

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting  
Agenda Item G-1  
July 9, 2024  
City Commission Chambers  
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago  
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson  
Commissioner Melissa Castro  
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez  
Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez  
City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.  
City Clerk, Billy Urquia  
Arts and Cultural Specialist, Catherine Cathers  
Governmental Affairs Manager, Fernando Weiner**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Eric Fliss, Board Member  
Rafi Maldonado Lopez  
Jackson Rip Holmes**

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Agenda Item G-1 [12:00 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Cultural Grant recipients and setting in place a funding mechanism contingent on the city's approved budget. (Unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 6 to 0).

Mayor Lago: We'll take item G-1, which is a time certain item.

City Attorney Suarez: G-1 is a Resolution of the City Commission approving Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Cultural Grant recipients and setting in place a funding mechanism contingent on the city's approved budget.

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Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Art Specialist Cathers: Good morning. Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Commissioners. One of the responsibilities of the city's Cultural Development Board is to recommend to the City Commission the annual allocation of cultural grant funding. I want to thank the members of our Cultural Development Board who had the role of reviewing and scoring each application. Our Chair Leslie Pantin, Vice Chair Jose Valdes-Fauli, Ray Corral, Frank Rodriguez, Eric Fliss who is here today to speak on behalf of the board, and Amanda Requena. I'm Catherine Cathers, Arts and Cultural Specialist with the city. I'd also like to thank our cultural partners, the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce and the Arts and Business Council, who provide important professional development opportunities and support to our grantees. On March 14, 2023, the City Commission adopted amendments to the Cultural Grants Guidelines and included a process to encourage greater participation in the program. These amendments include a bonus point for the following scenarios. Five points if the organization's principal address is in Coral Gables as verified by their non-profit corporation profile in SunBiz; five points if the application includes programming with free events; and two points if the organization's operating budget is \$50,000 or less as verified by tax records. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Cultural Development Board reviewed and scored 45 applications for the allocation of City of Coral Gables Cultural Grant Funding. That's three more than last year and ten more than two years ago. So, this includes the application required by the Coral Gables Museum, which is funded separately. Proposed funding of the 40 applicants and their scores, plus the Coral Gables Museum have been provided as Exhibit A, attached to the proposed resolution. The board further made a motion previously at their March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting to support a total of \$228,335, which reflects a cumulative increase established by the Commission prior to 2020. Last year they allocated funding was \$191,228, with gradual increases frozen since 2020 due to the pandemic. It's been at this amount through five fiscal years. When reviewing the applications, the user recommended funding estimate as is noted as part of Exhibit A. There is a small balance to that amount which they also made a motion to go towards one of the highest scoring applicants. We do have a couple of slides, some raising the impact of the program and the benefit to Coral Gables residents and visitors. So, I'd like to have that presentation. So, prior to 1995, the City of Coral Gables granted cultural funds based on individual requests, which is really the motivation to develop the Cultural Development Board. So that was when it was formed. And then in 2019, the annual funding was frozen and from 2020 to the present the request has also been frozen to increase the cultural grant fund. The Cultural Development Board has consistently every year since that time requested this increase. So, we have in here also from 1995, the City Commission recommended funding of a range between \$150,000 and \$200,000; and then you see the number of years that have stayed at \$191,228. So, it's like 30 years. Here's a review of the bonus points that I already mentioned; five points for the address in Coral Gables; five for their application including free events and two if their operating budget is \$50,000 or less. So, these are a list of all of the non-profit arts organizations that the board is recommending for funding. You can see it's

