

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Communication Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 8, 2020, 8:30 a.m.
Youth Center Conference Room
Coral Gables, FL

MEMBERS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	COMMISSIONERS
	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'19	'20	
Sandra Gonzalez-Levy	P	P	P	E	P	P	*	*	P	P	P	E	P	Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Derrek Space	P	E	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Pat Keon
Alexandra Pantin Connie Crowther	R	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	P	P	P	P	Vice Mayor Vince Lago
														Commissioner Jorge L. Fors
TJ Villamil	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Michael Mena

A = Absent
E = Excused Absence
P = Present
R = Resigned
RA = Reappointed by different
Commissioner
* = No Meeting
+ = No Quorum

STAFF AND GUESTS:

Maria Rosa Higgins Fallon, Public Affairs
Michael Rocha, CGTV
Nicolas Saenz, CGTV
Deena Bell-Llewellyn, Landscape Division

Mr. Derrek Space participated over the phone.

After achieving a quorum, the meeting began at 8:33 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. TJ Villamil made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 2019 meeting. Ms. Connie Crowther seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Publicity for Tree Services

Ms. Higgins Fallon invited staff from Landscape Services to renew discussions on how the Communications Committee can assist in publicizing the services offered to manage and protect the city's tree canopy. Ms. Connie Crowther has offered her assistance in coordinating a publicity campaign.

Ms. Deena Bell-Llewellyn from Landscape Services was present to discuss ideas for public outreach. Ms. Higgins Fallon reviewed the door hangers that have been already been produced by her office to inform residents of Landscape Services being provided, as well as another doorhanger with information regarding waterways.

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn provided a recap on what staff does to inform the public on a regular basis. The city is canvassed by zones year-round, which is a constant undertaking, to determine which trees are in need of replacement. When a tree is sick or dying, residents are notified by the city's arborists when a tree is going to be removed, and they provide an informational doorhanger in the area nearby.

Ms. Crowther asked what response the Landscape staff receives from residents when this happens. Ms. Bell-Llewellyn explained that residents rarely reach out on the specific case of the tree being removed. A resident can appeal to stop a tree removal, which then goes to the Board of Adjustment for appeal. They are currently experiencing the first tree removal appeal.

Chairperson Sandy Gonzalez-Levy stated that since there are a few new processes in place, Ms. Higgins Fallon should create educational stories to inform the public. She also asked if there are preventive measures the city can take to protect the trees.

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn discussed some preventive measures. An example is the requirement of tree fencing for any construction underway in order to protect the roots of the tree. Fines are imposed to developers if a construction does not provide tree fencing properly. Ms. Crowther suggested to also do a tree fencing public outreach.

Mr. Villamil asked why there is not a larger volume of responses from the public from the doorhangers when a tree is going to be removed. Ms. Bell-Llewellyn said that the average resident trusts the City arborists. Some responses come from residents that are curious as to why the tree died. The City then shares the arborist's report, which explains why the tree is in need of removal.

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn also discussed a new project in the North Ponce area, where many shade trees are being planted. Her Division has detailed a master plan for new trees to be planted in the area, which will replace the Foxtail Palms, a tree that is not native to South Florida and that is prone to illness.

Chairperson Gonzalez-Levy stated FIU has a partnership with Coconut Grove and offered to provide a contact of professors and students who may be willing to help in Coral Gables as well.

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn discussed the “Better Tree, Better Place,” team effort with FPL to give out information on tree safety, which is ongoing.

Mr. Michael Rocha suggested to include a presentation at the upcoming Farmers Market about what our own Landscape Services is doing.

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn spoke about the Black Olive study. She’s working with Ms. Higgins Fallon to promote this information in e-News and other communication venues. Landscape Services is also teaching other cities how to treat their Black Olives trees.

In order to promote the services discussed, Ms. Higgins Fallon suggested to work publicizing the following projects in this order: First, doing videos on Tree Removal and the Black Olive study, followed by the tree planting on North Ponce, and then a video on proper tree fencing during construction. Everyone agreed to proceed in this order.

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn announced that Arbor Day will be held on Friday, April 24 at Sunset Elementary. April also has Earth Day and is Landscape Architecture Month.

Mr. Villamil suggested producing a quick weekly series to follow the arborists in their quest to protect the city’s tree canopy. Ms. Bell-Llewellyn offered to be the contact person to coordinate all the upcoming public outreach.

The Communications Committee thanked Ms. Bell-Llewellyn for attending and her willingness to help. She left the meeting.

Public Affairs Report

Chairperson Gonzalez-Levy proposed to make changes for the upcoming 2020 meeting schedule and to take a break during the months of July and August. All members present agreed.

Mr. Villamil asked if Commissioner Fors, Jr. has made an appointment selection. Ms. Higgins Fallon replied that he hasn’t made an appointment as of yet.

Ms. Crowther inquired about adding additional board members. Ms. Higgins Fallon replied that it is up to the Committee to change its composition, but it needs to go through City Commission approval. Chairperson Gonzalez-Levy suggested to wait until Commissioner Fors’ appointee is selected.

Upcoming Events and Projects

Ms. Higgins Fallon provided an overview of upcoming stories her office is working on, including the Census 2020, the Farmers Market, and the Big Toy Extravaganza.

Mr. Rocha discussed the new show idea from CGTV called Gables Heroes, which was being developed. He also reported the online web participation for City Commission meetings has been approved. City Clerk Billy Urquia will be controlling the feed that goes live.

Mr. Rocha showcased a video produced by CGTV regarding the Mayor's trip to Santa Tecla. Members were pleased with this production.

With no other items to discuss the meeting was adjourned.