



City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
January 13, 2026

ITEM TITLE: ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS

MEETING DATE: December 3, 2025

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

QUORUM: Was reached

STAFF:

Jose Rodriguez –Human Resources & Risk Management - Assistant Director
Eglys Hernandez – Human Resources & Risk Management – P/T Administrative Assistant
Yanessa Rodriguez – Community Recreation – Administrative Operations Manager
Catie Hastings – Community Recreation – D.E.I. Coordinator

PUBLIC GUEST: None

CITIZEN ADVISORS:

Dr. Jennifer Durocher, University of Miami
Debbie Dietz. Citizen Advisor – Via Zoom

PUBLIC GUEST: None

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order at 10:00am

MEETING ABSENCE: Debbie Dietz, Citizen Advisor

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:

November 5, 2025
Motion by: Bonnie Blaire / 2nd: Jennifer Ward Sando / Approved unanimously

SECRETARY'S REPORT: None

BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairperson – Ms. Justine Chichester

Ms. Chichester advised board of wonderful news regarding Ms. Debbie Dietz's becoming a grandmother and board expressed their congratulations.

Ms. Chichester advised it was International Day of Persons with disabilities and was very happy board was together today.

Holiday Park – Parks & Recreations

Mr. Rodriguez advised himself and Ms. Hastings conducted a walk thru of holiday park yesterday. Mr. Rodriguez stated it is approximately 80% completed. Mr. Rodriguez stated they reviewed bathrooms, and the instructions available for someone on how to ask for assistance, accessibility of area and parking. Mr. Rodriguez said Ms. Hastings and her team have done a wonderful job in preparing.

Ms. Chichester asked if the holiday park was accessible for children in a wheelchair. Ms. Hastings provided information regarding paved areas and how mats will be put into place so that Santa's house as well as food area will be connected. Ms. Hastings provided further information regarding accessibility in area and availability of a beach wheelchair on site if needed. Ms. Rodriguez advised there is always staff available around to assist if needed.

Ms. Palacio-Pike asked the hours of operation and Ms. Rodriguez stated park usually runs from 8:00am till sunset.

Ms. Chichester asked as to how this event has evolved. Ms. Hastings stated the staff receives and listens to feedback very carefully. Ms. Hastings advised at this event there will not be a specific area designated for special needs. Ms. Hastings stated the reason is, like Coral Gables, accessibility should be available every day.

Ms. Rodriguez stated this year Area Stage will also be present during Tree Lighting event closing the show. Ms. Hastings advised there will be performers with disabilities on stage this year. Ms. Chichester stated they had been discussing regarding the stage not being accessible. Ms. Hastings advised that due to the space and logistics of area, it is not possible to place a ramp. Ms. Hastings stated there will not be any surprise performers, therefore, if a performer with disability needs to get up on stage, they would rent an elevator. Ms. Hastings stated this would be planned. Ms. Hastings advised that, going forth, during registration, a question will be added regarding needing assistance.

Backyard Basel Coral Gables Museum – Mr. Eddy Martinez

Mr. Martinez stated Crystal Academy Artwork will be displayed at the City of Coral Gables Museum on same day and time of the City Christmas tree lighting event.

OLD BUSINESS:

Update: Audible Crosswalks – Melissa DeZayas, Assistant PW Director for Transportation (Exhibit 1)

Ms. DeZayas shared with board part of power point reflecting approved and proposed locations regarding audible crosswalks. Ms. DeZayas advised status of project with Miami-Dade County, FDOT and city. Ms. DeZayas advised upon further review conducted by FDOT of city's submitted request for audible push button signals, approvals were issued for LeJeune and Minorca, Andalusia, Valencia, Bird.

Ms. DeZayas advised since then, the city has requested additional locations, such as Alhambra and Miracle Mile, which are still under review. Ms. DeZayas stated the approvals are tied to a major project FDOT will be

conducting during 2027.

Ms. Blaire asked if there were any plans regarding Miracle Mile, is it within the same state department or other entity. Ms. DeZayas stated when it comes to signals, it would be the county, and they have advised they have limited funding available for this type of project. Ms. DeZayas stated every time a request for push button is received by the city, it is submitted.

Mr. Jauregui asked when the county said there is limited funding, who are we fighting for the funds, we are talking of pedestrians, reckless drivers and how do we find out how far down on the food chain for funding the city is. Mr. Jauregui asked who needs to be addressed regarding getting City of Coral Gables pushed up on the list. Mr. Jauregui stated there are major events coming, including World Cup, which will generate lots of visitors and what we can do to protect people with disabilities.

Ms. DeZayas stated this is the way in the past requests have been made and will continue to place requests asking to expedite specific locations and follow up. Ms. DeZayas stated perhaps the board would like to act and bring this to commission.

Ms. Blaire expressed that requesting does not seem to be enough and feels it is time that other actions are taken. Ms. Chichester stated if the board wishes to take to commission, there are several parts to this. Ms. Chichester stated a person to address the commission is needed, someone who understands the history of this issue and how long it has been. Ms. Ward Sando asked if it would be someone to go address the county commission or city commission. Mr. Rodriguez stated it would be the City of Coral Gables commission to take it to the Miami-Dade Commission. Ms. Blaire stated board would ask city commission to take cause up to the county.