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quite an impressive list with a variety of organizations that do have their business address here in Coral Gables, including our core cultural grantees. And then, these are just a series of different images that we asked our applicants to provide, and these are all programs that have taken place in Coral Gables, and you can see the kind of range of performances, its film, its theater, its dance, its garden, its art galleries, and talks. So, this is a summary of the impact of all those wonderful events taking place. This year there is total of 1,259 arts programs that will be presented in Coral Gables; 100 percent of those take place in Coral Gables. This year there is an increase and now we're at 40 percent of free events that are taking place here, and also, I think it's important to mention that there are 20 venues that are also represented here and are benefiting from the cultural grant program. The economic impact for that is the total expenditures of the grantee organizations and audiences in the city is \$27,474,189, so that is to the businesses, restaurants, bars, anything else that people are doing while they are in the city attending these events, and that's a local government revenue of \$731,005. Now, this is based on national averages, and we know from looking at the same calculations which has been done by Americans for the Arts, for Miami-Dade County that we're actually above that. So, this is, I think, a rather conservative economic impact. So, I'd like to introduce Eric Fliss, who is here to speak on behalf of the board and respond to any questions from the Commission.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Mr. Fliss: Good afternoon.

Mayor Lago: On behalf of the Commission, I'd like to thank you for your service to the city. I know it's a labor of love, but we're blessed to have you here.

Mr. Fliss: No, it's my pleasure to serve. Thank you, Mayor and Commissioners, I am here on behalf of the Coral Gables Cultural Development Board to recommend the allocation of cultural funding to the City Commission. First and foremost, the board appreciates the dedication of funds the City of Coral Gables and the Commission and entertaining a recommendation for an increase in funding for this program as previously requested by the Cultural Development Board. The increase in grant funds is a modest request, that considers no increase has been provided in the grant's programs since 2020 and ask that the Commission adopt an increase of the lines with the COLA that we've all experienced in rent, salaries, materials, to these arts organizations as well. The importance of these funds has recently been magnified by the unprecedented veto of all art funds at the state level and has been devastating to our cultural organizations. Coral Gables provides a legacy of support for the arts. It's one of only two municipalities that has an actual grants program. The funds from Coral Gables, no matter what size, are often leveraged against other grants and funding opportunities, matching opportunities to garner further support for their programs. Additionally, as Catherine mentioned, 40 percent of the events proposed in this year's portfolio of arts activities are free to the public and the residents of Coral Gables. So, in some

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instances, these free events are actually not part of the core program of the arts organization and are additional events that they take on to provide free events. And I'll just say the cost of those events sometimes exceed the funding provided by the city. So, our request for \$223,335 investment to these organizations will provide a direct revenue return to the City of Coral Gables. The return on this investment, as Catherine mentioned, does not include the impact on the local economy, the shops, the restaurants, the jobs created for folks who live here in Coral Gables. So, at this time we just appreciate your support and your consideration and I'm here to answer any questions you might have.

Mayor Lago: Commissioners.

Commissioner Fernandez: I have a question. When you mentioned the revenue, these funds generated for the municipality you said that was based on a national average. That's not an actual figure that we've calculated.

Art Specialist Cathers: Correct. It's a calculator that was put together by Americans for the Arts.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay. I know most of these events are taking place in the Central Business District where parking revenues do go 100 percent to the city. So arguably these numbers could be low based on the number of events, correct.

Mr. Fliss: Absolutely.

Art Specialist Cathers: Yes. Like I said, those are conservative numbers, given our community.

Mayor Lago: At the end of the day, it's so much more than just that.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Its not only the parking, but it's also the issue of the restaurants, it's the atmosphere, its that culture elevates our community. When you talk about the City of Coral Gables you are talking about a city that is known as the City Beautiful, not only based on its aesthetics, but based on a litany of other things that also deliver on that moniker the City Beautiful. So, when you talk about revenue that's just one component of the issue, and I've had problems since you've asked me to engage, I've had issues before with wanting to have as many of these grant recipients be located in the City of Coral Gables, as many of these programs be free to the community, because the intent is to drive business. So, if we're going to help fund these institutions, which for example, I'm going to use, I'm not picking on anybody, but I'm going to use like the Sanctuary of the Arts. I had the pleasure of taking Mike...to lunch, to breakfast this past week and Mike's spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of his own pocket to make sure that the Sanctuary of the Arts is a treasure in our backyard. He could have brought that anywhere he wanted, and he decided to do

it here. So, when you think about the money that they are investing. They have 180 planned performances this year and I'm sorry if you're going to speak and I'm taking your time.

