

City of Coral Gables

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



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 4, 2025

4:00 PM

<https://coralgables.zoom.us/j/86149844627>

Adult Activity Center

Senior Citizens Advisory Board

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 4:07 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present:

Judith "Jude" Alexander

Gerardo Alvarez

Olga Girod

Julian Sevillano

Jean Connelly

Javier Figueras

Thomas Wells

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE NOVEMBER MEETING MINUTES WAS MADE BY BOARD MEMBER THOMAS WELLS AND WAS SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER GERARDO ALVAREZ. ALL IN FAVOR; PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MANAGERS REPORT

a. General Updates

Adult Activity Center Manager Gavarette began her report by providing a follow-up from the prior meeting regarding Spanish language programming. She reported that a potential instructor had been contacted and is scheduled to visit the Center to better understand expectations before any contract is finalized. She also noted that the public library currently offers free online language courses—beginner through advanced in Spanish, English, Italian, and French—held Monday through Thursday. Staff will confirm whether any of these options are available in person, as this may complement or supplement center's offerings.

Manager Gavarette announced that The Palace has been fully reserved for all major AAC events for the coming year. She emphasized that securing these dates greatly improves planning efficiency and reduces logistical burdens, noting The Palace's consistently excellent hospitality and food service.

She also provided an overview of upcoming workshops and services. Manager Gavarette is actively coordinating additional educational programs with Baptist Health and the University of Miami's Brain Institute, with both organizations expressing interest in offering recurring monthly lecture-and-lunch sessions. Additionally, she highlighted other upcoming programs, including a FLOW, Fraud Prevention Workshop, the Saturday Cinema series, and ongoing holiday gift workshops.

Manager Gavarette reported that the Holiday Luncheon sold out in under 48 hours, reflecting exceptionally high demand. To accommodate more participants, capacity was expanded from approximately 107 to 130 attendees by reducing dance floor space. Although more than 80 individuals remain on the waitlist, the adjustment allowed a significant portion of waitlisted guests to be included. She also shared updates on the Day Trippers program, noting a planned museum tour in January, pending confirmation of a private tour.

Manager Gavarette ended her report by reviewing the Adult Activity Center's holiday operating hours. The AAC will be closed on December 24, December 25, and January 1, and will close early at 3:00 p.m. on December 31.

b. Special Events

Friday, December 5 at 5 p.m. – Christmas Tree Lighting Event at Merrick Park,
Saturday, December 6 at 11 a.m. - A Saturday at the Cinema, December, "The Time Machine" at the Coral Gables Art Cinema, Saturday, December 6 at 9:30 a.m. - Planting Pollinators Dedication and Reception at Coral Gables Library Garden,
Sunday, December 7 at 9 a.m. - Hot Chocolate with Santa at Merrick Park, Sunday, December 7 at 6 p.m. - Centennial Grand Finale at the Venetian Pool, Tuesday, December 9 at 5:30 p.m. – Twinkle and Toast at the Country Club, Friday, December 12 at 1 p.m. - Annual Holiday Celebration 2025 at the Adult Activity Center, Saturday, December 13 at 10 a.m. - Pancake and Pajamas at the Country Club, Sunday, December 14 at 1:30 p.m. – Festival of Lights Chanukah Celebration at Ponce Circle

Park , Sunday, December 14 at 5 p.m. – JOB Parade, Tuesday, December 16 at 5:30 p.m. – Menorah Lighting at City Hall, Friday, December 19 at 6 p.m. – Movies Under the Gables Moonlight at Ponce Circle Park, Sunday, December 20 at 9 a.m. - Hot Chocolate with Santa at Merrick Park.

c. Administrative Updates

Community Recreation Director Couceyro provided an overview of the department's extensive holiday programming and special events. He noted that the Tree Lighting Ceremony at City Hall successfully opened Holiday Park, which will remain active through Three Kings Day on January 6. He outlined the busy December schedule, including Saturday at the Cinema, the Garden Club's pollinator dedication at the library, multiple Hot Chocolate with Santa dates, the Centennial Grand Finale Concert at Venetian Pool featuring the Miami Symphony, Twinkle and Toast at the Coral Gables Golf & Country Club, the AAC Holiday Luncheon, Pancakes in Pajamas, the Festival of Lights Hanukkah Celebration at Ponce Circle Park, the Junior Orange Bowl Parade, the Menorah Lighting at City Hall, and Movies in the Park on December 19.

