

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-1
June 14, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick**

City Staff

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

Public Speaker(s)

**Former Commissioner Chip Withers
Caroline Parker, Director of Coral Gables Museum**

Agenda Item D-1 [9:41:12 a.m.]

Introduction and welcome of Caroline Parker, Director of the Coral Gables Museum.

Mayor Cason: Now I would ask Ex-Commissioner Chip Withers if he'd like to introduce Caroline Parker, the Director of the Coral Gables Museum.

Former Commissioner Withers: Sure. Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure following the Teamsters. First of all, I want to apologize for the miscommunication on the time Mayor, we thought it was going to be a bit later, so I thank you for your patience.

Mayor Cason: Sure.

Former Commissioner Withers: At this time last year when I stood up behind you, a lot of things have happened in the Coral Gables Museum. Basically, there's been thousands of school kids coming through learning about sea rise. There has been exhibits on post World War II rebuilding, there's been exhibits on the Tamiami Trail, there's been exhibits on the new Ludlum and the Underline, so we are excited about it, and what we want to do is take just a few minutes, because I know how important your summer schedules are, and City Manager thank you for allowing this opportunity. It's crazy, I guess you are down to one meeting this month and you've got a lot of it jam-packed, so we'll be very quick. Since last November, as you know, Chris Rupp left the museum and we were really fortunate to find someone within, Caroline Parker, who actually is schooled and educated in museum. It's brought a whole new level of focus to us, which is absolutely fantastic. In the past six to seven months, we've grown, we've added a development officer, which Caroline will introduce, but more importantly, in the year to come we have some of the most exciting things you can possibly imagine. This upcoming year for me is probably one that I'm so excited about. I haven't had as much excitement about what we have coming up in the year to come, as we have coming up right now. So in the next couple of minutes I'm going to bring Caroline up here. She'll introduce you real quickly to Manny and what we've done and what we have in the future, so Caroline.

Ms. Parker: Good morning everybody.

Mayor Cason: Good morning.

Ms. Parker: Well thank you so much for having us on the agenda. I just wanted to really bring everybody kind of up to speed and give you all an update. This past March we submitted our letter of request for continued funding from the City of Coral Gables. I submitted all of that to the City Manager and others; Dona Spain who is here from Historical Resources and Cultural Affairs, and all that was submitted. Some additional things that were requested were audited statements and also our business plan, which was something new that we hadn't done before, but at this time I wanted to submit that to the City Manager. Some other new developments – we had been interviewing for a Development Director since fall of last there. There were many, many candidates; I think from 60 applications, we narrowed it down. Conducted several interviews and I wanted to take a moment to introduce our new Development Director Manny Perez. Manny Perez lives here in Coral Gables, he's a father of school age children who attend Coral Gables schools, and he has a very impressive resume and history of fundraising in and around our community and we are very happy to have him as part of our team. This was also something that I believe was told to the City that we were going to do in this year, I'm very happy that it's something that we have done. So, I'd like to invite Manny to come up here. This is Manny Perez.

Mayor Cason: Welcome. Welcome.

Ms. Parker: So we are going to be working together on a fundraising plan for this year and really for next part of our five year strategic plan, so this is something that is forthcoming, and we'll be happy to share that with the City once we have that approved by the Board and ready to share. But I also wanted to share with you all some pictures of some of the things that happen just in the last two weeks. I know that with your busy schedules it isn't always possible to come by, and so, I just wanted to share with you some images from just this past Saturday our "Family Day," which drew over 250 people. This is a monthly free event. The Coral Gables Museum started "Family Day" on Aragon, invited our partners Books and Books and the Coral Gables Art Cinema to join us in this initiative and that was back in 2011, and now we have an average of attendance of about 350 every second Saturday at the Coral Gables Museum, and I have some images from that. I also have some pictures for you from our members preview reception, which was held on June 2nd, Thursday, June 2nd, for the opening exhibitions, This Land is Your Land, A Second Century for Americas National Parks, which is now on view, will be on view through January 8th 2017. This was done with the support of our National Park Service, which is celebrating its centennial, and if you haven't come by to see you, I encourage you to do so, and this will be part of our school program offerings in this 2016-2017 school year. In addition to that, we opened up John Chen, a Chinese-American artist that was sponsored by the Tai Pei Economic and Cultural office; and we also been our fifth annual Capture Coral Gables Photography Contest. And you will see we packed the house on Gallery Night, which is another free event that we have sponsored by Mercedes Benz of Coral Gables where admission is free to the Museum and we had over 500 people in attendance this past Gallery Night June 3rd. So, I just wanted to share those with you all. Maybe I'll just bring these up.

