

# CORAL GABLES

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

International Affairs Coordinating Council (IACC)

Sister Cities Committee

Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 24, 2022

Location: City Hall Commission Chambers

405 Biltmore Way, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Coral Gables, FL 33134

| Members:              | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | Commissioners                |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| Raul Valdes-Fauli     | P |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Mayor Vince Lago             |
| Volker R. Anding      | P |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Vice Mayor Michael Mena      |
| Brett Gillis          | P |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Comm. Rhonda Anderson        |
| Richard Montes de Oca | P |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Comm. Jorge L. Fors, Jr.     |
| Carlos Hernandez      | P |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Comm. Kirk R. Menendez       |
| Alejandra Collarte    | P |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Peter Iglesias, City Manager |
| Rafael Gavarrete      | P |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Council-at-Large Appointment |

A = Absent P=Present E= Excused UA= Unexcused Absence X= No Meeting

## WELCOME

Mr. Julian H. Perez, Economic Development Director welcomed the members of the IACC.

The following provides a brief overview of the Council discussions:

- Chairperson Valdes-Fauli called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm, and asked the members to approve the November 15, 2021, minutes.
- Vice Chair Anding had one comment on the last minutes, he said on the first bullet on page 3, on the last line there is a mention of Spain as a Sister City, he said it should be the City of Sevilla instead. Changes were made immediately after his request.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES (November 15, 2021)

- Mr. Montes de Oca made a motion to approve the minutes and the rest of the board members voted in favor, with the correction that Vice Chair Anding had suggested
- Chairperson Valdes-Fauli, called in the next item on the agenda, presentation of the Gables Family Literacy Festival (GFLF) by Mr. Samuel Joseph.
- Mr. Samuel Joseph provided a brief history and description on the GFLF and how he would like the city to get involved. Before he started, he thank the Chairperson and all the IACC members for allowing him to present the GFLF today. He added that GFLF started under Mayor Raul Valdez-

Fauli Administration in 2017. The literacy festival is really a day where we help parents around the issue of literacy and how they can help support their children's literacy.

The event consists of working with the school district to bring families together, community and city resources to the Youth Center in some kind of book fair format. The schedule date for this event is May 28, 2022.

We also would like to recognize that we are an international city and want to highlight the large consulate community in the city and its Sister City Program and all the wonderful resources that they can bring in different language books. The model is to build an International Village, a small, tented area where we can highlight the work that the Consular Corps and Sister City communities do. Mr. Joseph invited all the board members to be a part of this year's event.

Chairperson Valdes-Fauli added that this is a wonderful initiative and thank Mr. Joseph for all his efforts with this event. Vice Chair Anding added that he and his wife attended the literacy festival last year and that it was absolutely outstanding. Chairperson asked Mr. Joseph how they can help, and he said he will work on a draft document that includes the International Village concept and once is ready he will send it to Chairperson Valdes-Fauli and the Board members.

- Chairperson Valdes-Fauli called the next item on the agenda, Spanish Cultural Program presented by Ms. Olga Ramudo. Ms. Ramudo introduced herself to the Chairperson and board members. Ms. Ramudo informed the Board that she owns a company called Express Travel and is the Chairperson of the Coral Gables Economic Development Advisory Board. She cited that the reason for attending the IACC meeting today is to inform the Board members that she is working with the Coral Gables Museum (CGM) on a program that is not only a cultural experience but it will also show an appreciation for Spain.

The program consists of several educational/cultural seminars at the Museum that will culminate with a trip to Spain in September of 2022 that includes the Sister City of Sevilla. She proposed to the CGM to involve the International Affairs Coordinating Council Committee, since Sevilla is one of the City's sister cities. She also mentioned that the trip is scheduled for September 1- 13, 2022. It will start in Salamanca followed by Sevilla, then Madrid an end in Barcelona. She went on saying that this is basically the idea of the Spanish Cultural Program, and she will love the Committee's support.

Chairperson Valdes-Fauli expressed his complete support and participation in this program and informed Ms. Ramudo to work with Ms. Leticia Perez and keep him in the loop. She thanked the Chairperson for his suggestions and cooperation.

### **CITY OF STELLENBOSCH**

- Mr. Gillis informed the Board members that he had briefly talked about Stellenbosch on the October 18, 2021, IACC meeting since he has not been assigned a country yet. He suggested to the Board the City of Stellenbosch. Mr. Gillis added that he had a brief conversation with Mayor Lago long ago but have not had a chance to meet with him again. He is hopeful to meet him over the next few weeks to see if there is an interest from the Coral Gables side.
- Chairperson Valdes-Fauli, informed Mr. Gillis that he was the attorney for an International Educational Consortium which has the University of Stellenbosch as a member, and he is also a friend of one of the most important Deans there. He told Mr. Gillis that if he needs any help or information, he will be happy to assist.

## COUNTRY REPORT

### AIX-EN-PROVENCE

- Vice Chair Anding informed the Board members that he had received an email from his counterpart in Aix-en-Provence and he said that their big event “Le marche international des villes jumellees” (International Market of Sister Cities) took place in early December 2021, despite the pandemic. They had about 12,000 people attending the event; the organizers were a little disappointed since in 2019 they had 25,000 people; but they also said that it was to be expected because of the health restrictions. Nonetheless, he said it was impressive that they went ahead with the event. Chairperson told Vice Chair Anding that he was doing a good job in keeping the relationship with Aix-en-Provence alive.