Commissioner Menendez: Steal his thunder.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, I've known Mike for 30 years. Mike's a mentor, so at the end of the day, he didn't call me to talk to me about the grants. This is an individual who has spent millions and millions and millions of dollars in philanthropy in this community. Everything from the Performing Arts Center in downtown and it runs the gambit. This is just his latest project, which is making huge waves, not only locally but internationally. So when you talk about this investment, its an investment that has a huge ripple effect in the fact that somebody goes and watches a guitarist at Books and Books or a play, for example, or a ballet, or an opera at the Sanctuary, or go watch a show at Miracle Theater or go watch a special performance at a synagogue, whatever it may be, and the residents and the people who are visiting our community are spending their tax dollars to go have a coffee, a wine, dinner, to maybe catch a matinee at the theater, to maybe buy something at a store. So, it's kind of difficult, I know the calculator exists, but at the end of the day, I think that the benefits are so much more that we can't even feel it, in my opinion.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I agree with you. That's where I was going with this. I think seeing that number of \$731,000, I think that was way below the impact that we're seeing in Coral Gables from all of the arts that we're seeing. I had the opportunity to visit Sanctuary of the Arts and had a lengthy conversation with Rafi about what's happening in the community, the shutting down of Miami-Dade County Auditorium and the impact that that's having on the Sanctuary of the Arts, Actors Playhouse in Miracle Theater, and all of the venues that we have in Coral Gables because the establishments that we're using, Miami-Dade Auditorium are looking for a place to come and Coral Gables is the natural place. We are a city of culture. We've always embraced our culture in our city. I think we were one of the first cities to establish these funds back in the 1990s to help attract all these organizations and if I remember correctly, we've had double the number of applications this year from prior years.

Art Specialist Cathers: It's a lot more, yes. Since some of those bonus points were put in place, like I said, like twelve more applications this year. It's a lot of work that the board does to review and score all of them.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I think you hit the nail on the head, I think the Governor's veto on a lot of these cultural grants that the state was giving are going to have a hugely detrimental impact on our community, in particular we've had organizations that have lost \$75,000 from their funding for this fiscal year and they are having to find ways to generate that funding to offer the same programming that they were offering in prior years, and that's something that unfortunately none of us are able to tackle that issue locally. That's something we can work on with the legislature going forward for next year's budget to ensure that these are priorities, but I know the amount of

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time that you and the board spends reviewing all these applications, going through all of your markers, all of the points to get to this point and I appreciate the time that you and every single board member has spent going through these applications.

Mr. Fliss: I appreciate that. It is a labor of love, but it allows us to actually vet the applications and make sure that we have high quality educational and informative events that just create a better quality of life for the residents and for those outside. I know some of our arts organizations are working with the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau and are actually tracking 8, 10, 12 percent of their audience are visitors who are then taking hotel rooms, who are then paying the taxes that come right back to the city. These are all the numbers that are kind of fueling that \$731,000 just to the city itself but it accounts for really the \$27 million dollars that is generated by cultural activities in our community.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, I'm going to make a suggestion because for the next legislative agenda, I think we need to impactfully demonstrate to the State and to the Legislature and the Governor the economic impact of the cultural arts. There are statistics out there all the time about football and soccer and I think its totally underestimated the impact of the arts in the State of Florida, and we've had it added to our strategic plan, but just having it in words and not doing it in action, I don't think is really what we want to do. We want to be able to demonstrate that this is a tremendous piece. Every time I go up to discuss things with the State Legislators, I try to put it in dollars and cents, whether it's the waterways and the quality of the water impacts the bay, which impacts the hotels, which impacts the value of the property, and the cultural arts does the same thing. It impacts the value of the properties throughout Coral Gables. It impacts the revenues on hotels and people staying and eating and so forth, which I'm being a bit repetitious, but we need to quantify it. We need to quantify it in a fashion where they say, oh my God, I had no idea that these grants had this outsized impact, because if you look at \$731,000 and looking at what our investment is \$228,000, we've got a very good return on our investment.