Director Couceyro reported that Venetian Pool had passed inspection and would reopen on December 9 following the Centennial event. Although this is outside the typical winter operating schedule, the decision to open was made due to the prolonged closure earlier in the year. He noted that reopening the pool creates staffing challenges, as Holiday Park operations traditionally rely on Venetian Pool staff for security and support.

Director Couceyro then reviewed ongoing facility improvements and capital projects. He explained that while 12 parks currently have flagpoles, expanding this initiative presents challenges with nighttime illumination and staffing for flag removal. The City will pilot a solar-lighted flagpole at Bryan Owen Park to determine feasibility. Updates were provided on planned dog parks—one near the library and another under the Metrorail/Underline, the latter awaiting permit release and electrical adjustments before the City can assume maintenance. Sanitation services for artificial turf will be managed by Doody Calls, Inc. Additional park improvements include maintenance at Salvadore Park's dog area, final work at David Lawrence (Blue Road) Park, which is nearing a soft opening pending plaque delivery, and progress on designs for golf course shelters and the long-overdue renovation of the golf maintenance barn. Work is also underway on replacing the boardwalk at Ruth Bryan Owen Waterway Park and evaluating the addition of a canoe launch.

Director Couceyro addressed ongoing discussions regarding the historic Gondola Building, weighing options to repair in place or relocate depending on historic grant requirements and space constraints. Other safety and facility enhancements, such as additional lighting poles at Maggiore Park and continued planning at other recreation sites, were also noted.

Director Couceyro ended his report with staffing updates, stating that the department is actively recruiting for several full-time roles, including a Fitness Center Manager at

the Country Club, a Youth Center Manager, and two maintenance positions at the Tennis Centers and Venetian Pool. Multiple part-time vacancies also remain open due to normal turnover. He also emphasized that this is the final year of the current Holiday Park layout, with several vendors submitting new design concepts. These concepts will be reviewed with Commissioners and City Management before bringing a recommended design forward under a bid waiver.

NEW BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

b. Invitation of Elected Officials to Attend Board Meetings

Board Member Wells informed the board he was in contact with Commissioner Castro, who expressed interest in attending a Board meeting and requested a future date. The Board discussed the process for inviting elected officials and confirmed that commissioners may attend individually, but not as a group, to avoid Sunshine Law conflicts.

After discussion, the Board would invite Commissioner Castro to join the January 8 board meeting. The Board briefly noted that additional dates could be arranged for other commissioners should they express interest.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Discussion regarding proposed recommendations for the 2026 Dr. William Schiff Art Show.

The Board Members reviewed the recommendations developed by Board Member Connelly for the Annual Dr. William Schiff Art Show. The discussion began with the proposed timeline for the Call to Artists, with members agreeing that outreach should begin in early September to allow sufficient time for promotion across all platforms. The Board further recommended that all submitted artwork be completed within the past five years and that artists be permitted to enter more than one category, with a limit of two pieces per category.

The Board Members also revisited the structure of categories, considering the possibility of separating Drawing and Painting due to high participation and evaluating the feasibility of adding or refining categories for mixed media, watercolor, photography, hard crafts, and soft crafts. While more categories would offer greater clarity, concerns were raised about whether there would be enough entries in each to justify the change.

The Board also discussed improvements to labeling and display procedures. Suggestions included grouping artwork by category to assist with the judging process and implementing a numbering system—such as P1 or P2 for photography—that corresponds to an organized spreadsheet.

The Board Members emphasized the importance of maintaining anonymity during judging by ensuring that only entry numbers are visible on the front of each piece.

The judging process itself was also examined, with consensus that a panel of five to seven judges is ideal, preferably including local artists who are not current board members. Judges should receive clear written instructions in advance, and the use of photographs to assist in tracking selections was encouraged. A two-round voting system was recommended: a first round in which judges select several pieces per category, followed by a second round to resolve ties and finalize the category winners. The Board reaffirmed that Best in Show should be selected from among the category winners.

Award structure and presentation procedures were also addressed. Members agreed that each category should have one winner, with Best in Show receiving a slightly more substantial prize. Ribbons would continue to be placed on winning works during the awards ceremony. The Board emphasized the importance of volunteer involvement, recommending that specific tasks—such as intake, setup, labeling, and easel placement—be assigned in advance to ensure smooth operations. Finally, the Board expressed interest in expanding post-show visibility for senior artists by exploring potential partnerships with the Library or the Coral Gables Museum and possibly aligning with Art Basel-related programming.

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY

Next meeting date Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 4 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY BOARD MEMBER THOMAS WELLS TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AND WAS SECONDED BY OLGA GIROD. ALL IN FAVOR; PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 5:05 P.M.

NOTE