represents prior to the opening or after and can say that they have principals, teachers, staff and parents that are second to none. Everyone has worked to ensure that all safety protocols are in place to ensure everyone is protected.
- Parents were given the choice of in-person or virtual learning. There are also some classes that have dual modality which the School Board Member does not like which is when one teacher is teaching both a small in-person class and virtual at the same time.
- Has witnessed the social distancing taking place in schools. Children are wearing masks. Very impressed and pleased with younger students with how they have adapted to the new norm and are following the mask requirement. There is signage throughout the entire facility. Water Fountains have been covered and bottle feature has been added.
- There is an app that needs to be filled out every morning by all the students. Temperature of students should be taken prior to arriving at the school. This is through the honor system and they hope to get all the help they can from parents and the community.
- Every school has an isolation room and separate clinic which the School Board Member has visited. Through the CARES Act, the County provided funding to bring in a nurse at every school. In cases where a nurse was not able to be hired due to high demand, a MOU has been put in place with the City to provide EMTs. They have been hired specifically to care for students with COVID symptoms.
- Recently proffered a board item to provide rapid testing at three locations for families, teachers and their immediate families. Just in the first week there were 551 tests administered at these sites.
- Addresses the fact that they have had some positive cases since reopening, but this was expected, and they have the protocols in place to handle those cases.
- All Coral Gables schools have a nurse with the exemption of Carver Elementary, Coral Gables Prep. and ISPA which have an EMT onsite.

Discussion of Articles Regarding the Opening of School Houses

**Attachments:** [Article Miami's teachers union seeks PPE, sanitation donations ahead of school r](#)  
[Article State Funds For Classroom Supplies Won't Cover What Many Teachers V](#)

School Board Member Maria Tere Rojas states that she has proffered a board item to be heard at next School Board Meeting regarding this issue.

**C-2 Wawa Development on by Carver Elementary & Middle School (Facilitated by Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager)**

**Comments from ACM Santamaria:**

- Project has been in practice since 2014 and is a complicated matter.
- It involves litigation and the project has been approved and will move forward.
- Courtesy notice was provided by Bahamian Village to properties within 1,000 feet including the School Board.
- Naomi Levi Garcia, Staff Liaison adds that per the settlement, City Manager and City Attorney have the power to administratively approve the project. The City Attorney's opinion letter was mailed to the school district and those within 1,000 feet out of courtesy, not requirement.

**Comments by School Board Member Maria Tere Rojas:**

- This is the second time that notification is an issue. For example, Coral Gables Preparatory Academy. Notification was not received and that the 30-day window passing is unfortunate.
- Trying to gather facts to see where this fell through the cracks. This is something she would have been actively involved in if she had received notice.
- Need to look at traffic issue very carefully as it is of great concern due to the small age of the students.

**Comments from ACM Santamaria:**

- Bahamian Village was the party that sent out the notification to the neighbors.
- City is requesting the name of the appropriate contact to send the notifications to. If given this information ACM Santamaria will make certain that it gets delivered to that person moving forward. Board Member should receive courtesy notice.

**Comments by Ariel Fernandez, Chair:**

- Appreciates the comment but they have heard that promise before.
- In six years this issue was never brought up to this committee. "Why were we not informed of this issue?"
- Chair states that this committee specifically represents the parents and students in this City and this was never brought to the committees attention.

Question was asked by Board Member Dimitris about options available to the school district or developer to stop this project and about having future developments affecting schools come before the School Community Relations Committee.

Naomi Levi Garcia, Staff Liaison explains the type of over site this committee is intended to provide and adds that notice of development is out of the purview of the board's intended objectives and that it would require approval by the Commission to alter the committees founding legislation.

Comments are made by Chair as to whether this is something in the purview of the committee because it affects students. Board Member Dimitris clarifies that she meant for the SCRC to be notified so that the committee can put the word out and not necessarily to have a say on the development.

**Comments by School Board Member Maria Tere Rojas:**

- Appreciates ACM Santamaria's comments and reiterates that this is the second time this happens and that the names of the appropriate contacts were given before. Those being Mr. Torrens, Mr. Alonso, and Mr. Perez. Those individuals deal with these issues and there is also Mrs. Mendez-Cartaya.
- Feels she has been let down because she did not receive notice on this issue. If she had she would have gotten involved.

**Comments by Sam Joseph, Vice Chair:**

- Restates that this is not the first time this happens.
- Mentions that over a year ago there was a meeting regarding construction taking place across the street from Carver. Specifically the PTA and parents came to the committee and said they were having parking problems and they saw signs of a new development, so they ask what was happening.
- It is their reputations as board members on the line. They state in those meetings and no one brought up even the remote possibility of a Wawa, gas station or anything of the sort.
- Committee stated they would look into this and look at enforcement and stated that things would be nicer when the development was complete.
- Question is asked as to were we go from here to resolve this issue for the schools and what mechanisms can be put in place to ensure notice get done and get done properly.

ACM Santamaria states that he will personally be involved in making sure the notification process is a better one. There is a legally bending settlement agreement and this looks to be on track for final approval by the County.

Chair asks why there was no notice provided during the litigation process. ACM states that even though it was not required Bahamian Village provided notification, there was a City Attorney opinion that came out and that the 30 day window to dispute that opinion expired.