Mr. Fliss: I want that in my portfolio.

Vice Mayor Anderson: What?

Mr. Fliss: I want that in my portfolio.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes. Yes. That return on investment in a year, my goodness, some of us takes seven years to get there on that kind of return.

Mayor Lago: And if you look at it, we're not talking about this here today, but it's an opportunity to also put it into the discussion. When you look at the cultural events that we do for the Mexican Consulate and the Columbian Consulate, for example, "Diaz de Muerto" draws a significant amount of people. Those individuals have a great time here in the city and they go and enjoy themselves or they get the ability to say, what's that building, oh, that's the Sanctuary of the Arts.

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Well, I'm going to come back and enjoy the following restaurants. I'm going to enjoy shopping at this destination. A lot of things that you don't see are people who leave, and they came here for a certain endeavor, maybe their daughter was dancing in a recital, maybe their son was playing an instrument at the Sanctuary, but they've never come to Coral Gables. I know this sounds weird, but not everybody has been to our city, and they have that one-time opportunity to experience our city and they come back, and they say, you know we're going to come back and have a fine dining experience, or we're going to catch a matinee, or we are going to go to Merrick Park. Those are things that are kind of not tangible, that's not my expertise, but I think it's something that pays dividends in the future. Just an opportunity to open us up to people who are again, more interested in all the great things that Coral Gables has to offer.

Commissioner Menendez: Based on what I read coming out of Tallahassee, I think is most likely a significant backlash across the state, because the narrative that came out of Tallahassee after the backlash is indicative that they got the message across the state, that the cuts to cultural grants was not well received, that's my observation based on what I was reading. My question is, do you provide the opportunity to applicants, the opportunity to sit down to better understand the parameters of applying for these grants, because I mean, some groups, I've mentioned it before, have a team of folks that are professionals in that area and there are others that aren't quite as sophisticated, in terms of the ins and outs of grants. Do you provide that and the reason I ask again, a broken record, but I think Little Carver didn't get a grant again this year. Last year, they had I think its "Taste of the Americas," I think the Mayor attended and I attended and to me, yes, its important to have events that draw people to our restaurants, but there are other events that have an impact that goes beyond the economics, its impacting the lives of others. And to me, something like the Little Carver kind of thing that was overwhelming, the number of families, the number of people that are going, foods from every part of the Americas. It was truly an amazing event and I'm concerned that things seem to be, I don't want to say skewed, but leaning in a way that if you are the ones that bring folks into Coral Gables, you have a better chance perhaps than the one that's more of the local neighborhood event. So, what can be done to help those smaller groups have a better chance.

Art Specialist Cathers: So, I'll speak a little bit first and then maybe I'll turn over to Mr. Fliss to speak on the board's conversation and about that particular one. But yes, its actually a requirement for first time applicants or applicants that have not received funding or have been denied funding or had a low score, it's a requirement that they meet with staff ahead of time. So, I meet with them, it could be anywhere from you know 20 minutes to an hour, depending on how much conversation is needed, but we ask that they complete the applications, a draft first, including all their financials and anything that they can get to me, staff, ahead of time so I can provide some direction.

Commissioner Menendez: Before they submit, there is someone that you have that they can reach out to. We were talking to the young people here about communication and letting folks, young

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people know that we have the Page Program, the internship program and everything else. Do we have that proactive kind of communication that if you need a sit down with somebody to go over, do we make that available.

Art Specialist Cathers: Yes. So, beyond the required ones, we also say, if anybody wants to complete the draft and have me review it, I'm certainly happy to. My role as staff tends to be more technical in nature because that's really the content is really up to the board, but I'm still able to give them direction, especially if they have already applied and there is some feedback. So, I definitely do my best, but it still ends up being their application. So, I don't know if you would like to hear about their conversation about that particular one or not.