Commissioner Slesnick: Chip, are you still Chairman of the Museum Board?

Former Commissioner Withers: Yes. I am still Chairman of the Museum Board.

Commissioner Slesnick: Thank you for continuing to serve and keep it going.

Former Commissioner Withers: You are very welcome. So, I think we just about wrapped it up for now. Again, we appreciate your time. Just a real quick personal aside. I really want to congratulate the City and the Commission on the commitment to downtown. It's something that I remember 25 years ago, we were trying to get done, and it's so important to have a good strong vibrant downtown and a main street that really stands out. So we are so happy for the Museum to be right in the epicenter of that. With the visitor center right there, the commitment that the City has made to downtown, it's just going to enhance, I think the whole downtown experience. So we are excited. If there are any quick questions, we are here.

Mayor Cason: Congratulations on getting the Development Director. I think that's really important. I think the 160 corporate headquarters we have here need to step up to the plate and support their Museum, so I'm hoping that you'll have success at that and that will help give you the funds to do even more things at the Museum.

Former Commissioner Withers: I think so Mr. Mayor. His background is UM and Miami Children's, Nicholas Children's, whatever the hospital is named now, the connections and the book of business is there, so we are pretty excited about the opportunity.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor if I may? Commissioner again, just to dovetail what Commissioner Slesnick stated. We are very excited and as your representative on this Commission to the Coral Gables Museum, I want to say thank you for your commitment to the Museum. If you are not committed, I don't see that building where it is today. I also want to welcome Caroline Parker. I've been in your presence during the meetings, during our Board meetings, and you do an incredible job. We are very fortunate to have you, along with Mr. Perez. I look forward to working hand-in-hand with you, so we can solidify the future of the Museum. I just want to make sure that everybody understands that the job that these individuals do is an incredible job. They protect the Coral Gables brand, and when I mean they protect it, the type of cultural initiatives, the type of items that they proffer which hundreds, if not thousands of people enjoy at the Coral Gables Museum is top notch; and if you haven't gone on a Wednesday to enjoy the lunch and the jazz, I highly recommend it. What are the days?- I've been to two of them.

Ms. Parker: That is every year January through March every Wednesday from 12 to 2 (p.m.).

Commissioner Lago: It's an incredible experience. It gives you a little bit of culture and they offer great food and also allow you to take some time off in between work and kind of you can meet new people, you can network, and just sit down and enjoy a little jazz. It's a great opportunity. So I want to commend you. I want you also to know that I support you a hundred and ten percent in regards to this year's budget, requested budget allocation. Hopefully we'll be speaking about that at the forthcoming Budget Hearing, but more importantly I just want to say thank you for allowing me to serve on your Board as your representative to this Commission, it's been an honor and a pleasure, and I really appreciate your commitment to the City of Coral Gables. So thank you so much.

Former Commissioner Withers: And thank you for your scholarship fund for campers, for kids in need, its noble, and thank you for that program that you initiated.

Commissioner Lago: How many kids are we going to get this year?- one or two right?

Ms. Parker: That will serve two, but we have a total of, I think, 20 children who will be attending camp through the scholarship money that we have raised from various donors and foundations. Today is day two of City tracker summer camp; we are in our seventh season of City tracker summer camp.

