

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Economic Development Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 6, 2009, 8:00 a.m.
Development Department, 95 Merrick Way, Suite 450, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F #	M	A	M	COMMISSIONERS
Richard DeWitt	P	P	X	P	E	A	P	E	P	P	X	*	Mayor Donald D. Slesnick II
Ray Zomerfeld	P	P	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	Vice Mayor William Kerdik, Jr.
Gladys Diaz Jourdain	E	P	X	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	Commissioner Maria Anderson
Dr. Al Smith	P	E	X	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	X	P	Commissioner Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
James Casey	P	P	X	P	P	E	P	E	P	P	X	P	Commissioner Wayne "Chip" Withers

STAFF:

Maria Alberro-Jimenez, Assistant City Manager
Jessica Wotherspoon, Business Development Specialist

A = Absent

E = Excused Absence

P = Present

X = No Meeting

= Special Meetings

*** = Resigned Member**

GUEST: Carol Ellis-Cutler, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce

RECORDING SECRETARY: Nancy C. Morgan, Coral Gables Services, Inc.

Meeting Motion Summary:

The minutes of the March 4, 2009 Board meeting were approved.

Chair Ray Zomerfeld called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

1. Approval of March 4, 2009 Board Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Casey made a motion to approve the Board meeting minutes of March 4, 2009 as presented. Dr. Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

2. Discussion of permitting, as noted in Section 6-4 of the City Code, the selling and serving of pour-by-the-glass with bread and cheese (or similar consumable snack items) as an accessory use in retail beverage or retail liquor store, non-restaurant facilities, but without the requirement of individual business administrative review by the City Manager and approval by the City Commission:

Ms. Wotherspoon explained that the request for discussion was prompted because the owner of Wolfe's Wine Shop wants to sell wine by the glass, serve it with cheese and bread, but not be licensed as a full-fledge restaurant where the entity would need a restaurant license. Special permission, required from the City Manager's office, was not granted in the past.

Board discussion:

- This issue could generate a recommendation to change the code and needs to be examined from a legal perspective.
- Mr. Casey recommended consulting with appointing Commissioners. If this were approved, it would likely open a precedent-setting issue for nightclubs and bars.
- Dr. Smith requested an opinion from the City Attorney, and also indicated an inclination to support business owners as much as possible.

It was agreed to table the discussion to a future meeting.

3. Review of 2007-2009 term's goals and achievements:

The 2007 and 2008 Board annual reports were distributed as a basis for review in advance of establishing goals for the new term.

Board discussion:

- Consideration of establishing one primary Board goal versus each Board member determining an individual goal, as well as tangible versus intangible goals.
- In consideration of the increase of more brazen, daylight crime throughout the downtown area, as well as an increase in vehicular accidents on Ponce de Leon Boulevard, the Board considered establishing a goal to examine how crime in the downtown area is being addressed. Ms. Alberro-Jimenez said she would invite a Police Department representative to the next Board meeting.
- Recommendation to adopt short-term, long-term and conceptual goals that can be tracked and liaised with various City departments.
- As part of a downtown master plan that could be implemented in phases, a focus is needed on alleys, pass-throughs, encouraging garage parking and working with property owners.
- Consideration of addressing trash and garbage, particularly generated by restaurants, in the downtown alleyways.
- Improve the aesthetics of empty buildings. Miracle Mile signage in vacant windows is visually appealing; however, trash accumulates and homeless people often use doorways for sleeping.
- Consideration of collaborating with the BID to promote and create indirect economic incentives for business owners to maintain clean, neat entrance areas to their places of business, making the businesses more inviting to consumers.
- Consideration of permitting signage that heralds the pending arrival of new or relocating businesses. City signage is very restrictive and a significant issue with businesses. Determine signage code issues, how they are governed and re-examine the signage policy.
- The substantial empty storefronts on Miracle Mile are discouraging from a marketing perspective. It is preferable to have "Coming Soon" announcements posted in vacant windows.
- The City and the Chamber could collaborate on seminars regarding the permitting process and signage.
- The Miracle Mile Streetscape program, its advantages, detractors, funding and status was discussed. Gaining consensus of Miracle Mile property owners is difficult.
- Ms. Diaz Jourdain described a program that could help fund neighborhood stimulus projects, and a countywide strategy for pedestrian walkways, gardens and parks, with a plan in progress from Countyline Road to Homestead. Ms. Alberro-Jimenez will research the county program and discuss it with the Parks and Recreation Director.
- Consideration of increasing bicycle racks and possible funding opportunities.
- Consideration of promoting businesses to join the Adopt-a-Classroom effort in support of education.

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Continued

- Consideration of new SBA funding available to acquire commercial spaces for businesses, guaranteed by the SBA up to 95%. Discussion evolved regarding an informative seminar and the possibility of collaborating with the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, a large bank and the SBA.
- Consideration of increasing public knowledge of non-obvious businesses as well as an easily-accessible directory of all City businesses.
- Consideration of conducting a citywide survey focused on business and government relations.
- Consideration of focusing on workforce housing issues. Ms. Alberro-Jimenez advised that Planning Director Eric Riel could advise the Board about requirements, regulations and related issues at a future meeting if that was the desire of the Board.
- Annexing to reach a population level of 50,000 would entitle the City to specific benefits. City Manager's Office intends to resume conversations with the County on annexation.
- The need to know the biggest concerns to the City regarding the economy. Once concerns are identified, determine how the Board can address those concerns. Board members will discuss this issue with their appointing Commissioners.
- Suggestion to invite Mari Molina to attend monthly Board meetings and discuss initiatives for potential collaboration.

Mr. Zomerfeld advised Board members to be prepared to take these issues to the next level at the June Board meeting.

4. Additional Business:

Members' terms: Dr. Smith was thanked for his eight years of service to the Board, though he will continue until someone is appointed to serve in his stead. Mr. DeWitt was praised for his excellent leadership, and Ms. Ellis-Cutler was thanked for her many contributions. Outgoing Board members will be formally acknowledged at the next meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Next Economic Development Board Meeting: Wednesday, June 3, 2009 at 8:00 a.m. The July meeting will be held Wednesday, July 8, 2009 at 8:00 a.m., Development Department Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Alberro-Jimenez
Assistant City Manager
Acting Secretary to the Economic Development Board