

TRAFFIC ADVISORY BOARD
CORAL GABLES YOUTH CENTER
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
FEBRUARY 19, 2008

	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	
MEMBERS:													APPOINTED BY:
Ian Martinez	-	-	-	-	-	P	P	P	E	*	E	P	Donald D. Slesnick, II
Larry D. Kries	A	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	P	*	P	P	Maria Anderson
Douglas Yoder	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	*	P	E	Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Frank Quesada		-	-	-	-	P	P	E	P	*	P	P	William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Christopher Morrison	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	P	P	Wayne "Chip" Withers
Bertram Goldsmith, Jr.	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	*	P	P	Commission-as-a-Whole
Ramon Irigoyen	A	E	P	E	E	A	A	A	A	*	P	P	City Manager

(*) Board recommended not holding a meeting due to holiday vacations

A - Absent
E – Excused
P - Present

STAFF

R. Alberto Delgado, P.E., Public Works Director
Lt. A. Diaz, Police Department
Esther Zabalo, Civil Engineer
M. Francomacaro, Central
Yamilet Senespleda, Marlin Engineering

Press

Sebastian del Marmol, Coral Gables Gazette

Residents

Anthony Paul, 437 Santander
Thomas Mooney, 601 Navarre Avenue
Axel R. Font, 813 Lisbon Street

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m. The draft minutes of the January 16, 2008 were distributed. Upon a motion made by Mr. Irigoyen, seconded by Mr. Goldsmith, the minutes were approved as presented. At this time the Board Members, upon a motion made by Mr. Goldsmith, seconded by Mr. Irigoyen, moved that Dr. Yoder's absence be considered an excused absence. He is in Tallahassee.

Minutes of the meeting with the Hammock Lakes I & II community meeting were distributed. Upon a motion made by Mr. Irigoyen and after a brief discussion the minutes were approved as

presented. Mr. Martinez asked if we were supposed to have some comments back from the Police and the Fire Department by now. Mr. Morrison noted that the Fire Department will have comments on the gate and street closure and the ability of the Fire vehicles to access the area at a later date.

Mr. Morrison called everyone's attention to the motions recorded in the minutes. He noted that Mirtha had some difficulty hearing Dr. Yoder, but she did her best to capture the motion. He advised the Board Members to make sure they were comfortable with the motion as written.

Pursuant to Mr. Kries' question last month as to whether the Board holds an annual meeting the purpose of which is to elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman, Mr. Morrison suggested we hold our annual meeting during the March Traffic Board meeting in deference to Dr. Yoder who was not present.

PUBLIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Delgado gave a report on the Hammock Lakes I & II issue brought to the City Commission meeting of February 11, 2008, but the item was deferred because a couple of Commissioners wanted more information on the subject. Mr. Morrison noted that the item should not have been scheduled before the Commission until the January Traffic Board minutes and the minutes for the Hammock Lakes I & II community meeting had been approved by this Board and distributed. The City Manager's office is now scheduling another community meeting before the City Commission to insure all affected residents will have a say. The City Manager's office will be sending out notifications to all area residents, not just the ones on the Special Taxing District.

Update on the Circle at South Alhambra and Veronese: Even though the majority of the residents are in favor, the homeowners who live next to the circle are not in favor of the installation. Mr. Delgado had a meeting with Commissioner Kerdyk and the property owners who live next to the circle, but since they are against the installation, another meeting will be scheduled with those residents to address their concerns. It seems that their main concern is the so called "park", but which, in actuality, is an island. Those residents fear that the island will be split in two by installing the circle. Mr. Morrison asked for schematic drawings to show to the Board.

Mr. Morrison asked for a little history on another circle near that location that had been removed. Mr. Delgado noted that another circle had been planned for the area of Veronese, but it did not really work. The residents were not in favor because it was encroaching into their properties. It was only marked with temporary delineators, which were removed.

Mr. Delgado noted that the existing island is triangular in shape and the rest of the intersection is asphalt. There is a lot of asphalt in the area. The proposed plan calls for a big circle plus a triangular-shaped island and all of this would be additional green space. If the plan is put into effect, the properties are going to be protected with more swale and more green space, so it would be an improvement to the area. However, they are upset. They do not like the idea that this triangular island is going to be split in two sections because they consider it a park.

