

**CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**  
**Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2024, 8:30 a.m.**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Coral Gables, Florida 33134**

MEMBERS	J 23	J 23	A 23	S 23	O 23	N 23	D 23	J 24	F 24	M 24	A 24	M 24	APPOINTED BY
Bonnie Seipp	N	N	P	E	E	P	N	P	P	P	A	A	Vice-Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	O	O	P	E	P	P	O	P	A	P	A	P	Mayor Vince Lago
Mary Beth Burke Vice Chair	M	M	P	P	E	P	M	P	P	P	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Margaret Groves	E	E		E	E	E	E	P	#	P	P	P	Commissioner Melissa Castro
Alexis Ehrenhaft	E	E	P	E	P	P	E	P	A	E	E	P	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Genevieve Orr	T	T	P	P	P	E	T	P	P	A	P	P	Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Joanne Meagher Chairperson	I N G	I N G	P	E	P	P	I N G	P	P	P	P	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 at 8:39 AM by Chair Joanne Meagher. Attendance was stated for the record.

**ROLL CALL:**

In attendance were Ms. Burke, Ms. Cason, Ms. Groves, Ms. Ehrenhaft, Ms. Orr, and Ms. Meagher.

**OPENING STATEMENT:**

Ms. Meagher read the opening statement:

*The South Wind and the Boy*

*Ever since the family had come to the Biscayne Bay country the boy had loved the south wind. To him it held promise, romance, fulfillment. And, not as the north wind bringing down the cold waves; not as the west wind carrying the drowning rainy-season floods and the mosquito plagues; not as the east wind with its ten-day drizzles in the fall and weeks of raw petulant rages in the spring; no, unlike these other, these jealous alien winds, -the south wind and the boy knew as the spirit of the land.*

*He knew the south winds' promise, its soft assuring promise, that came after the jealous north wind had frozen their first pioneer crop in their fresh cleared Okra sink and Sweeting sink; that balmy consoling promise that miraculously blew over the blackened stalks that were scenting the pine-wood air with that deathly sweetness which frozen pithy stalks give out. That day after their first freeze the south wind had arrived with the sun. The promise was plain to the boy. There was unmistakable promise of life, -feeling of new life; that could spring again from unharmed roots deep in the "potholed" sandy, sink oil. On the early morning south wind there was promise and impellent.*

*"If we prune them, Papa", the boy was saying to the gloom-burdened father, "If we cut off their dead tops at once so the sour sap don't hurt the roots, they'll come out again, papa, I know it!"*

*"Come out again! The devil will come out again!," his father snorted: hands clasping and unclasping behind his bent back.*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**A motion was made by Ms. Ehrenhaft, seconded by Ms. Cason, to approve the minutes from the March 11, 2024, meeting. The motion passed unanimously.**

**A motion was made by Ms. Burke, seconded by Ms. Groves, to approve the minutes with amendments from the April 8, 2024, meeting. The motion passed unanimously.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Merrick House Activity Report April 2024 -  
Ms. Meagher read the April 2024 House Report. The report was shared with the Board in advance of the meeting and is included as an attachment to the minutes.
2. Founder's Day, Monday June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2-4 pm – Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables requested to have the Founder's Day celebration at the House and would like to present a donation of the book "Tales of the Alhambra". The event would be by invitation-only event. Staff advised that a rental agreement from HPACG needs to be submitted. The City also needs insurance from the catering company.
3. Coral Gables Garden Club – Kathy Zuckerman from the Garden Club asked for a date to decorate the House and suggested Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. The board discussed producing a Christmas ornament to sell, benefitting the House. A series of locations/landmarks was discussed. Ms. Groves will obtain a price quote to produce a blown glass holiday ornaments for Merrick House.
4. Centennial Events – The City's Centennial website will be up within a couple of weeks, per the Communications Department, describing some of the events throughout the city. When Ms. Meagher met with Communications, she mentioned the possibility of utilizing the reenactor, Robert Dawson, who has shown interest in playing Henry George Fink. He will be doing research and providing a price.
5. Short Stories / Story Hour – Ms. Meagher suggested a program of stories – i.e., different people reading several short stories. They could be on Sundays, before or after tours. The series could possibly start in April 2025.
6. WLRN PBS – They are doing a series called "Our Cities" that are 10 minutes pieces to run in-between regular programming and feature various speakers about cities in south Florida.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Stag Painting – Ms. Meagher forwarded website information for Guerri's Antique Restoration and described their credentials and experience. The cost of the restoration, with pickup / delivery is estimated at \$2600.

**A motion was made by Ms. Burke, seconded by Ms. Cason, to use Guerri's Antique Restoration in Deland, Florida to restore the Stag Painting. This motion passed unanimously.**

2. Staff Tours – Ms. Meagher suggested providing a rolling sign up for employees to tour the house, rather than just on one day. For example: every 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday with a maximum of 20 people.

3. Althea's Garden Brigade – Staff has a waiver template and is waiting for the City Attorney's office to review.
4. Pond – The fish are not being fed temporarily due to the inoperable filtration pump. Staff is working on an emergency purchase authorization. Ms. Groves suggested investing in an automatic fish feeder.
5. Craig Johnson Memorial - Ms. Bell Llewelyn will obtain the Lignum Vitae tree for the memorial. The stone and plaque are already at the House. The ceremony will likely be in the fall.
6. 100 Voices – The Board complimented Carolina Vester as a speaker. It was noted that a new videographer is needed for the next season.
7. Place Maker Poet - The inaugural showing of the 45-minute piece will be on June 7<sup>th</sup> at 8pm. It will have a special showing throughout the centennial year.
8. Way Showers Monument – Ms. Meagher and Ms. Bondurant met with the mayor and all the commissioners about the idea of having a plaque to be located near the art piece.
9. Eagle Scout – Eagle Scout Ben Martinez mentioned working on a project at the Merrick House. Staff advised the carriage house is a historic structure and cannot be altered in any way.
10. Flag – The flag has been replaced. The old flag will be decommissioned.
11. Sunroom – The repair project will be managed by Public Works with a conservator and roofing company to complete the work.
12. Woodwork – Staff is working on the budget for next year. The Department requested a Capital Improvement Project for the restoration plan for interior woodwork at the House for approximately \$30,000.
13. Rug – The rug has not been returned to the House. Staff will request again.
14. Dishwasher – Staff advised they will be purchasing the dishwasher in the next few days.
15. Furniture – There are various furniture pieces that need repair: Ms. Meagher requested quotes for the following: chair upstairs - right front leg broken (\$150), Althea's trunk – some leather broken and missing (\$325), Joan of Arc table - piece missing (\$150), Gramophone - one door missing knob (\$475), Entrance table – veneer top (\$225-350), two armchairs in office - leather broken (\$995). Staff noted that if the furniture is on loan we cannot do the repair work.

**A motion was made by Ms. Burke, seconded by Ms. Groves, to approve using Tony at Disar Furniture to repair Guerri's to repair the entrance table for \$350.00. The motion passed unanimously.**

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:** None.

**CITY COMMISSION ITEMS:** None.

**ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY:** None.

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**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna C. Pernas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "P".

Anna C. Pernas  
Historic Preservation Officer