

**CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**  
**Meeting Minutes of October 9, 2023, 8:30 a.m.**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134**

MEMBERS	N 22	D 22	J 23	F 23	M 23	A 23	M 23	J 23	J 23	A 23	S 23	O 23	APPOINTED BY		
Bonnie Seipp	P	N O  M E E T I N G	E	P	P	P	E	N O  M E E T I N G	N O  M E E T I N G	P	A	E	Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson		
Carmen Cason	P		P	E	P	P	P			P	P	A	P	Mayor Vince Lago	
Mary Beth Burke	P		E	P	P	P	P			P	P	P	E	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez	
Margaret Groves												A	E	Commissioner Melissa Castro	
Alexis Ehrenhaft	E		P	P	P	P	P			P	P	P	A	P	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Genevieve Orr	*		*	*	*	*	*			*	*	P	P	P	Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Joanne Meagher	P		P	P	P	P	P			P	P	P	A	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 by Chairperson Meagher at 8:40 A.M.

**A motion was made by Ms. Cason and seconded by Ms. Ehrenhaft to excuse Ms. Seipp, Ms. Groves, and Ms. Burke from this meeting, which was unanimously passed by voice vote.**

**OPENING STATEMENT:** *Excerpt from the Placemaker Poet: Poets kindled the embers of a nine-year old boy’s imagination. He saw the future stretch out before him, a limitless expanse of promise and possibility. But, in all truth, all he really wanted was to be a writer, to share his romantic idealistic heart through poetry.*

*The future Placemaker-Poet sat between two conflicting states of being - a state of awe at the lightning speed of images flashing past him through the window of the train and a state of numbing tedium as the three-day journey began to feel interminable. Unbeknownst to this young Placemaker-Poet, this one thousand five-hundred mile journey, much of it through open, barren and uninhabited land, laid the foundation to his future imagination, the imagination of a boy raised on the suspense-filled escapades of Kirk Munroe.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

1. Merrick House Governing Board Meeting Minutes - May 8, 2023

**A motion was made by Ms. Ehrenhaft and seconded by Ms. Cason to approve the meeting minutes of May 8, 2023, which was unanimously passed by voice vote.**

2. Merrick House Governing Board Meeting Minutes - August 14, 2023

**A motion was made by Ms. Cason and seconded by Ms. Ehrenhaft to approve the meeting minutes of August 14, 2023, which was unanimously passed by voice vote.**

3. Merrick House Governing Board Meeting Minutes - September 11, 2023

**A motion was made by Ms. Orr and seconded by Ms. Cason to approve the meeting minutes of September 11, 2023, which was unanimously passed by voice vote.**

#### **HOUSE REPORT:**

1. **Maintenance Schedule** – Ms. Meagher and Ms. Burke are working on a list of regular maintenance issues that will be presented to the Board for review. Creating a maintenance schedule will provide guidance to staff.
2. **Gramophone** – Continuing to research a repair person.
3. **Garbage** – Ms. Deena Bell is planning to arrange pick up to follow the residential schedule.
4. **Wooden Bench** – There is a table that goes with this bench that needs a couple screws. Mr. Ehrenhaft and Chair Meagher will be oiling all the screws and bringing the table back to MH.
5. **Tree** – Looking for a small tree to put family photos.
6. **Pond** – Staff are working with Pond Doctors to arrange a regular maintenance schedule for the koi pond.
7. **Activity Report** – Welcomed the 1500<sup>th</sup> visitor of this fiscal year, total is 1506 guests, \$7055 from tour fees, special events and merchandise sales. September alone, 77 guests totaling \$593 not including Eventbrite. Red Hat Ladies scheduled a private tour next month. On 9/30 representatives of the Miami Chapter of the Urban Sketchers gathered on the lawn to sketch MH. Arie Haddad, 2<sup>nd</sup> year grad student at UM, studying architecture contacted MH. Mr. Haddad is photographing the outside of the house at different times of day for his class. Will be doing the same with the interior of the house. Complete activity report attached.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Holiday Open House** – Carolers are confirmed. Considering inviting a few more vendors to the Holiday event. Need ribbons for the children's craft planned. Ms. Cason will provide 200 candy canes. Each board member to provide 4 dozen cookies, no bags.
2. **100 Voices** – 9/17 performance we had 44 guests including the Mayor and Vice Mayor. 10/22 performance videographer is not available, may need to set up a tripod to record.
3. **Eventbrite** – Has changed their protocol and are charging for their basic services, \$49/month. Will be working with the Coral Gables Community Foundation, Robbie and Romero, to make tickets available. Will investigate using Mail Chimp. Staff to confirm what are options are available through the City.
4. **Garden Club Décor** – Will be held on Thursday, November 30<sup>th</sup>. The tree decoration will happen at 9:00 A.M. Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>.
5. **Villagers Tour** – Scheduled for December 9<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Meagher will ask if Merrick House volunteers must pay for the tour if they are working at the event.
  - a. There will be two shifts for the volunteers.
  - b. Kirk Shubert, a docent, is available to play piano during the tour for a fee of \$250, if the Board agrees.

**A motion was made by Ms. Cason and seconded by Ms. Ehrenhaft to have Docent Kirk Shubert play the piano during the Villager tour for a fee of \$250.00, which was unanimously passed by voice vote.**

6. **Villager Grant Application** – Application is due 10/15. Ms. Meagher wants to conserve the painting of the stag in Helen’s room. This painting is mentioned in every tour. It is very, very dark. Art Care Conservation would charge \$800 for the estimate.

**A motion was made by Ms. Ehrenhaft and seconded by Ms. Orr to use Art Care Conservation to restore the painting, with the condition that the \$800.00 estimate amount can be applied to the cost of the treatment, which was unanimously passed by voice vote.**

7. **City Staff Tours** – When Denna Bell was at the House, she mentioned that we can start with Public Works. Ms. Bell has 25 direct reports and 250 employees. Would like to start with Department Heads in the new year.
8. **Craig Johnson Memorial** – Deena Bell is proposing that a Lignum Vitae tree (Wood of Life) is planted in his honor. Staff are also working on getting a bronze plaque. Possible wording for the plaque, “Lignum Vitae, Wood of Life, honors Craig Johnson, Merrick House gardener and City of Coral Gables Employee, April 19, 1997, to August 2023, Nature lover, friend to animals and teller of tales.” Memorial event date is to be determined, based on when the plaque will be complete.
9. **Dishwasher** – The p-card is now working, and we can purchase the dishwasher.

**NEW BUSINESS:** None

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:** None.

**CITY COMMISSION ITEMS:** None.

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Anna C. Pernas  
Historic Preservation Officer