Mr. Delgado informed the Board Members that Public Works is working right now on another design which will be presented to the residents. The new design most likely will keep the island. The rest of the affected residents have voted in favor of the original design. Public Works needs to work with the residents who are not in favor to see if they would like the new design. The new alternative will keep the integrity of the intersection. Mr. Delgado will bring the completed design to the Board before holding the meeting with the residents. The residents have been advised that Public Works will meet with them and address their concerns.

Mr. Irigoyen asked what if only one resident is opposed. Mr. Delgado noted that there are four or five residents who are opposed. The only ones opposed are those who live next to the circle and are opposed to the split of the triangle-shaped green area. The rest of the residents, about 70% are in favor. The objection right now is the "park." They call it a park, but it is not. It is a green area. When asked what was the size of the island Mr. Delgado informed the Board that it is about 100' X 40'. All of the area is right-of-way. The property is not designated as a park. Mr. Delgado explained that it is the same as the one on Alhambra Circle and Country Club Prado, a median.

Mr. Goldsmith suggested that the residents who consider this triangle a park could check the one at Alhambra Circle and Country Club Prado. Mr. Delgado noted that they had already been informed that it was similar to the Alhambra Circle median, but they feel that this is their own "park" and children play there.

Mr. Irigoyen noted that there is no curbing there right now, but Mr. Delgado mentioned that when the circle is installed, there will be curbing.

Mr. Martinez asked where exactly the project was located. Mr. Morrison explained to him that if you are traveling south on Granada, after you have passed the Hardee Circle, you go over a bridge. Immediately after crossing the bridge you turn right onto South Alhambra and the location is with a block. There are several other traffic calming devices on South Alhambra west of the proposed circle.

Mr. Morrison (referring to the drawing), "If it is installed as designed, vehicles will not be able to turn south onto Mindello. Therefore, resident who live on Mindello will be inconvenienced".

Mr. Delgado explained that before we eliminate that turn, traffic counts will be taken. He does not think there are a lot of drivers making that movement. The new design will make the island longer. Mr. Morrison will tell Mr. Brad Hornbacher, 700 S. Alhambra Circle, a resident who had complained about the design, that we are working on an alternate plan to be presented to the Board and then to the residents.

Public Works met with the people who live adjacent to Hernando where the circles are being installed funded by the Bacardi Project. Those circles were according to the traffic engineer's recommendation; however, residents from Malaga and Santander are asking why they were left out as no circles were planned at the intersections with their streets. Mr. Delgado noted, "That the

reason was that those streets do not have the volume or the speed at those locations to qualify for a circle. However, we met with the residents of the area. And, there is a resident of that area here tonight who lives on Santander. After the circles are installed and traffic patterns have been established, we are going to have to gather new traffic counts. If those streets have increased in volume or speed they will be included in our plans for traffic circles. Mr. Morrison asked as to whether the Bacardi group will pay for those circles. Mr. Delgado told him that they would not. It will be part of the City's city-wide traffic program but the idea is to actually revisit the area and see if it will qualify.

Mr. Delgado noted that Mr. Anthony Paul was present at the meeting and he wanted to meet the zone representative for his area. Mr. Paul lives on Santander. Mr. Delgado informed Mr. Paul that the Zone Representative for his area is Mr. Larry Kries, his neighbor, and any questions may be directed to him.

Mr. Delgado informed the Board members and visitors that the residents were very happy with the proposed Segovia Median and with the circles that are now under construction on Hernando, to the north.

Mr. Morrison welcomed Mr. Paul.

Anthony Paul, 437 Santander. Mr. Paul noted that he was on the learning curve. He claims that he did not know anything about this project until they saw the Hernando being dug up and until he finally spoke to various people in the City (Mr. Delgado and his staff). He needs to understand what is going on and also asked what the function of the Traffic Advisory Board was.

Mr. Morrison proceeded to explain to Mr. Paul the function of the Traffic Advisory Board:

"The Board has been in existence for about four years and was formed when the City Commission determined the need for an advisory board for traffic concerns. Traffic had become one of the biggest issues in the City with the increase in cut through traffic and speeding throughout the City. And so, as other boards have been created to deal with specific issues, the Commission created the Citizen's Advisory Traffic Board. When an issue comes to the forefront, it is first sent to the appropriate board and then the Board makes recommendations to the City Commission."

