

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-1**  
**November 17, 2009**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II**  
**Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.**  
**Commissioner Maria Anderson**  
**Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.**  
**Commissioner Wayne “Chip” Withers**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Patrick Salerno**  
**City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez**  
**City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman**  
**Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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F-1 [Start: 1:46:08 p.m.]

Presentation on senior activities – Commissioner Maria Anderson

Mayor Slesnick: Ms. Anderson, F-1.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes. This is a presentation on senior activities, and it is prepared by the Parks and Recreation staff before they...you can come up if you like...what I like to do periodically is just to get a sense of where we've been, and what we've accomplished, and where we might like to go. This particular report that I've asked for talks about the history of our senior program through the current time, and I think there is a Phase I and a Phase II and Phase III is to come, and its going to take a bit of dreaming and some budgetary things that are probably not in place right now, but I want to thank the Parks and Recreation staff for putting this together; and I hope that you will be presenting this also to the Senior Board. It's your show now.

Mr. Couceyro: Good afternoon; for the record Fred Couceyro, Parks and Recreation Director. As Commissioner Anderson stated, we wanted to, if we can get the presentation up on the screen...We wanted to just give you a brief snapshot of where our Senior Services Division is, where it started?- where we've gone?- where we are now?- and what our hopes are for the future. Our Senior Services Division began really in 1993, after Hurricane Andrew there was a study that was conducted by F.I.U. on our elderly needs in 1993. As a result of the study it was determined that a Senior Citizens Advisory Board should be established to champion the needs of the senior citizens, and also to have a senior services coordinator position created. This position was created and filled in 1994. Now for several years the beginning of our programming efforts centered on the Board and the coordinator holding annual health fairs, or health expos;

interestingly enough a couple of them were held at the old Country Club site, but we kind of branched out in programming, we had F.I.U. after they conducted their study, their Center on Aging had some workshops and some programs that we held at the temporary Parks and Recreation office, I don't know if any of you remember back when the Youth Center was being renovated, the Parks and Recreation offices were located in what is now the Biltmore Hotel's conference center, and we had a lot of arts and crafts classes for seniors, painting, those kinds of courses, that's where we started our programming. As we moved along throughout the years, we started to see that we needed some more programming; we had by 2002, the Youth Center had been renovated; we had established our Friendship Club, which was a group that had activities at Salvadore Park, and then they had moved over to the Youth Center, and we also had our "Young Viejos", which is our senior softball group which had been playing at the Youth Center; and we had a few field trips that we were coordinating with our Youth Center staff; we were just trying to do a few things and working with the Board and the coordinator and trying to find some programming, but it wasn't a completely coordinated effort as of yet. What we did from this point on, is we partnered with the University of Miami; and the University of Miami conducted a second study, it was named the Elderly Report, and what came out of this report was, we found that the seniors were interested in certain things. They were interested in varied programs; whether it was cultural programs, whether it was trips, concerts, and we also found that they needed some help with coordination of services; whether it be transport, whether it be handyman services, whether it be house cleaning. So we looked at all this and we started coming up with some big milestones in our programs that kind of lead to where we are now, and one of them was, we added two positions, one fulltime position and one part-time programming position; and these two positions were slated under the Senior Services Division, and these were the two positions that started our programming efforts. Our other big milestone is in 2007, we entered into a use agreement with the University Baptist Church; this use agreement allowed us to have some space in order to branch out and have more programs. Right now, using what we call, the adult activity center at the University Baptist Church, the past year our total visits were almost 4,500. To give you kind of a perspective of where we were prior to that, just with our programming staff without the University Baptist Church, we were at about 500 total visits. So, the University Baptist Church has really created an opportunity for us to expand our program. We have about thirty programs that we offer in any given month, which is a large increase over the eight that we offered before we entered into the Church. Some of our highlighted programs that we are thriving with right now are, we have a "Dancercise" which is very popular, always fills up as soon as we start registration; our lunch and lecture series is very popular, and we just had our "Senior Arts Show" this past week; it was a wonderful event, it was our best attended event ever, great art. We have current events class that meets at the Church, its very popular, and also on movie days, which are one of the few things we had at the Youth Center, we've been able to move them over to the Church, and it continued to be one of our most successful programs. Now, we do appreciate everything the Church has done for us in helping us, and accommodating us for the needs that we have, but there are some realities, there are some challenges; the challenges that we have are, the adult activities center limits our use, and we usually have it about three to four days a week; we don't have it for the entire week because they do have church activities there. We also have to plan around their activities and their needs, obviously it's their building and we understand that, so sometimes we have to forego long range planning and concentrate our programming on the short term, and look at those events that we can put together quickly, and we can advertise quickly. One of the other features of the Church is

