

# City of Coral Gables

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



## Meeting Minutes

Friday, June 11, 2021

8:00 AM

The Board meets the second Thursday of every month.  
Coral Gables Youth Center, 405 University Drive, Coral Gables, FL  
**Parks and Recreation Advisory Board**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**@8:12 am**

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:**

**Joan Valdes**

**Jennifer Marques**

**Charlie Rua**

**Ellen Chases**

**Laura Hernandez**

**Monica C. Segura-Virtual**

**Absent:**

**Ruben Rodriguez**

**A motion to excuse Ruben Rodriguez absence was made by Charlie Rua and was second by Laura Hernandez. All in favor, Motion passed unanimously.**

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

We began the meeting by having staff and board members formally introduce themselves and share their time in the city. Following introductions, Community Recreation Director Fred Couceyro quickly highlighted Florida's Sunshine Law, how to add items to the agenda, attendance, and excused absences. He also went over how to pass motions, purpose of the board and how we typically setup the agenda for each meeting. Assistant Director Carolina Vester shared that in 2019 the Zoning code for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) for the use of parks was amended to require the Parks Advisory board to review and provide their recommendation of any transfer prior to the Commission's approval. However, this does not happen often.

### **a. Board Member at Large Nominations**

Fred mentioned that the Board Member at Large position is still vacant so if the Board has any suggestions to please submit their information along with a resume to our admin staff. Once received, that information will be shared with the Board for consideration.

### **b. Chair and Vice-Chair Nominations**

Before opening up for nominations and the selection of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board, Fred went over the roles and duties of the positions. Monica Segura asked to be considered for either Chair or Vice Chair and to also nominate Charlie Rua as Chair or Vice-Chair.

Charlie Rua made the motion to nominate Monica Segura as Chair of the Parks Advisory Board. This motion was second by Jennifer Marques. All were in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Monica Segura made the motion to nominate Charlie Rua as Vice-Chair of the Parks Advisory Board. This motion was second by Laura Hernandez. All were in favor, motion passed unanimously.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The City will officially reopen to normal operations starting June 14th. All of our park's facilities are now open, and capacities have increased along with additional programming. The Adult Activity Center has been open since May but will continue with limited programming until September. Youth Summer Camp programming will begin June 14th.

The Community Recreation Department have begun with summer events which included the annual Memorial Day event and our first annual Literacy Festival that was hosted at the War Memorial Youth Center. This event marked the first time Scholastic Book Fair partnered with a municipality rather than a school which allowed for our event to sell books onsite for a reasonable price during the event. The event was very successful and drew out more than 1200 participants. We did not anticipate such a large turnout so we will need to adjust logistics if we are to continue the event at the Youth Center. Parking and police street closures will need to be adjusted. We were able to use school PTAs and word of mouth to help promote the event.

Board member Jennifer Marques asked if we are considering a different location for the Literacy Festival next year. Fred responded to the Board that we got a lot of positive feedback from participants and vendors by using the Youth Center because of the shade provided by the tree canopy and allowing for street closures. But we have identified that if we are going to continue to use the Center, designated parking stalls, parking attendants and additional police presence will be needed. We will also need to inform surrounding residences in advance that there will be street closures and increased car traffic now that we know to expect a much larger turnout. We hope when the Coral Gables Public Library reopens that we will be able to partner with them and utilize both locations.

Fred shared with the Board that the City has begun gaining interest again for outside special events. Our department has been receiving and processing applications for events like Carnival on the Mile, filming permits and photography permits which we hope will help generate back some of the lost revenues during the pandemic.

As we gear up towards the official start of summer, Fred shared that our department along with other businesses have had a very difficult time in hiring Part-Time staff. We have heard from former employees that they receive more money from government aid than working part-time. We hope

that this will change as the government makes obtaining unemployment funds more difficult. Charlie Rua asked if there will be enough staff to continue our safety ratios for summer camps. Staff assured the board that there will be enough staff for a 10:1 child to staff ratio that we have always had. And we will still be able to keep the cohort groups. We have also decided to not allow for off site field trips.

