

CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
Meeting Minutes of September 9, 2024, 8:30 a.m.
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, 2nd Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	O 23	N 23	D 23	J 24	F 24	M 24	A 24	M 24	J 24	J 24	A 24	S 24	APPOINTED BY
Bonnie Seipp	E	P	N	P	P	P	A	A	N	N	P	P	Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	P	P	O	P	A	P	A	P	O	O	E	P	Mayor Vince Lago
Mary Beth Burke Vice Chair	E	P	M	P	P	P	P	P	M	M	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Margaret Groves	E	E	E	P	#	P	P	P	E	E	E	E	Commissioner Melissa Castro
Alexis Ehrenhaft	P	P	E	P	A	E	E	P	E	E	P	E	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Genevieve Orr	P	E	T	P	P	A	P	P	T	T	P	P	Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Joanne Meagher Chairperson	P	P	I N G	P	P	P	P	P	I N G	I N G	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole

LEGEND: A = Absent; P = Present; E = Excused; * = New Member; ^ = Resigned Member,
 - = No Meeting; # = Late meeting arrival.

STAFF: Anna Pernas, Historical Resources Director, Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer;
 Gay Bondurant, Docent Coordinator, Yvelisse Bonilla, Administrative Assistant.

RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Yvelisse Bonilla, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 AM by Chair Joanne Meagher. Attendance was stated for the record.

ROLL CALL:

In attendance were Ms. Burke, Ms. Cason, Chair Meagher, Ms. Seipp, and Ms. Orr.

OPENING STATEMENT: Excerpt from the book, “Bubble in the Sun”

“He was a large, fine-looking man, with rich, deep voice, a natural orator,” the Ohio Annual “Conference Yearbook recorded at this death, “and a very good preacher; very profitable to the large congregations that, as a rule attended his ministry.” At more than six feet four inches tall, reed thin with piercing blue gray eyes, H.G.G. had a commanding presence. When he was a young boy, George Merrick wrote that his beloved grandfather, prematurely gray with a long, flowing Old Testament beard, seemed like the personification of Moses and God when “his shouting Methodist voice would soar up and away into the rafters.”

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Ms. Seipp, seconded by Ms. Cason, to approve the minutes for the August 12, 2024, meeting with amendments. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Merrick House Activity Report August 2024 - Ms. Bondurant read the August 2024 House Report. The report was shared with the Board in advance of the meeting and is included as an attachment to the minutes.
2. Craig Johnson Memorial – All agreed that it was a very heartfelt ceremony. Many of his co-workers attended and expressed their appreciation.

Coral Gables Merrick House Governing Board Meeting
September 9, 2024

3. Docent Letter – Ms. Burke noted her appreciation of the thank you letter sent to Docents.
4. 100 Voices Speaker Series – Dan Finora from Coral Gables High School will be the speaker on Sunday, September 22, 2024. It was noted that a new videographer is needed. Mayor Don Slesnick has agreed to speak on October 27th. Mr. Slesnick will be speaking on the Sister Cities program. Board members will be working on speakers for February, March, and April of 2025.
5. Grants - Ms. Meagher noted that she is not inclined to apply for a Villagers Grant this year. The Merrick Trust Fund is at a good level. We have asked for an extension on the book restoration due to supplier registration issues.
6. Coral Gables Museum – The Museum borrowed several artifacts from the Merrick House for their exhibit on George Merrick. The exhibit will be at the Museum until 2025.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Stag Painting – Board members and Staff continue to work on Guerri’s Antique Restoration estimate and vendor registration.
2. Furniture – Staff is working with Disar on the purchase order to repair the table in the entry hallway where the veneer is coming unglued.

A motion was made by Ms. Burke, seconded by Ms. Seipp, to approve using Tony at Disar Furniture to repair the entrance table for an amount no to exceed \$650.00. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Staff Tours – The first tour for City staff will take place on Friday, September 13, 2024. The board will look into providing a pass for employees’ families that are interested in touring MH at a later date.

A motion was made by Ms. Burke, seconded by seconded by Ms. Seipp, to provide family passes of 4 for employee’s families. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Althea’s Garden Brigade – The waiver was approved by the City Attorney’s office. The first clean-up will be on October 5, 2024. Board members will discuss the frequency with which the Brigade meets to garden at a future meeting. Chair Meagher will work on an announcement.
5. Founders Day – A thank you letter was sent to Karelia Carbonell for the “Tales of the Alhambra” by Washington Irving book by Amanda Levasser, Archivist.
6. Veteran’s Day Concert – Scheduled for Sunday, November 10, 2024 at the House. Chairperson Meagher has resolved the payment issue with the band. Tentative schedule as follows: 1:00 pm open house, 2:00 pm concert, 3:00 pm open house. Ms. Orr research renting a popcorn machine for the event.
7. Historic Tiles – Chair Meagher contacted Amanda Levasser regarding the tiles. Ms. Meagher is interested in placing the tiles in a more appropriate location. For example: working with Coral Gables High School or returning to the Biltmore.
8. Holiday Open House – Scheduled for December 15, 2024. Board members will contact schools to see if they can have a children’s choir at this event.

Coral Gables Merrick House Governing Board Meeting
September 9, 2024

9. Antique Doorknobs – A resident, Lisa Davison, donated antique brass doorknobs. The doorknobs are from a demolished original John Hancock building in Boston built in the 1800s. Staff will advise whether these can be sold at Merrick House.
10. Shadow Boxes – Ms. Burke suggests donating these to History Miami or Coral Gables Museum, Dade Heritage Trust to take into schools for a show and tell or put on display at the local elementary or middle schools.

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None.

CITY COMMISSION ITEMS: None.

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Kara N. Kautz
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer