



**CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**

**Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2022, 8:30 a.m.  
Coral Gables City Hall, City Commission Chamber  
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida 33134**

Historical Resources &  
Cultural Arts

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MEMBERS	F 21	M 21	A 21	M 21	J 21	J 21	A 21	S 21	O 21	N 21	D 22	J 22	F 8	APPOINTED BY
Ana Lam	P	P	P	-	P	P	E	E	P	P	N	P	P	Mayor Vince Lago
Barbara Reese	P	P	P	-	P	P	E	E	P	E	O	P	P	Vice-Mayor Michael Mena
Bonnie Seipp	P	P	P	-	P	E	P	E	P	P		P	E	Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	P	P	P	-	A	P	P	P	P	P	M	P	P	Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Mary Beth Burke	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	E	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Alexis Ehrenhaft	P	P	P	-	P	P	P	P	E	P	T	P	E	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Joanne Meagher	P	P	P	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	I	P	P	Board-as-a-Whole
											N			

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

STAFF: Warren Adams, Historic Preservation Officer, Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Colette Worm, Docent Coordinator.

RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Nancy Kay Lyons, Administrative Assistant

The meeting was called to order by Chair Meagher at 8:36 a.m. and attendance was stated for the record. Only Chair Meagher, Ms. Cason and Ms. Burke were present.

Ms. Lam and Ms. Reese joined the meeting.

**OPENING STATEMENT**

Chair Meagher opened the meeting with a reading. “In late 1913 he began keeping company with the girl he had been waiting for, 18-year-old Eunice Isabella Peacock who had become one of the most, if not the most sought-after young woman in Miami, clearly she liked the attention and relished playing one suitor against the other. The competition only increased George’s interest. Although Eunice had a whole crop of admirers, most of Miami’s unmarried young women also had their sights set on George. Not only was he handsome, smart, and charismatic, he was rich. Like the rest of the Merrick family, he never showed off his wealth, but a 1914 financial statement indicated he and his mother had a net worth of a whopping \$312,172 .92 and that in today’s dollars is equivalent to \$8.7 million. In June when she left Miami as she did each summer, George sent his first telegram as the train pulled out of the station. “I am wishing you a pleasant trip” he wrote in a wire to be delivered on the train as it headed towards Jacksonville. “All the way thinking you are getting father away wishing so much I were along”. The first telegram was immediately followed by another sent to the connecting train from Jacksonville to Washington DC. “You see” he wrote “I am still chasing after you, habit is hard to break, never saw Miami so empty and lonesome”. When Eunice had not replied in four days George sent another telegram to Stewartstown, Pennsylvania where she was visiting. He reminded her that she had not written and was so upset he went by her home to talk to her parents to make sure she was alright. “I have driven three mail clerks crazy inquiring of a letter from you” he wired “the fourth one threatens to shoot me if I ask again, write immediately if only to save my life”.”

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion was made by Ms. Lam and seconded by Ms. Cason to approve the minutes of January 10, 2022. The motion was unanimously approved.

**APPROVAL OF ABSENCES:**

A motion was made by Ms. Lam and seconded by Ms. Burke to approve the absences of Bonnie Seipp and Alexis Ehrenhaft. The motion was unanimously approved.

Chair Meagher introduced Ms. Gined Lopez & Mr. Alberto Puerto, owners of the AP Guitar School on Almeria Avenue and explained they were coordinating a classical guitar festival in the fall. They were looking at the Merrick House as one of the venues. Chair Meagher noted that having the Merrick House as a venue would have its challenges, but she had encouraged them to come in and make a presentation.

Ms. Lopez & Mr. Puerto introduced themselves and gave a presentation on the Coral Gables International Guitar Festival. They proposed to:

- a) Create intimate series of small concerts with a classical focus.
- b) Reflect the character of contemporary diverse Coral Gables.
- c) Celebrate music played in 20<sup>th</sup> century Mediterranean Gables homes and the Spanish influence.
- d) Reinvigorate the salon format concert as a reflection of the “Culture of Character” values revived during the COVID pandemic.
- e) Improve classical music accessibility with an informal salon design in the small concerts and by using 21<sup>st</sup> century tools.
- f) Recontextualize the memory of George Merrick as an advocate of music and arts from a 20<sup>th</sup> century lens.
- g) Have small concerts that were elegant but not inaccessible.