Commissioner Menendez: I know they teamed up with the YMCA this year, they partnered with the YMCA. I just know the event and I know they've come up in conversation before here. Whatever light you can shine that maybe – what's done is done, you know, it is what it is, the other groups were selected, but going forward, I'd like to have groups like that have a better chance.

Commissioner Fernandez: Just on that point, do we offer any bonus points or any points if they're offering programming for youth or children? The demographics of our city are changing. We have a lot of younger families moving into the city, do we offer any specific requests or any specific points for programming for children?

Art Specialist Cathers: No. We do ask for what their audience is and then they need to describe that for us, and I had another thought about that. So, part of our part within the guidelines, there are things that can be used and things that can't be used for, and one of those things is specifically school events or afterschool events or programs, things that are not open to the public or perceived as being open to the public. So, for example, a few years ago there was a program that happened, this is actually on the campus of University of Miami in a theater that was very difficult to find at 2 o'clock, on a Thursday afternoon. So, we kind of look for those things too, and say well, it's not really open to the public, and it seems to be only for this particular group of people, but we don't specifically have a bonus. We have many, many programs that do include children, but there is not a bonus for that.

Mr. Fliss: I would just say that I think staff does a great job directing the applicants and giving them the information for them to be successful. The particular application you're referring to is the sole provider of after-school programming at the school. The optics of it didn't read very well for the panel. A lot of mention of student contribution, collaboration with the school and the PTA, I think the optics of it just felt like an extension of a school program. Your experience may be very different, and they just need to figure out how to put that in a narrative that makes it more palatable for, I think, the larger board to understand the experience and maybe less about leaning into all of their ties.



Commissioner Menendez: That's the kind of guidance that I think would have been helpful for them and hopefully they apply again next year with that understanding. I attended, like I said, the Mayor attended it was really impressive. I ended up eating foods I had no idea existed, but from every country in the Americas and you could see people coming in from all over to attend, so I think you make a great point, sometimes it's not what you present, but how you present it. So, if you could perhaps have your staff reach out to them.

Art Specialist Cathers: We talked to them about marketing and outreach and about making it even physically more open. I went two years ago, and it was only in that inner courtyard. I don't know how it was last year, but this year we talked, I had a long conversation, I think a very productive conversation with them about making sure that it was physically accessible for community members and that the community would know about it. So, the marketing and making sure that they could post in the E-NEWS or something to get the word out, and I think the other aspect of it was making sure that the musical performative components of it beyond the food that that would come out stronger. So, we did have that conversation and we hope that they apply again.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. First speaker is Rafi Maldonado Lopez.

Mayor Lago: Sir, good afternoon.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you for being here.

Mr. Lopez: Thank you. Good morning. Good afternoon, sorry, or is it morning still. Hopefully my face is getting familiar. I did want to, I don't know if Catherine ever gets commendation, but I work with a lot of grant people and Catherine is the only one who actually goes to things that gets funded by the city. I don't see anyone from the county ever in any of our events and she knows everybody. So, hopefully she gets a raise from that. I have had the privilege, and I do call it a privilege, to talk to some of you personally about some of the issues. I want to go back though to that November meeting where you guys had the vision, you had the foresight to approve something that has become historic. If you read the letter to the editor in this months Coral Gables magazine, it is a tribute to you guys, because on the same day following on your decision to agree to a strategic plan that includes the arts and cultural economics into it, the same day which was June 12<sup>th</sup> a black day for the arts in Florida, that same day coincidentally, because of your action 18 organizations were meeting at the museum, to put together a response, to put together a plan and it was precisely not to exclude public and elected officials and appointed officials, but we wanted to have a candid conversation about what this all meant to us. It was amazing. I do want to follow up on a few things. Thanks for your allowing us, Sanctuary, to be here. We have eight more organizations that came through the cultural grants process, because they have the space now, where they qualify to perform in Coral Gables, where before we didn't have a concert hall or a dance floor like we do