### QUITO, ECUADOR

- Mr. Montes de Oca gave an update on Quito. He reported to the Board members that he as well as Mayor Lago invited Ms. Vienna Maino, Minister of Telecommunications for Quito, Ecuador to come to the City of Coral Gables during her visit to Miami. The Economic Development Office coordinated a meeting and tour at the Police and Fire Headquarters on December 8<sup>th</sup> to showcase the Smart City capabilities and Technology Center. Vice Mayor Mena was in attendance on behalf of Mayor Vince Lago. He added that it was a very positive meeting and a good step in terms of moving forward to re-establish a Sister City Relationship. Minister Maino was very impressed with the Coral Gables Technology Center and the fact that the information that Mr. Rodulfo was showcasing was also available online.
- Mr. Perez agreed with Mr. Montes de Oca that they had an excellent meeting with Mrs. Maino. He added that after the meeting he had an opportunity to speak to Minister Maino regarding Cyber Security issues that came up in several occasions in the conversation. Mr. Perez informed the Board members that Mrs. Maino extended an invitation to him and Mr. Rodulfo to visit Quito.
- Mr. Perez recommended to follow up with them and continue the discussion on the sister city relationship, this is an important area to work with them and perhaps identify other opportunities of mutual interest such as enhancing the cultural relationship.
- Chairperson Valdes-Fauli asked Mr. Perez to give a report about the meeting we had with the Colombian representatives. Mr. Perez informed the board members that recently we had a virtual meeting with Sophia Archbold from the City of Cartagena and Olga Liliana Bedoya from the Colombian Embassy in the US. Both Ms. Archbold and Ms. Bedoya are very interested to jumpstart the Sister City relationship between Cartagena and the City of Coral Gables. As you may know Colombia had closed their borders in 2020 and most part of 2021, the country was hit very hard with Covid and later, with many Omicron cases. They feel that now is the time to renew and discuss this sister city relationship. Mr. Perez explained the process and what steps they need it to do next. He added that we should regroup and have another meeting in the future to continue the conversation in terms of the relationship, and Chairperson Valdes-Fauli added that once the relationship is established a trip to Cartagena should be organized.

### SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

- Mr. Gavarrete reported that the Mayor of San Jose, Costa Rica is going through serious legal challenges, and that he has been removed from office temporarily and an interim Mayor is or will be named soon. He added that once he has the information on the new Mayor, he will share it with the Board members.

### LA ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

- Mr. Gavarrete informed the members that a letter was sent early January from Mayor Lago to Mayor Del Busto in La Antigua. He said he would follow up with the office of Mayor Lago to find out if he has received a response.

### SANTA TECLA, EL SALVADOR

- Mr. Gavarrete told the members that he still waiting for Mayor Flores of Santa Tecla to return his phone calls. He added that he requested a meeting through the General Consulate of El Salvador with no luck. He will be calling the City of La Antigua soon.

### SAN ISIDRO, ARGENTINA

- Ms. Collarte informed the board members that she did not have any news from San Isidro except that Argentina open their flights in November of 2021. She also reported that she received information from the Consulate of Argentina that the former Secretary of International Trade of the Nation, Ms. Marisa Bircher, is coming to Miami in February, and she thinks it would be a great opportunity for the Economic Development Office to meet with her. She also added that she is organizing a meeting with Ms. Bircher, the ITC and the Greater Miami Chamber on February 24<sup>th</sup> and would like to propose that the city invite her on a separate meeting/tour to showcase the city's communication and technology center.
- Mr. Perez told Ms. Collarte that we can arrange a meeting with her during Ms. Bircher's visit to Miami in February.

### OPEN DISCUSSION

- Mr. Perez, informed Chairperson Valdes-Fauli that he would like to share some information about the Consular Corps Educational Seminar Series. We are hoping to have the first seminar in February on Cyber Security. And finally on the International Cultural Events, Mr. Perez added, that the Economic Development Department sent the second letter mid-January 2022 to all the members of the Consular Corps. He reported that we have already received emails from Consulates that are interested in participating in this program, we hope that on the next IACC meeting we can provide you with the names of these countries and what activities/events they are planning to do.
- Vice Chair Anding informed the Board members that he read on the January 2022 Coral Gables Magazine a brief report on things that had been discussed at City Hall and that Julian Perez, Economic Development Director, based on a proposal made by Mayor Lago made an announcement for a series of five International Cultural Events in Coral Gables to Celebrate the City's Cultural diversity into luring more foreign Consulates. Vice Chair Anding asked Mr. Perez to give them more information about the program.

- Mr. Perez shared with all the members, that this initiative was put forth a few months ago by our current Mayor, and that basically the whole intent is to bring the city closer to the foreign agencies/Consulates and Multinationals Companies through these cultural events. He added that we saw the success the Consulate of Mexico had when they celebrated in October of last year, “El Dia de los Muertos” and he would like to duplicate that this year with other countries. He went on and said that to incentivize this program the city is offering this year up to \$20,000 to help the Consulates that are interested in participating. This is a very competitive process, each interested party will have to fill out an application and go through the Parks and Recreation Board for approval.
- Brett Gillis asked Mr. Perez for the status on the Fink Studio. Mr. Perez informed him and the Board members that we were supposed to move this month but unfortunately is now being delay another two months. They are basically working on a punch list and as soon as the building is ready, we will coordinate the move. The renovations are coming out very beautiful. We look forward to seeing you all at the grand opening and thereafter.
- Chairperson Valdes Fauli thank Mr. Perez and Ms. Leticia Perez for their assistance and cooperation. Thereafter, a motion was passed to adjourn the meeting.

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Respectfully submitted,  
Leticia Perez  
International Business Development Representative  
Economic Development Department  
City of Coral Gables