They were looking to center the festival around the Merrick House and have volunteer residential homes and associated art businesses.

Ms. Lopez gave a background on the Merrick House and George Merrick showing the reasons they wanted to highlight the Merrick House.

- a) Recent controversy around figure of George Merrick coming from the University of Miami.
- b) Embodies the clash between the 19<sup>th</sup> century Culture of Character and the 20<sup>th</sup> century Culture of Personality.
- c) Show that Merrick was interested in Latin American culture and history and had wanted to include Cuba in “Historical Association of South Florida”.
- d) Merrick was recognized by King Alfonso of Spain in 1927 for his expression of Spanish architecture in Coral Gables and was awarded a “Don of the Order of Isabel La Católica”.

She said they were looking to highlight the context that they were coming from. Invited Artists include Ahmed Dickinson Cardenas (Cuba 1978), Jose Luis de la Paz (Spain 1968), and Alberto Puerto (Cuba 1986).

The proposed calendar of events:

Friday: Evening – Merrick House inaugural concert with invited classical guitarist, Luthier expo at concert  
Saturday: Afternoon – master class for AP Guitar school students, Merrick House.  
Evening – gala concert with contemporary flamenco guitar theme.  
Sunday: Afternoon – concert in chamber style. Guitar and voice or guitar and string quartet.

Potential Partners and Sponsors included: Miami Cultural Arts Exchange, Pan Performing Arts Network, Bill Glez Guitars, City of Coral Gables, LnS Gallery Coral Gables, Cernuda Arte Gallery CG, Miami Dade Cultural Affairs, Alberto Puerto Music LLC.

Ms. Lam thought this would fit in nicely with the Merrick House. Ms. Reese asked how many people they planned to have. Ms. Lopez said she was aware that the number of people allowed in the Merrick House was 50 so they would have to stick to that and figure out some way to appeal to a broader audience such as online broadcast. Ms. Reese asked if they had approached the Coral Gables Museum, to which Ms. Lopez responded no. Chair Meagher said that George Merrick had designed the house with a large living room to have dances and other events. Ms. Lam said the Coral Gables Museum would be a good venue due to its choice of rooms. Chair Meagher agreed and mentioned the interior courtyard. Ms. Reese also suggested the Coral Gables Congregational Church. Chair Meagher suggested St. Phillips and offered to be their contact. Chair Meagher asked Mr. Adams if he had any thoughts regarding the festival. Mr. Adams said there is a process to go through, he thought the main concern would be the numbers, the location in the house., whether it would require moving of the furniture and addition of chairs, and if the floors and fittings in the house would be protected. He thought it would be a fantastic event. He said Ms. Kautz would explain the requirements and then he could address any questions that came up. Chair Meagher asked if the festival would be only one weekend to which Ms. Lopez answered affirmatively and that the proposed date was the September 23<sup>rd</sup> weekend. Chair Meagher said the house was open in the afternoon on Saturdays for tours so they would have to see what kind of impact the festival would have. She asked if

people would buy tickets for individual concerts or a package? Mr. Puerto said they could buy both, they were thinking of Saturday from 1-3 pm. The workshop and master class could be done at the same time as it would be with children, and then the adults could tour the Merrick House. Chair Meagher asked if the Master Class would be outside. Mr. Puerto said the master class was between 5 and 20 students. It was suggested to have the class in the portico or the garden.

Ms. Kautz asked the board to remember that there are specific guidelines put into place for the use of the house. These were intended to allow access to the house, but also keep requests to a minimum as it is a house museum. Currently the rental requests allowed are:

- a) Programs that educate the public about the legacy and significance of the Coral Gables Merrick House, the childhood home of the founder of the city, George Merrick, his parents, and his family
- b) Regularly scheduled tours and special tours.
- c) Activities recommended by the Merrick House governing board.
- d) Meetings of Coral Gables based not-for-profit organizations.
- e) The City also reserves the right to use the house for official city functions.

Ms. Kautz said she did not believe that they were non-profit. Ms. Lopez said they weren't personally, but they had some non-profit partners.

