

CITY OF CORAL GABLES ADVISORY BOARD ON DISABILITY AFFAIRS  
 CITY OF CORAL PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING  
 2151 Salzedo Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Asst Chief Conf Room Coral Gables 33134  
 WEDNESDAY, February 7, 2024  
 MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	APPOINTED BY:
	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	
Jennifer Ward Sando	*	P											Mayor Vince Lago
													Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Mary Palacio-Pike	*	P											Commissioner Kirk Menendez
Bonnie Blaire	*	P											Commissioner Melissa Castro
Vanessa Bedoya	*	P											Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
													Ex-Officio Member Chamber of Commerce

PZ = Via Zoom

A – Absent  
 E – Excused Absence  
 (-) – No Appointment  
 (\*) – No Meeting  
 (\*\*)-No Meeting – COVID19

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

**QUORUM:** Quorum was reached

**STAFF:**

Raquel Elejabarrieta – Human Resources Director  
 Eglys Hernandez – P/T Administrative Assistant Labor Relations & Risk Management  
 Catie Hastings – Park & Recreation – D.E.I. Coordinator

**GUEST:**

Ana Lam, City of Coral Gables Crime Watch Volunteer

**CITIZEN ADVISORS:**

Deborah Dietz  
 Jennifer Durocher, Director of UM-NSU Card

**PUBLIC GUEST:**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting called to order at 10:06am

**MEETING ABSENCE:** None

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL:**

November 1, 2023 (Commission 12/12/23 – File #23-6694)  
 Motion by: Bonnie Blaire / 2<sup>nd</sup> Vanessa Bedoya / All approved unanimously

**SECRETARY’S REPORT:** None

**BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Autism Acceptance Month – April 2024**

Board discussed Autism Caravan scheduled for April 2, 2024, the presentation of the Autism Proclamation & the Principles of Inclusion Resolution at City Commission, the raising of the Autism flag at City Hall, the sunflower lanyard program, and new police officer badges.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**New Board Member – Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike**

Ms. Pike advised she wanted to discuss the nomination of Justine Chichester made during the commission meeting of December 2023, which was voted down because she was not a resident of Coral Gables. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated board member Ms. Samantha Duran (who Justine Chichester would have replaced), appointed by Vice Mayor Anderson, had advised that due to scheduling issues, she was having difficulty attending meetings and therefore could no longer continue to serve as a board member; however technically she remains a board member until someone else is appointed.

Ms. Pike provided information regarding the candidate, nominated by Vice Mayor Rhoda Anderson, Ms. Justine Chichester, and advised, that even though she is not a resident, Ms. Chichester is employed in the city and has been very involved with the city. Ms. Pike advised that due to Ms. Chichester not being a city resident, the commission did not approve the request to appoint her. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised the board that all nominations to boards go to the commission and stated that when a non-resident is nominated, the commission must approve it by a four-fifths vote, which did not happen, therefore Ms. Chichester was not appointed.

Ms. Sando asked what the board could do to advocate that Ms. Chichester be reconsidered for the appointment. Ms. Elejabarrieta stated that the board could make a motion for her nomination to be reconsidered which would go before the commission. The board discussed the importance of having someone on the board like Ms. Chichester, who is a wheelchair user because of a freak accident she had while walking and brings a different perspective and thorough understanding of accessibility.

***Motion:***

***Ms. Bonnie Blaire made a motion to request that the City Commission reconsider the appointment of Justine Chichester to the Coral Gables Advisory Board on Disability Affairs. / 2<sup>nd</sup> Ms. Jennifer Ward Sando / All approved unanimously***

Ms. Elejabarrieta advised a Resolution will be prepared stating that it is the will of the board that Ms. Chichester's nomination be reconsidered and will try to place on the upcoming February 27, 2024, Commission meeting. Ms. Blaire advised she will be sharing her point of view with her commissioner. Ms. Dietz expressed concern regarding the lack of understanding about disabilities displayed by commissioners during that commission meeting. Ms. Blaire stated the board needs to continue to reinforce its' perspective about disabilities because it can be easily misinterpreted and feels Ms. Diez is making a good point.

**Ex-Officio Board Member with City of Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce – Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike**

Ms. Pike advised she had reached out to Mr. Devin Wade, Chief of Staff for the Chamber, who was going to speak with Sarah, chamber chair regarding someone being appointed as Ex-Officio member to the Coral Gables Advisory Board on Disability Affairs, however, she has not heard back. Ms. Pike stated she would keep the board posted.

**School Community Relations Committee Appointee for Disability Initiative – Ms. Mary Palacio-Pike**

Ms. Pike advised Ana Lam, City of Coral Gables Crime Watch Volunteer, volunteered to be the liaison between the School Community Relations Committee and the Coral Gables Advisory Board on Disability Affairs. Ms. Lam asked board for guidance as to how she can best assist. Ms. Pike expressed she can be the voice between both boards. Ms. Lam advised she may not be able to attend all board meetings due to conflict with other previously scheduled meetings same day and time as this board. Ms. Elejabarrieta advised it would be ok if she does not attend every meeting, what is important is that she be a point of contact between both boards.

**Stock Pictures Update – Ms. Raquel Elejabarrieta**

Ms. Elejabarrieta provided an update of the status and pictures of Ms. Rochelle Baer (Shelly) were shared.

**My Squad / Autism Appreciation Night Police vs Fire Kickball Game – Ms. Raquel Elejabarrieta**

The board was advised of the date and time for this event. Ms. Hasting provided further information and the flyer was shared with the board. Discussion regarding the title of the event was conducted.

Ms. Palacio provided information to the board of a program being sponsored at Crystal Academy – “*Love on the Spectrum*” collaborating with Palmetto Bay school, Rising Star and the board conducted a discussion on this topic.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**NEXT MEETING:** March 6, 2024

**ADJOURNMENT:** Motion by: Vanessa Bedoya / 2<sup>nd</sup> Bonnie Blaire / All approved unanimously  
Meeting adjourned 11:06 am

DRAFT