



**City of Coral Gables**  
**CITY COMMISSION MEETING**  
**February 14, 2023**

**ITEM TITLE: ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS**

**MEETING DATE: January 18, 2023**

**SUMMARY OF MEETING:**

**QUORUM:**

No Quorum was reached - Discussion commenced at between 10:05AM – 10:14AM  
Quorum was reached upon arrival of Board member Ms. Milne at 10:15AM

**STAFF:**

Raquel Elejabarrieta – Labor Relations & Risk Management Director  
Eglys Hernandez – Labor Relations & Risk Management PT Adm Asst  
Catie Hastings – Parks & Recreation D.E.I (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Coordinator  
Vivian Pires – Parks & Recreation P/T D.E.I. Counselor

**GUEST:**

Jennifer Sando

**CITIZEN ADVISORS:**

Bonnie Blaire – Via Zoom  
Debbie Dietz  
Jennifer Durocher, Director of UM-NSU Card

**PUBLIC GUEST:**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Meeting was called to order 10:05am

**MEETING ABSENCE:**

Samantha Duran

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:**

September 7, 2022 (draft submitted and approved by Commission on October 25, 2022, meeting)  
Motion by: Blake Sando / 2<sup>nd</sup> Philippa Milne / All approved unanimously

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** None

**BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS:** None

**10:05AM – 10:14AM - DISCUSSION COMMENCED WITH NO QUORUM REACHED**

Board commenced discussing goals for next year. One of the items discussed was following up with school board regarding a self-contained classroom at elementary level. Ms. Durocher stated past issue was concern regarding available space at schools in the elementary level. Ms. Sando spoke of area available at a site. Ms. Sando asked

Ms. Palacio if she would like to come to the next meeting of the School Community Relations Committee. Ms. Elejabarrieta recommended prior to attending the School Community Relations Committee, that the school district be contacted first regarding an update of status for this issue.

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised the last suggestion was to consider a school within the vicinity of Coral Gables such as Tucker. Ms. Durocher advised it would be beneficial to look into this option. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised city will reach out to school district and advise Board.

#### **10:15AM – QUORUM WAS REACHED – BOARD MEMBER MS. MILNE ARRIVED**

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### **Board Goals for 2023**

Ms. Palacio shared article with board which reflects Miami positioning itself as a destination for people with disabilities. Ms. Palacio stated -Dade Commissioner Raquel Regalado had discussed this in the past. Ms. Palacio spoke regarding expanding Project Victory. Ms. Palacio advised board regarding Chamber of Commerce survey sent to business and results. Discussion continued how to proceed with best way to reach the business community regarding issue of employment for people with disabilities. Various suggestions were discussed such as creations of videos, marketing as well as involvement of Development Services board.

Ms. Dietz stated the importance to continue efforts regarding installation of audible cross walks in downtown Coral Gables and the ongoing discussion of the pathway at the Granada Golf Course.

Board spoke regarding city hosting once again the Business award program for the month of October, which recognizes companies who employ people with disabilities.

##### **Freebie Services**

Ms. Liebl asked regarding expanding of Freebie services available. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised she will research and provide updated route information.

##### **Board Attendance: Ms. Palacio-Pike**

Ms. Palacio-Pike expressed concern regarding board attendance. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated if someone is sick or traveling that should be ok, however, being absent often should not be the normal. Mr. Sando stated in past during current meetings the next month's meeting date would be determined. Board determined to maintain meetings for first Wednesday of every month and at ten am. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised meetings commencing February thru June will be scheduled.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

##### **Board meetings: Ms. Raquel Elejabarrieta**

Ms. Elejabarrieta stated in October 2022, the board was going to hold an evening meeting where Miami Dade Commissioner Raquel Regalado was going to address board. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated that instead of board hosting evening meeting, it was determined it would be best for Miami Dade Commissioner Regalado to attend the October 11, 2022, commission meeting where she spoke regarding her initiatives in the county and accepted proclamation for Disability Awareness month. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated city also passed annual resolution regarding Principals of Inclusion for All Individuals. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised there was also a proclamation for Florida City Government Week presented which was accepted by Project Victory participants. Ms. Elejabarrieta shared pictures of proclamation acceptance.

**Director Training – Ms. Elejabarrieta**

Ms. Elejabarrieta stated Director Training conducted by Ms. Haley Moss and Ms. Shelly Baer regarding Disability Myths & Truths took place on October 26, 2022, and was attended by all directors and assistant directors as well as the City attorney, City clerk and City Manager. Ms. Palacio suggested perhaps another training should be conducted during this quarter.

**2022 Fire Department Santa Claus Visit – Ms. Elejabarrieta**

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised the Fire department conducted its' 2<sup>nd</sup> annual visit from Santa to families within the city, who have children with disabilities. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised the families received gifts for the children and took pictures with Santa. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated the fire fighters are looking forward to doing again this year.

**Board members visit self-contained classroom at Ponce de Leon Middle School – Ms. Elejabarrieta**

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised board members visited the self-contained classroom at Ponce de Leon Middle school. Ms. Elejabarrieta spoke of initial concern county had regarding enrollment, however, Ms. Palacio-Pike advised there is no issue with that. Ms. Palacio-Pike advised there are twelve students currently in program. Ms. Palacio-Pike also feels if there were to be a self-contained classroom at an elementary school, there should not be an issue regarding enrollment. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated there are plenty of families in need of service.

Ms. Dietz advised that Ms. Genesis Espaillat celebrated her one year of employment at the Senior Adult Center. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised Ms. Espaillat was hired as a part time Guest Services representative and is the city's first Best Buddies hire. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated Ms. Espaillat has been doing great at her position.

Ms. Palacio-Pike advised Autism Caravan will be taking place once again this year on April 6, 2022. Ms. Palacio-Pike advised it will commence in North Miami and will end at Crystal Academy. Ms. Palacio-Pike advised this year students from Coral Gables High School students will be going to Crystal Academy as well on that day.

**Recap: Adventure Day for All – Ms. Raquel Elejabarrieta**

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised event was held on October 22, 2023, and it was a beautiful day. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated everyone is looking forward to hosting this event once again.

**Re-Cap: Teens Scene – Ms. Catie Hastings**

Ms. Hastings advised they had four events last year. Ms. Hastings advised for upcoming session the activities will be restructured to more indoor ones and to be more engaging for the younger group.

Ms. Hastings spoke of concerns they have received regarding registration. Ms. Hastings advised this is being reviewed and to facilitate the process, they are researching the possibility of offering an annual subscription.

**Re-Cap: My Squad – Ms. Catie Hastings**

Ms. Hastings advised there are approximately 15 to 20 participants. Ms. Hastings advised of upcoming events scheduled. Ms. Hastings will send Ms. Elejabarrieta information on the scheduled events, which will provide same to board members via email.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**NEXT MEETING:** February 1, 2023

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 11:01am

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Minutes of the January 18, 2023