**Comments by Board Member Snow:**

- States that the Chairman of the Community Foundation board is the attorney for this project and can confirm that Bahamian Village working with the City Attorney's office sent notification to all of the neighbors and Miami-Dade Public Schools.
- She is asking when they were sent but has received a list of where they were sent to and the school board is listed.

**Comments by Board Member Manrara Cartaya:**

- Asks if there is a way to create a trigger mechanism for any communications that are sent to schools or district regarding City issues to also be sent to the committee regardless of whether it is a development issue or not.

Chair clarifies that there was no notification sent to the school just to the general mailbox at the school board.

ACM Santamaria suggests that the committee take this up at a future meeting to

develop some sort of method they would recommend to be followed in notification processes.

School Board Member Maria Tere Rojas asks if something like this would require certified mail. ACM Santamaria states that he will look into it.

Comments by Board Member Slesnick,

- Read on a blog that the City is looking at changing building code to allow for further development in the business district. Two schools that could be affected by this now and in the future are Coral Gables Prep. and Carver.
- This is something that the committee as a whole should have on the backburner as this might come up again in the future.

Questions by Joshua Goodman:

- Which judge or court oversaw the settlement? ACM Santamaria states that he does not have this information at this time.
- Where is this project in the permitting process? ACM Santamaria states that the only review pending at the City is that of Landscape Services and it is also pending County overview of Grand Ave in terms of traffic and vegetation. County department currently reviewing is that of RER. After that this project is set to move forward.
- Where does the School Board Member and SCRC Chair stand on this issue and if they will oppose this development.

Board Member Manrara Cartaya asks those in attendance what they would like the committee to request if the project does get built.

Comments by Nan Markowitz:

- Brings up the Wawa selling beer and wine.
- Asks who is conducting the developers traffic analysis.

Comments by Estelle Lockhart:

- Request something in writing from committee showing their stance on this issue that the PTA can publish to their parents.
- Mentions that Commission Keon has repeatedly provided her support for this project. That is very concerning and states that this is not okay. Mentions that Commissioner Mena has also shown support for this project. States that this is a problem and that their two appointments to the SCRC need to talk to the Commissioners.

Committee discussion on how to move forward:

- Sam Joseph, Vice Chair states on the record that he does not stand with this development at all and opposes it 100%.
- Board Member Anding suggests recommending to the School Board Member to consult with the School Board Attorney. She also suggests that the committee members speak to their appointing Commissioners and alert them to what is going on. Final suggestion is to take this public and make a stink about it so that this does not happen again.
- Chair passes the gavel to Vice Chair in order to make a motion.

Motion by Ariel Fernandez, Chair to request that the City Commission reconsider the approval to this project and open up a truthful public comment period which was not offered in the first place, so that all stakeholders in this process are able to voice their concerns and a decision can be made that takes everybody into consideration.

Motion passed with one Nay vote by Board Member Manrara Cartaya. Board Member Snow was absent from the vote.

Board Member Manrara Cartaya explains the reason why she voted down the motion was due to how it was worded. States that she does not have enough information to agree that it wasn't done to protocol and that rules weren't followed. She does support revisiting the decision made by the City but does not support the way the motion was framed.

Motion by Ariel Fernandez, Chair requesting that the Commission make a decision on future development projects that affect our schools should be notification of this committee and that the committee should bring it up to parents so that everybody is aware of these projects going forward. Seconded by Board Member Watson.

Motion passed.

Attachments: [CAO 2020-003 Bahamian Village Site Plan.pdf](#)  
[Signed Resolution 2015-303.pdf](#)

**C-3 Meet & Greet: New Principal at Coral Gables High School**

Motion made by Vice Chair Joseph for Items C-3 through E-3 to be tabled and deferred to next meeting. Seconded by Board Member Slesnick. Motion passed.

**C-4 School Community Relations Committee Newsletter (Facilitated by Ariel Fernandez, Chair)**

**D. OLD BUSINESS**

**D-1 SIP Committee Member Assignments Review (Facilitated by Ariel Fernandez, Chair)**

Attachments: [SIP Descriptions](#)

**D-2 Update on Summer Family Literacy Festival Planning Meeting (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Vice Chair)**



**E. ONGOING BUSINESS**

**E-1 Teachers Awards (Facilitated by Sam Joseph, Vice Chair)**

Attachments: [Teachers Awards Report 2019.docx](#)

**E-2 Rules on Speakers (Facilitated by Carmen Manrara Cartaya, Board Member)**

**E-3 Follow-up on Introduction of PTA Presidents (Facilitated by Carmen Manrara Cartaya, Board Member)**

**E-4 General Updates (Facilitated by Solanch Lopez, Secretary)**

Motion made by Vice Chair Joseph to move Nov. 20 meeting to Oct 30. Seconded by Board Member Chang. Motion passed.

Attachments: [SCRC General Updates Oct. 16](#)

**F. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**F-1 Next SCRC Meeting - Friday, November 20, 2020**

Questions/Comments: [scrc@coralgables.com](mailto:scrc@coralgables.com)

**F-2 International Coastal Cleanup Season - September 19th - November 1st  
Visit [CoralGables.com/KCGB](http://CoralGables.com/KCGB) for more information.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 10:44 a.m.

**NOTE**