Commissioner Lago: Commissioner do you want to also discuss, I don't know if we can discuss much about a potential, our future forthcoming art show that we are having that deals with...or you want to keep that under wraps right now?

Former Commissioner Withers: We can let you know. You can talk about one, but one I'm really, really excited about next year is Denman Fink. It's going to be "knock your socks off" type of presentation and what we are trying to do is, we all love George Merrick, but there are a handful of others that have built this City that really haven't been fully exposed to the whole community. So we are starting with Denman and maybe go to Buttons, and who knows where that takes, but once a year we are going to try to focus on one of our City builders. But why don't you real quick tell about the art exhibit and...

Ms. Parker: A lot coming up this next season. One of our first exhibitions will be a children's interactive exhibit, which is something we hope to bring out time and time again, which will move us toward sustainability, and it's something we can offer when we are not in summer camp mode, that would be curated by Cecelia Slesnick, actually who has a lot of – we serve together on the Cultural Educators of Miami Steering Committee. She has a wonderful resume when it comes to museum education and developing children's programs. Then we'll have an exhibition on Cuban architecture. That will be presented in partnership with University of Miami, Victor Dupee and John Francios LeJeune are the co-curators of that. Following that and overlapping with that would be a Cuban art exhibition that was very well received in Tallahassee at FSU, at the museum there, and that is being brought down here. We'll be hosting at the museum, this will be the best in twentieth century Cuban art. A lot of local scholars involved in that and many collectors throughout the state; and following that later in the spring we'll have the Denman Fink exhibition. We've been fortunate, being the museum that several people come to us with their collections pertaining to Coral Gables history, and Ron Gabor is one of those collectors who came to us and has an outstanding collection. Actually Dona Spain had never seen it before, Arva Moore Parks had never seen it before, and now we are going to be able to exhibit that next spring. I believe I'll be meeting with Arva this week; hopefully we'll get her as curator of that exhibition.

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Lago: Great work. Thank you. We are excited for next year.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Slesnick: One more plug for the summer camp, which we discussed a little bit, but there is a full camp all summer long at the museum, and every week there are interesting topics that are for the children and one is especially is architecture and the study of Coral Gables and so forth. Caroline started this six or seven years ago, and it's grown and it's a very well respected summer camp at the museum.

Commissioner Keon: It's for children of what age?

Former Commissioner Withers: I'm sorry.

Commissioner Keon: For children of what age?

Ms. Parker: Five to twelve.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, five to twelve. OK.

Commissioner Lago: From what time to what time?

Ms. Parker: We offer it's a full day program; drop off starts at 8:45 (a.m.) and goes onto to 5:15 (p.m.), but we do have extended day from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and this isn't after school type of movies in the afternoon, this is a full day of curriculum and activities designed for working parents.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Former Commissioner Withers: In fact, all 30 kids are outside, they are going to be...

[Laughter]

Commissioner Keon: Are you taking them to lunch, is that what you said?

Commissioner Lago: You taking them to Ortaniques for lunch?

Commissioner Keon: You taking them to lunch.

Former Commissioner Withers: Absolutely.

Commissioner Keon: Good for you.

Former Commissioner Withers: Anyway thank you very much.

Mayor Cason: Thanks again.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you Commissioner – great work.

Commissioner Keon: Commissioner Chip Withers, you know, I think every person that is ever elected to office your hope is that you leave it a little bit better off than you found it when you came and that your service has brought something new and good and better to your City. You certainly have with the museum; you really deserve to be congratulated for that. Thank you so much.

Former Commissioner Withers: Well thank you, but you know Commissioner, there have been so many people involved in this....

Commissioner Keon: There have been so many people and I know that you are very generous with that, but I remember that that idea germinated with you and you never lost sight of it, and you were the one, you were the seed that planted the idea and you have done an amazing job. So thank you.

Former Commissioner Withers: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you sir.

[End: 9:55:43 a.m.]