Ms. Blaire said board members to remember that they have been appointed by a city commissioner and therefore, each one should address this directly with them. All board members agreed to pass a motion regarding expediting this matter.

Board motion:

“This board to create a resolution to our Coral Gables city commission to expedite the process with Miami-Dade County in order to move forward with the audible crosswalk improvement program for Miracle Mile.”

Motion by: Bonnie Blaire / 2nd: Vanessa Bedoya / Approved unanimously

Ms. Blaire stated that between Willy, Eddie, Justine and herself they should put together a narrative so that everyone utilizes same language when addressing their perspective commissioner. It was determined language provided by board will be utilized for resolution to be presented in January 2026, commission meeting, after the board meets on January 7, 2026.

Ms. DeZayas asked board which are the locations regarding Miracle Mile are they requesting and the board stated all of them from LeJeune / Miracle Mile to Douglas Road / Miracle Mile.

Pedestrian Crosswalks Ponce Circle Park

Ms. DeZayas stated she will need to do further research as this is not a city project, but part of a developer's project being conducted just east of the park, which includes improvements be made to the park. Ms. DeZayas stated she

will need to follow up with Director Diaz of Public Works. Ms. DeZayas advised there were several improvements requested regarding addressing slowing down traffic around the park.

Mr. Martinez asked if it would be possible to review the drawings for this project. Ms. DeZayas stated she would have research as to where the progress is regarding this project and where the drawings are at.

New Safety Training – Mr. Rodriguez

Mr. Rodriguez advised the police training lieutenant along with Chief Hudak will be meeting to simplify the program and go forth with the training. Mr. Rodriguez stated he will continue to work with the police lieutenant and hopefully will be able to provide additional information at upcoming board meeting.

Board's suggestions regarding inclusion & accessibility within the public school system

Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike – School Community Relations Committee

Ms. Palacio-Pike stated she would like to know what are items the board would like to see happening at the local public schools regarding programs for students with disabilities. Ms. Palacio-Pike stated their suggestions and ideas can be shared with the School Community Relations Committee. Ms. Ward Sando asked how parents can be made aware of this board and ask for assistance. Ms. Blaire stated though this board could be one avenue; however, board should not be the destination and assist in directing them to the correct city advisory board.

Ms. Ward Sando asked Ms. Palacio-Pike if she had ever received any information from previous requests regarding adult students with disabilities attending Coral Gables Senior High school and their opportunity to participate in the culinary program. Ms. Palacio-Pike advised she has not and would gladly reach out once again via email.

Ms. Bedoya expressed concern regarding lack of disability parking available for parents for drop off at G W Carver Elementary school.

Board further discussed this matter and stated it would be placed on upcoming January 7, 2026, meeting.

Re-Cap Adventure Day – Community Recreation

Ms. Hastings stated she was advised of many events regarding people with disabilities going on same day as well as time, therefore, attendance was a bit less than last year. Ms. Blaire stated new set-up truly flowed and it was great. Mr. Martinez stated he has shared pictures taken during other events Ms. Hastings has conducted and utilized them for the Gables monopoly.

Mr. Rodriguez advised there is an option from the Community Recreation department instead of having Adventure Day, perhaps to have a walk. Mr. Rodriguez stated walk would commence on Biltmore Way, then there is a park in front of city hall which will be utilized and incorporate walk into set up there.

Ms. Ward Sando asked why the Community Recreations department wants to change it. Ms. Hastings expressed there are a lot of events, approximately twelve disability affairs vendor events during the year. Ms. Hastings advised throughout the various events, the same audience, and the same vendors are present just at different locations, which seems redundant and makes it less enticing for people to attend events. Ms. Hastings said she feels the city's focus has evolved and that all events conducted should be for everyone, including people with disabilities, providing the opportunity to contribute and be a part of it.

Board members expressed their concern regarding difficulty of people with disabilities and ability to walk.

Ms. Chichester suggested for the city to research Wings for Life, which conducts a successful Walk & Roll event each year which incorporates people with mobility challenges.

Ms. Bedoya suggested perhaps combining the Literacy Festival with Adventure Day, making it just one event. Board agreed to further discuss this at upcoming meetings.

Philips Park Design – Ms. Yanessa Rodriguez (Exhibit 2)

Ms. Rodriguez advised construction commenced November 3, 2025, with concept design for playground and advised funding was removed for the Community Center. Ms. Rodriguez stated it is being conducted in phases. Ms. Rodriguez stated Phase 1 consists of planning, general improvements, pavilion, sidewalks, restrooms, outside gates, and Phase 2 should include splash pad, turf soccer field, pickle ball courts. Ms. Rodriguez stated she hopes that during Phase 3 perhaps the discussion of bringing back the Community Center can be addressed.

Mail In Ballot – Mr. Rodriguez

Mr. Rodriguez provided information regarding procedure and how city will be promoting information to residents.

ArtLabbe – Mr. Rodriguez

Mr. Rodriguez advised there were two winners from Ms. Hastings' participants.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

NEXT MEETING: January 7, 2026

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 11:09am

Motion by: Jennifer Ward Sando / 2nd: Vanessa Bedoya / Approved unanimously

ATTACHMENT(S): Minutes of December 3, 2025