we don't have storage space; they have a lot of their own equipment, and we do not have an area that we can use for our storage needs, our equipment, or any of the things that we need, and that's understandable, considering its their building that they use for the majority of the time.

Commissioner Anderson: You have to bring it over every time you use it?

Mr. Couceyro: Yes. We have, like for instance, we have a computer program; what we've done is we've made it a mobile computer lab, and what we have to do is basically, we have to cart it across the street for the classes, and then we bring it back and store it in our building, because we need to have the safety and security of all that equipment, so that's better done at the Youth Center. So we do walk across the street, our staff, and we cart them over. It's the same thing with our office staff; our staff cannot stay on site if they have some office duties that they have to...whether its reports, whether it's planning or marketing for the programs, they do have to come back to the Youth Center, that's where their office space is. Now, the last challenge is obviously the adult activities center is temporary; it was always intended to be temporary because as we know the University Baptist Church is not going to be there forever. Now, when we started with this presentation, one of the tasks was to look at what our "Wish List" is; what would be what we would want or to carry our Senior Services Division and the programs to the next level, and obviously, the first facet of that would be a permanent senior center; and it would be a senior center that would be a stand-alone building or a building that had the ability for us to use several breakout rooms, to have a front lobby for greeting people, to have onsite parking, sort of a destination center where people could come, and know this is, where we are going to be for senior activities.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Do you have a....have you done a space plan on how big that center would be in your ideal situation without going crazy?

Mr. Couceyro: That's an interesting question. We originally had done one and it was much smaller, but as we have seen the opportunities expand for the types of programs and the types of popularity that we are getting for certain types of programs that we didn't even expect, it has grown, you know, conceivably you can look at a center in the 7,000-8,000 square foot range that would satisfy all needs; you could go smaller, but if you are talking about a wish list and what would be perfect, you'd look at a lot of the standard senior centers are up there between 5,000 and upwards in the 7,000-8,000 square foot, and those are the ones, the ones that are 7,000-8,000 have the bigger breakout rooms, usually if you have a big large banquet that usually goes about 4,500, just that one room; and you have the breakout rooms, the lobby area. So if you had that one big room in the middle that you do for the large presentations, for banquets, that kind of thing, then you'd go up to...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Or if you had access to it very closely would be another possible situation.

Mr. Couceyro: Yes, it is.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Have an idea for you, but I am not going to discuss it right here.

Mr. Couceyro: Tell me later.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I'll tell you later.