Ms. Kautz added the following comments:

- a) The house was intended as a meeting space for non-profit organizations to give them a low-cost option.
- b) The rental agreement also specifies that charging for professional services such as private lessons or athletic instruction for commercial use at the house is not permitted without the written permission of the director, this includes the collection of admission fees for guests upon entering the rented facility.
- c) The indoor house capacity is capped at 50 people, however with chairs the number would be much lower.
- d) Chairs are only permitted to be set up in the sunroom.
- e) If the furniture is moved out, there still needs to be access to the doors for fire egress.
- f) If the house is used the entire weekend, tours would not be possible as it would not be possible to move people throughout the house.
- g) It needs to be decided who would open and close the house, and who would be there during the event to ensure that no one touches the furniture and children were not running through the house?
- h) Parking is limited
- i) Evening events must end at 10pm due to it being in a residential neighborhood.

Ms. Kautz said she supports the idea, but maybe not for the entire weekend. She also noted that they did not have anything noted in their budget for a rental fee. She discouraged the board from waiving the rental fee as this would open the door for other individuals wanting to use the house to charge for their functions. Chair Meagher explained to Ms. Lopez that rental fees were typically waived for nonprofit organizations that they have had a long-standing relationship with, and those that have traditionally supported the house. Chair Meagher suggested that one of the concerts could be outside. Ms. Lopez said that they had a lot of flexibility. She was thinking about their concerns as well as the following:

- a. Budget –getting sponsors for the rental fees.
- b. Ticketing - getting donations instead of ticketing.
- c. Space limitations – broadcasting online.
- d. Increasing accessibility to classical music in the community – have a strong marketing strategy to approach a younger audience.

She thought they could have an inauguration at the Merrick House and maybe have an invited guest that would talk about the socio-cultural aspects as they related to the Merrick House and family.

Ms. Kautz added that if they rented the house for a day long activity they would need to go to the City's Special Events Committee. City Staff would ask questions about amplified music, electrical permits, parking, and the need for police officers, etc. When asked what time of the year the festival would be, Ms. Lopez said it would be in the fall. Ms. Reese said lighting might be an issue. Chair Meagher asked if they were going to charge for the master class, to which Ms. Lopez replied affirmatively. Chair Meagher suggested that they have the master class outside. She said she loved the idea of the tie-in to the family's love of music and Spanish culture. She thought the idea of a class spoke directly to the idea of Althea always teaching her family and accepting other people in the neighborhood into Guavonia School. She would love to see something happen at the Merrick House but thought there would be other venues that would be easier and maybe they could have just one part at the Merrick House.

Mr. Adams suggested there could be a way the rental fee could be waved. He suggested that they do an online short concert in the house where the music could be used to help promote the Merrick House. He suggested that they reach out to the city's cultural grants program through Cultural Arts, Catherine Cathers. It was also suggested that they reach out to Belkys Perez in Economic Development. Ms. Kautz said they needed to refine their schedule of events and come back before the board. Ms. Lam suggested they contact the Coral Gables Woman's Club, where she was a member and would help.

**DOCENT COORDINATOR REPORT:**

Ms. Worm provided updates on: security checks; window latches; trimming of greenery; garage security alarm; fire alarm; fire inspection; security monitors; service animals; pests; trash pickup; lily pond repair; tour with used book seller; linens; leaks; dirt in the swale; electrical repairs; stains on garage door and front porch; flowers requested by the garden club; floral arrangements made by Carmen Cason; storing of decorations; docents; advertisement for docents in E-News; and landscaping. She also reported on the following items:

1. Tours are limited to three families per docent due to social distancing.
2. Visitor numbers have increased.
3. Statistics for January: 53 Visitors which includes 5 children.  
Collected \$253 and \$18 in tips since the last meeting.  
Sold 4 items, 2 of them are the Villagers books.  
Most popular time is Sunday and at 2pm.