"In most cases, traffic related items come through this Board. We hold public meetings and provide recommendations to the Commission on that issue at hand. Our recommendations are a matter of public record. In the case of what was the Burger King (now Bacardi project), we were initially left out of the loop. In this case, the developer, Codina Group, hired a consultant to meet with affected neighbors to mitigate problems, such as cut through traffic that might occur in adjacent neighborhoods because of their project. A lot of what transpired between the neighborhood, consultants and Burger King took place without the involvement of this Board. The consultant did make several presentations to the Board to keep us advised of their plans and discussions with the neighborhood. The plans presented to us showed traffic calming devices to control traffic passing through the neighborhood in the morning and in the afternoon west of Le Jeune Road."

Mr. Paul asked that if there were any records of these presentations and Mr. Morrison noted that we have copies of the materials provided by the consultant. Mr. Delgado mentioned that we had a couple of presentations with the consultants and we have minutes for those meetings.

Mr. Morrison noted that we have reports from the consultant and that is also part of our records.

Mr. Paul wanted to know if the Board had made any recommendation to this city about this project and Mr. Morrison reiterated that in this case, they went around this Committee.

Mr. Paul also asked if notices of those proceedings had been given to anyone.

Mr. Morrison again noted that the homeowners association had called those meetings and asked Mr. Delgado to explain further.

Mr. Delgado informed the resident that there are a couple of persons who are representing the homeowners association, Ms. Wendy Cook and Ms. Ronda Anderson, who were kind of the captains for the area. They were the ones arranging the meetings. They had several public meetings and also met with the residents several times. Mr. Delgado noted that he was not invited to most of those meetings

Mr. Morrison asked Mr. Delgado to check and see if there any records of those meetings and request copies.

David Plummer & Associates, Inc., the traffic consultant for the project, recommended the traffic devices that needed to be installed. They have not finished. They are now in the process of implementing other diverters and turning restrictions and they are presently preparing letters to be sent to the residents. They have not finished all the steps in that particular study. The circles are the first step.

Mr. Morrison asked that Public Works make whatever records it has on the meetings we held with the project attorney and their traffic consultant available to Mr. Paul. Also to make sure he requests the records of the public/neighbors meetings the consultant has held with the neighbors.

Mr. Kries: Introduced himself. "I am the representative for that area. Frankly this has been a bit of an unusual process for us, not the norm. But Alberto, as I recall these two streets are part of the so-called "affected area" and I would, I guess, request on behalf of the residents on those two streets, that we go back and re-visit the process? I do not know when they took the traffic counts, if they were east/west traffic or whether they were also looking at the Hernando traffic, as well. Or what was basically studied.

Mr. Delgado noted that the consultant did a comprehensive study but unfortunately those streets did not meet the thresholds. This could be because they are to the south and most of the traffic goes along Anastasia. Anastasia is the one that is taking the brunt.

Mr. Kries: “I take it by your presence that you are interested in trying to get circles for those two streets. I am assuming that, I don’t know.”

Mr. Paul confirmed that but he said he had one more important item he would like to bring up at the end of the meeting. He was encouraged to proceed and not wait.

Mr. Paul: “Well, there is a proposed second phase of this project and I think it is what really disturbs us on Malaga and Santander, and that there is an apparent attempt to divert traffic from four blocks north of our streets to our streets. Now, with the diversion installation (I am not talking about traffic circles here) that is a very worrisome thing to our streets. If there is some way to bring that before this board we would certainly like to do that.”

Mr. Delgado explained that that was the next step. On the second phase of the study that was presented by Tim Plummer, the diverters are addressed in two ways. Either by signs, for example, NO RIGHT TURN SIGNS along Le Jeune Road so people will not be able to make the turns onto Sevilla, Palermo Streets, etc. Also, signs along Segovia to prevent commuters from turning onto these streets in the morning. So set of signs deals with the morning rush and the other set with the afternoon rush.