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now. So, part of that was so great to hear during the panel process. Because of what you just said, Miami-Dade County Auditorium is actually producing here in Coral Gables at our space. They just brought the...they are taking their shows and putting them here, so there's an interest. However, what we're doing is putting you guys as a model, as a model of how legislature and City Hall can work with the artists for real, not in rhetoric and narrative, so much so that for example, your example a few months ago, you donated a fire truck to the City of Acencion in Paraguay. We work in Paraguay, Sanctuaries in seven countries right now, Paraguay is one of them. Right now, we have a new show that we're producing with a national company of Mexico and our manufacturing is being done in Paraguay, thanks to a conversation with the consulate that came through here. We're trying to find ways that, as the gentleman was concerned about, we're not taking money away from anything. We're bringing in money and so, one of the things that we hope, we created the Coral Gables Arts Alliance is that with your help we can do better, I don't want to say the word lobbying, but in activism, creating a thought process in Tallahassee that taking the arts away when it brings in so much money. And there's confusion in Tallahassee, because they'll say, no, no, no, but sports bring in way more, but do you know that in Florida sports and tourism are connected. That's not fair, seriously, because Disney alone would kill us. We are trying to work with the cultural council now, to work a whole new narrative. We have become a model, and this is why if you please read the letter. We have been approached by two cities, two in Brazil, we now have a fulltime satellite in Rio, we have a full staff in Rio. We've been approached by the City of Kudicheba, we've been approached in Mexico. City of Kudicheba, we're actually working with the county. Because of Coral Gables and what we're promoting is a whole new narrative about how the arts works. We've been approached by the Grammys. We're going to have a road to the Grammys concert, the Mayor is privy to some of that information already. We just got approached by the Black Caucus to have a townhall meeting on June, July 25<sup>th</sup> which is 15 days away. The City of Opa Locka is hoping to be the site of the Black History Museum for the State of Florida and where did they decided that they needed to be, they knocked on our door. So, I can go on forever. You guys have to have coffee with me. So, I'm just going to leave it there. But please be conscious that you sit there not alone, that we are craving to have a very important conversation with you. We have conversations that are statewide about bringing new things here. We've had conversations even with the parking, how much we need it now, because we're just overwhelmed with requests, but the most important thing is that, please support our organizations so we can thrive and then beyond that, please support your own resolution, have a conversation with us so we can even put this higher up. I just want to thank you on behalf of all the institutions that are here for making yourselves accessible, to listening to us, to communicating with us, not always agreeing with us, that's cool, Rosa, she's over there in the back, we had a good conversation. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Rip Holmes.  
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Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Mr. Holmes: I don't really understand it, how it is that you, Mayor Lago, and even you Ms. Suarez, insinuated to me less than an hour ago that the city doesn't spend money on the arts. Here, to my astonishment, is proof that I was right, and that we do spend money on the arts. They've been getting, I guess the last budget was \$223,000, and just to be clear, you all know, we have a police crisis, possibly could be called an emergency. We're losing police officers, because there is a shortage of police officer applicants that is going to extend as far as the eye can see. So, we need to take money from the arts, in my opinion, and put it into a fund, and this is discretionary, how could you all imply that this is not there. It's standing right here behind us. The city money needs to be addressed to the citizens highest priority, which is public safety, which is funding the police and retaining good police officers. I recommend you do zero for this budget that they're asking. No money to the arts.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Commissioner Menendez: Mayor, if I may.

Mayor Lago: I just want to have our City Attorney clarify before anyone speaks on the issue. Its more for the record.

City Attorney Suarez: So, Mr. Holmes previously asked about the Art in Public Places fund and whether funds in that program could be used for police operations, police hiring, etc. So, the answer to that question is no. Now the funding for the cultural grants is not from the Art in Public Places fund. It is different and that's the distinction.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Sir.