Parent orientations will be given twice before programming starts and we will be using the Pro Care app for child check-in and sign out.

**a. Presentation on Master Plan**

Staff continued with the meeting by sharing the War Memorial Youth Center Master Plan presentation with the Board. This presentation was created after edits were submitted to the consultants of AECOM and ETC. The presentation highlighted the conceptual plan for the Youth Center for the next 20-50 years. Items covered included a brief explanation of the project process and approach, an existing conditions analysis, a needs and priorities assessment, the overall vision for the center, and a strategic implementation plan. Staff will also share the Community Recreation's overall Master Plan with the Board during our July meeting. However, if any of the Board would like a draft copy of either plan to review, they can request a copy with the Admin Assistant Sarah Espino. We hope to present both plans to Commission in July for adoption. Staff also notified the newly appointed members of the Board that the previous members passed a motion approving the plans with conditions.

Fred Couceyro gave the Board a brief history of Youth Center's original design and how during the time of phasing in construction elements, budget cuts were made that did not allow for the building's completion. Since these renovations and additions were not completed, it left the Center without an indoor walking track and underutilized space throughout the building. Fred and Carolina also went over flagged issues with the existing conditions that were obtained using surveys and focus groups.

Carolina Vester went over the survey results and vision workshop results that were collected in 2019 for future needs and priorities residents would like incorporated into the Youth Center. Key takeaways included residents would like a developed aquatics facility, expand current fitness facility to support broad memberships, community centers, the community's willingness to financially support recreation improvements, connectivity to the center, and clean public restrooms for indoor and outdoor activities. The

results also highlighted the possible use of the vacant lot across the street for expansion.

There were three conceptual building expansion designs that were shown to the Board to highlight extensions of space, redesign of entry ways and fitness areas, and outdoor athletic space with concessions. A fourth option of demolishing the Center and starting over was also given as a possibility. This same presentation was shown to the War Memorial Youth Center Association, their preferred option was complete demolition and reconstruction.

Charlie Rua asked if or when these plans are adopted by the Commission, how soon would construction take place. Staff responded that even after Commission approves the conceptual plan, a funding source would still need to be established and a phasing plan of how to implement any of these designs would be needed. Staff does not expect any physical implementation until a minimum of five years.

An order of magnitude estimate for probable capital improvement costs was provided that summarized estimated costs of each design plan. The designs ranged from \$22.7 million to the more expensive option at \$25.3 million. However, the fourth option of completely rebuilding which was not included but suggested came in at approximately \$30 million. Staff asked that AECOM consultants to provide an escalation chart to help provide a realistic cost associated with construction several years into the future and to create an itemized price menu in the event the City chose to pick and choose design elements from each design to put together. The consultants also provided operating expense and revenue projections with a redesign of the Youth Center.

Funding opportunities were included in the Master Plan document that identified the General CIP Fund, Grants, Park Impact fees, and a Parks and Recreation reinvestment GO Bond as possible funding sources.

Laura Hernandez asked what possible locations could be utilized if the Youth Center goes under construction. Fred and staff listed spaces that were used in the past when the center was initially constructed. They also suggested phasing out the construction to still use the field, utilizing our parks such as Phillips Park, utilize local schools and fields during Summer, and utilizing the vacant lot across from the center.

Jennifer Marques suggested that staff include the fourth option into the

presentation since it seems to be the most talked about option. The consultant team has been tasked will including this option in the WMYC Master Plan with a more measurable cost to the project. We will include it in the presentation to the Commission.

Ellen Chasens wanted to know more about plans for increasing parking to the center. Carolina shared with the board that underground parking was discussed or expanding the existing parking by creating more stalls closer to the street.

#### **ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY**

**a. Proposed meeting date and time.**

The next board meeting is scheduled for July 8th at 8:00am with a tentative location at the Adult Activity Center.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 9:39am

#### **NOTE**