The County wants to have signs first, like what the City did on Riviera by the High School. The County does not go to the extreme of allowing the placement of diverters. To have diverters installed, the County requires 2/3’s approval of the entire affected area. The affected area in this case is the area between Le Jeune Road, Segovia, Anastasia, and Valencia and obtaining 2/3 of that area will not be an easy task. The streets that benefit from the diverters will vote in favor, but the others are going to vote against them. What is happening right now is that the people who are working with the community in this area are hesitant to present that in letter form and are canvassing the neighborhood to seek opinions as to their preference – signs or diverters.

Mr. Martinez asked if the diagram presented to the Traffic Advisory Board by the consultants showed the movement restrictions from the north and from the south. Mr. Delgado noted that it did.

Mr. Delgado confirmed that once the homeowners association decides to go to a vote, we will let everyone know. He reminded Mr. Paul that 2/3’s of the affected area residents’ approval is the County’s requirement.

Mr. Morrison noted that he had complained about our Board not being involved in this process for months, if not for years. As far as Phase II is concerned, he said that this committee must get involved and host a community meeting. Then we can control the notification process and make sure that the whole affected area is contacted.

Mr. Kries mentioned that there are a couple of individuals who live on the streets that are further north who really got behind this (project) and really organized their blocks. They have taken control .

Mr. Paul asked to be educated about the 2/3's vote requirement. He noted that if we have six blocks, of which four will benefit from this and two will be prejudiced by it, the 2/3 requirement would be met. Mr. Paul hopes that, as Mr. Delgado indicated, it will be a tough thing. He cannot see how any one in those four blocks would vote against that, and assumes they would all vote for it and we will then have the 2/3's vote.

Mr. Delgado pointed out that we have Hernando and Valencia, which are against, because they will get all the traffic; we have Anastasia which will get all the traffic, so we are talking about two other streets which makes a total of four streets against four, plus Hernando. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Kries suggested that the best thing would be that everyone who lives in the affected area could agree on a plan and not pit neighbors against neighbors, which would be the worst possible situation.

Mr. Morrison agreed with Mr. Kries and suggested he make a motion that we conduct a public hearing. Mr. Kries had thought that this had been done before.

Mr. Delgado reistated that Phase II is not moving forward right now and that is why it is being brought to the Board. The homeowners association is canvassing the neighborhood. Conversation among all those present ensued.

Mr. Delgado informed Mr. Paul that as far as he knew the letter had not been prepared and there is nothing official. The homeowners association is just checking the feeling of the whole area. Once anything develops, Mr. Delgado will notify the Board.

Mr. Kries questioned what if the City Commission were to approve, does the County approve it. Mr. Morrison explained that the County has to approve any diversion. That is why the required 2/3 vote. Then the County will consider the recommendation.

To the comment Mr. Kris made that then we have Le Jeune Road, which is a State Road, Mr. Delgado noted that the State will approve anything along Le Jeune Road as far as restrictions, but the State does not count in this issue, only the County.

Mr. Kries made the following motion: **That we request a community meeting including the consultants and everyone that is involved in this project to discuss any proposed phase to that project.** Mr. Martinez seconded. Discussion. Motion carried.

Mr. Paul thanked everyone and expects to hear from the Board regarding his requests.

Mr. Delgado informed the Board that the County had approved the Bella Vista plans and they are ready to go. Construction is scheduled for March. Other projects are moving along at the various phases of approval. Beginning April we will see some action. As far as the Blue Road circles, the specs are ready and we expect to advertise for bids next month, if the County approves everything.

Mr. Martinez asked about the bump-out projects for Fonseca, Alcantarra, etc. and Mr. Delgado noted that they were disapproved by the County because of the size of the neck. Mr. Delgado will review the measurements. Those streets have parallel parking but it is sub-standard in dimensions. Mr. Martinez's main concern is for the April/May construction time frame shown on our project spread sheet. He questioned whether the information provided takes into consideration the construction at the entrance of Eighth Street and Ponce. His offices are along there and the traffic backs up until Santillane. Mr. Delgado informed him that the idea is to finish the entrance and then go into other projects. A disapproval of the County may delay that project.

Mr. Martinez asked if the recent budget cuts would have an effect on the proposed traffic projects for this year but he was informed that the money was set aside for the 2008-2009 projects.

Mr. Morrison would like to propose the installation of a circle at Valencia and Granada for a future year. There is a four-way stop at that intersection but there is a lot of traffic stopping. He noted that a circle might help the situation and improve the intersection.