Mr. Couceyro: As a companion to that, we would also like office space within that center, so not only to have our programming staff there, but also to have our senior services coordinator there, and also be able to provide some office space for senior service providers that we would bring in, social service agencies that we could set up some office hours at certain times for seniors to come in, if they needed any help with any myriad of difficulties they may have. Now the one thing we would, if we had a permanent center, we would need a little bit more staff for a permanent center, we would be looking at augmenting our current staff of a fulltime recreation specialist and a part-time programming position, to at least one more fulltime position for programming, and then have a part-time support staff for office and registration needs, and that would be between two and four depending on the hours that we were open, depending on the needs that we had in terms of our registration system; and we would also need one fulltime maintenance person for the building, that's kind of in keeping with what we have at the Youth Center, we have three there, a much bigger building, but we think one would suffice. So for our current budget needs, that was where we started, when we were in the beginning of our Phase II 2002, our budget was \$74, 825, it was basically the senior services coordinator and a small budgetary amount for the annual health fare. This is what we have currently slated for this upcoming budget, so we've come a long way, and I think our seniors are very happy with the advances that we have made. Obviously that increase in budget has to do with our increase in personnel, our staff, but also our increase in programming, and the materials that we use, and a lot of the services that we now provide. Now, I just have some pictures here, just so you can see that our things are being attended, our programs are taken up; this is one of our lunches, this is the computer lab as you can see; what we have is, we have the mobile teaching cart and we have the laptops; this is the coffee club and the current events room; this particular picture is from the coffee club, which is when they all get together talking about issues and having coffee; this is one of our lectures from our lunch and lecture series; this is one of our special events, our luncheons; dancercise – very popular; this is some more of our fitness; this is actually at the Youth Center; this is our knitting and scrapbooking courses; this is our Friendship Club, just to show you these are all of our senior activities, and I did want to show you those, these are our "Young Viejos". So we started at the beginning with the "Young Viejos" and Friendship Club, we are still there. So that's just kind of a snapshot of where we are and where we'd like to go; obviously there are some budgetary issues that go with that, but thought that was important just to verbalize what it is that we...

Commissioner Anderson: You all did a fine job, I appreciate it. I had spoken with the Manager to have this report brought forward and in speaking with him shared my desire at some point when we have the resources, the budgetary resources to begin to chip away at the bigger one which is the senior center. I would like for staff to think and figure out some things, some of the smaller items that we could figure out, maybe we could talk to UBC about storage or something like that, I'm not sure if that's possible or not, but maybe that might begin to help you a little bit, I don't know.

Mr. Couceyro: They have been very accommodating...

Commissioner Anderson: I'm sure they have.

Mr. Couceyro:...and we really don't have any complaints with them, we are very thankful for the space that we use, but it is difficult because they do have their own agendas that they have to make sure they meet.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Can I ask a question? With regards to how is our senior program working with the Coral Gables Foundation?- is it...

Mr. Couceyro: Well we have had an established relationship with Coral Gables at Home Project, the representative does come to our Board meetings, we have had discussions; I don't think we have any active programming partnerships currently right now.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Alright, but you are working with them?- the Coral Gables at Home.

Mr. Couceyro: Yes.

Mayor Slesnick: Is there a reason not to have any programs with them?

Mr. Couceyro: No, I can't tell you that there is a reason, no.

Mayor Slesnick: I'm just wondering why partnerships wouldn't help us be better suppliers.

Mr. Couceyro: I'm not sure that there has been resistance to it, I just don't think we have one as of yet.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: They have people coming to our meetings; do we have people going to their meetings to understand what's going on with their projects?

Mr. Couceyro: I cannot answer that. I would think we do not; but we could change that.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I think what the Mayor said is a good idea, I mean, we want to have as much synergy as possible, because we are all doing the same thing, which is basically trying to improve the quality of life for the senior citizens of our community, and if we can do that in partnership so be it. Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: Well we will keep on tabs with this and see what progress we can make, maybe in a couple of years figure out something; the budget has moved, its opened up and given us more money and maybe we can get a senior center at some point.

Mr. Couceyro: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: In the interim thank you very much; you all do great work, staff is...you have an amazing staff there that works very hard.

Mr. Couceyro: They do a great job.

Mayor Slesnick: Did you get an answering machine yet for Mr. Hunt?

Mr. Couceyro: We did not get an answering machine, we are working on it.

Commissioner Cabrera: I'll donate one.

Mayor Slesnick: Fred, it's been like a year and-a-half.

Mr. Couceyro: There have been some other issues.

Mayor Slesnick: OK, there's been some other issues – OK, we won't go into it, but thank you for working on it.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Please get it done – alright, we'll leave it.

[End: 2:02:07 p.m.]