Commissioner Menendez: Through the Manager, Fernando, our Government Affairs Director would come up. A lot of discussion regarding obviously, the cuts to cultural grants and funding for arts. About a month ago we talked, I think the museum was applying for a state grant and we said, let's see if we can provide our resources, our lobbyist, to help them sort of massage whatever they are going to request. If there's an answer now, great, but maybe something we can come back before we start setting our priorities, how we as a city can identify the need for dollars for culture, for arts in Coral Gables for our organizations. They suggested, I think it's a great idea, to see how we can use our resources, our leverage to help our local organizations get those dollars. I know we have a lot of priorities, and we have a lot of infrastructure, but I think this is a way that we can lend a hand.

Governmental Affairs Manager: Absolutely. And like you're saying, we can use both looking for grants, whether its through the Florida Department of State, we're looking at the Cultural and Arts Division. We have until March, that's when the next legislative session begins. It's a later start this

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year, so we'll have more time to set our legislative priorities, if that's something we want to throw into that bunch.

Commissioner Menendez: If we can – if we all participate, I know if we can emphasize its important to us as a city, I'm sure every city will do that, but we should do that as well, that's a good way we can help. Thank you, Fernando.

Government Affairs Manager: Yes Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: And if I may to Mr. Holmes. I think we all understand the concern with police and safety. Item H-2 on the agenda is actually our approval of...

Mr. Holmes: [Inaudible- off mic]

Commissioner Fernandez: I know. Let me just finish. We're approving \$1.425 million dollars on item H-2.

Mr. Holmes: It's not going to solve the problem...

Commissioner Fernandez: This was the contract that was approved by the police union, so we are also restricted in what we can do, based on a contract that has been signed by both parties. I understand the concern and I think...

Mr. Holmes: [Inaudible]...the indefinite future, just because we put a band aide on this year doesn't mean it's not getting worse every day.

Commissioner Fernandez: And we're working on it.

Mr. Holmes: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Fernandez: There are funds that are separated for different things, as the City Attorney explained. I just want to make sure you understand. We are addressing both issues.

Mr. Holmes: How can you be addressing when you're spending money on the arts when you should put it in the police fund. I won't say anything more...

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to go ahead and add two cents to that. Unfortunately, we can't force people to want to be police officers and money alone is not the motivating factor. We have examples across the country where there's just folks not wanting to be police officers for a number of reasons you can easily think of why you wouldn't want to do the job either. We need to do a better job, everybody, law enforcement period, across the country and encouraging individuals who are fit for duty to apply for these positions, whether they are stepping out of the military, or other departments to perform a law enforcement function. There are folks in the Department of Corrections that I've met and the BOP, the Bureau of Prisons that have gone from

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being in that position to move into law enforcement. We need to recruit better that's the bottom line. We need to show people what a worthwhile job this is, because even the highest paid job some people don't want. My daughters watch me work the number of hours I do as an attorney and they didn't want to do that job, but they chose other jobs. One wanted to do air traffic control, that's a very stressful job, but it's not a job for everyone, just not. Policing is not a job for everyone either. So, we need to spread the information out there so people will want those jobs, and by the way, we have a shortage of air traffic controllers too.

Commissioner Castro: So, compensation money is not the only factor, but I have to say its one of the biggest factors. But moving forward, if you guys, whenever you guys have plays, dances, whatever the case is, events, send them to my email so that I could go ahead and promote them on my social media. Okay.

Mr. Lopez: You're not on them? That's our fault because we thought we had everybody's email already.

Commissioner Fernandez: No, I'm not on there either.

Mr. Lopez: Are you serious?

Vice Mayor Anderson: We're serious or it might be spam.

Mr. Lopez: You guys have like a military firewall.

Commissioner Castro: I'm not getting anything.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I do look at the spam thing every once in a while.

Commissioner Menendez: I get Rip's emails.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do you have any other public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No sir.

Mayor Lago: So, I'll entertain a motion, unless there is any other further comment.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

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Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)