Mr. Delgado noted that one of the residents who came to the meeting, Mr. Mooney, who lives at Navarre, had a question about the circle on Segovia and Navarre, "Esther do we have anything on this?"

Ms. Zabalo noted that we did not have a circle on Segovia and Navarre; the circle is on Segovia and Mendoza.

Thomas Mooney, 601 Navarre Avenue, inquired about getting a circle at the intersection of Segovia and Navarre. Currently there is one at Majorca and Minorca which is a major north/south corridor that is used by drivers to circumvent Le Jeune Road. He has seen a lot of people stop and go and often times run the four-way stop at Navarre and Segovia. The drivers seem to be frustrated because coming from north to south they are forced to go around the circle at Majorca and they speed up to the stop because they are forced to slow down by the circle at Minorca. He was hoping that the City would install a traffic circle at that intersection to slow down the traffic.

Mr. Delgado to make a note of the request and he will take a look at that location.

Mr. Morrison noted that he had previously forwarded an e-mail to Mr. Delgado from Mr. Mooney in which he had expressed his concern over the situation.

Mr. Morrison: the current budget year runs through September. We will be deciding this summer, based on the backlog of projects, which to recommend for 2009-2010. Each zone representatives will be asked which projects with their zone are the "hot issues", the ones that need to be addressed first. A list of recommended projects is then developed and sent to the Commission for approval. Before, they can be approved however; funding sources have to be identified.

Mr. Delgado also explained that all projects have to meet the County's criteria.

Mr. Mooney asked what other factors, besides budgetary funding, go into traffic projects.

Mr. Delgado explained that traffic counts need to be taken which measure speed and volume and they have to meet the thresholds established by the County. If a project does not meet the County's threshold as far as volume and speeding, we cannot recommend it. But if they do meet the threshold, the next step is to put the project into our program of work and notify the neighbors, etc.

Mr. Morrison further explained that based on the Board's most recent agreement with the County, the approval requirement is now 50% plus one. Whereas for diverters or street closures require 2/3 approval. However, the County does not want to see request for those again.

Mr. Goldsmith explained what we call the affected area, which is normally one block north/south/east/west of the intersection and the City prepares and sends notifications to those residents.

Mr. Morrison noted that this whole process is explained on the website of the City of Coral Gables. There is also a petition form on the site for anyone who wishes to initiate a traffic calming project in their neighborhood.

Mr. Mooney will stay in touch with his zone representative.

Axel Font, 813 Lisbon Street. Mr. Font attended the meeting to see how the process works. About two years ago he spoke with Mr. Delgado. He mentioned that Commissioner Kerdyk, the then Assistant City Manager Zachary Williams and Mr. Delgado had met him at his residence to address the parking issue on Lisbon off of Eighth Street. It is a mess because of the businesses fronting Eighth Street that do not have parking. People who frequent those businesses park everywhere in the residential area and it is a mess. He is asking what can the City do to alleviate the problem. He noted that when neighbors call, parking tickets are issued, but since the turn over is so large, one car leaves and another comes in. He wants something else done.

The Board Members discussed what could be done and how the construction of those buildings without parking was permitted.

Mr. Font asked that if there were to be infrastructure improvements, if that would come under the purview of this committee. He mentioned that curbing could be installed so that people could not park on the swale, or some type of traffic diversion where people would not be able to go southbound on Lisbon, but the residents could go northbound.

Mr. Morrison said that we could check on that and then asked Mr. Delgado what other steps we could take.

Mr. Delgado noted that this issue had to be referred to the Parking Department for review and comments for a possible solution.

Mr. Kris: "Such as residential parking permits?"

Mr. Morrison: "I think what Mr. Font is talking about is more of an infrastructure issue. Curbing so people could not park on the swale at all.

Mr. Font asked if we could not improve the infrastructure so people could not park in the area.

Mr. Morrison: "That is Zone 1, Ramon that is yours. Alberto can we have a report back at our next meeting? Please make sure that Parking understands that we are not looking for more parking tickets, but some infrastructure improvements."

Old Business

Mr. Quesada asked about the drawing that Dr. Elbadrawi had presented on Ponce, but Dr. Elbadrawi could not come to the meeting. He will make the presentation at our next meeting.

New Business

No new business to discuss.

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.