Chair Meagher thanked Ms. Lam for her donations to the house and Ms. Cason for doing the flower arrangements.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. **Laura Yusko:** Chair Meagher advised the board that she had sent Laura Yusko the wooden plaque signed by the board along with a Doc Dammers program. She read the thank you letter that Ms. Yusko had sent.
2. **John Adams:** The gift package to John Adams was prepared by Ms. Kautz and would be delivered by her.
3. **Online Auctions:** Instead of the online auction Nicolas Cabrera would be putting together a market called Maker's Market, starting February 19, 2022, at the outside area at Bay 13 an Australian pub located at Douglas Road and Alhambra Circle. The market will include food vendors and crafts, he was willing to give organizations like the Merrick House a free booth or they would share with another non-profit and sell their items. Ms. Ehrenhaft & Chair Meagher would man the booth. Ms. Cason said that Dora Valdez Fauli values items for sale, Chair Meagher said she would follow up with Ms. Cason.
4. **Display Case:** Approval from Ms. Kautz was pending.
5. **Air Conditioners:** Would be installed sometime in February.
6. **Donations:** Ms. Cason's daughter-in-law donated \$60 to the Merrick House from her sales at the Christmas Open House.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Victorian Tea Party:**
  - a. **Schedule of Events:** Ms. Burke passed flyers to the board. The event would be at ticketed event for adults only on the March 27, 2022, from 2 to 5 pm. She went over the food, decorations, music, speakers, vendors, exhibitors, and demonstrations. Chair Meagher also added that she had contacted speakers and exhibitors. The House would be open from 2-3pm for tours and the tea party from 3-5pm with the lectures and people on the porch doing their crafts in costume. Ms. Burke said people would pick up their food box and they would serve 3 types of tea at the tables.
  - b. **Food:** Chair Meagher explained the proposal for food from Rita Tennyson. Food boxes would include three courses:  
**First Course:** Finger sandwiches - chicken salad, tarragon, walnut edge, and nutmeg dust; herbed cream cheese cucumber and deviled eggs.  
**Second Course:** 3 assorted pastry sweets.  
**Third Course:** Scones dusted with powdered sugar served with homemade jam.  
**Price:** \$32.00 per person, 2 servers for four hours at \$120.00 each. -  
**Total Amount:** \$1968.00. The price was for serving one tea, if there were three teas, they would have to add another server which would cost an additional \$120, or they could do a tea station, or

have a selection of three tea bags and a pot of hot water at each table. Chair Meagher said she would cover the cost for the additional tea.

- c. **Teacups:** The teacups at the Merrick House would be used and both Ms. Burke and Ms. Worm also had teacups that they could use.
- d. **Music:** Chair Meagher said they could have classical music piped through the sound system.
- e. **Other items:** Ms. Kautz said they needed to get 3 quotes. She also said the budget for events was cut during COVID. Use of trust fund money and ticketed events had to be approved by the City Manager's Office. She also said that they needed to contact the Special Events Committee for approval, and they meet once a month. She also needed, a list of the items they needed and site plan so she could contact Public Works if necessary.
- f. **Flowers:** Hydrangeas needed to be purchased, Ms. Burke had the glass vases.
- g. **Advertisement:** Flyers in Books N' Books, E-News and Coral Gables Magazine and tickets sold on Coral Gables Community Foundation's EventBrite.
- h. **Miscellaneous:**
  - a) Chair Meagher would prepare an email for the city manager.
  - b) Ms. Cason asked if anyone remembered the Royal Poinsettia Tea Festival, teas were donated by the Palace, Chair Meagher said they would reach out to them.
  - c) Carol Berg is willing to bring over 4 rocking chairs and 2 Adirondack chairs for the demonstrators to sit on.
  - d) Ms. Lam suggested getting together as a group prior to the event, to make fascinator hats and sell them at the event.
  - e) Victorian furniture in the house would be highlighted by labels or tags.
  - f) Displays would include furniture from Linda Zahler, linens from the house and samplers that others have made.
  - g) There would be a "Guess the gadget" game, the item would be provided by Linda Zahler, with a prize from Stitching Around.
  - h) Games on the lawn, included croquet, game of graces and badminton.
  - i) There would be a reception Table where people would get ribbons on their wrist which they would need to get their food.

Ms. Reese said she would not be at the event as she was having knee surgery on March 22, 2022.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:** None

**CITY COMMISSION ITEMS:** None

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:**

Ms. Kautz said they were getting close to having the coral rock wall repaired.

Chair Meagher said if anyone had any information or ideas for the AP Guitar School, they should send them to her, and she would forward them on. She also said the Ms. Burke and herself would be sending follow up emails regarding the Tea Party.

Ms. Kautz said the next meeting would be on March 14, 2022.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:17 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams  
Historic Preservation Officer