



CORAL GABLES MERRICK HOUSE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING

Meeting Minutes of September 13, 2021, 8:30 a.m.

Hybrid Meeting – In-Person & Virtual via Zoom

Coral Gables City Hall, City Commission Chamber

405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

Historical Resources &
Cultural Arts

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MEMBERS	O 20	N 20	D 20	J 21	F 21	M 21	A 21	M 21	J 21	J 12	A 12	S 12	APPOINTED BY
Ana Lam	P	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	P	E	E	Mayor Vince Lago
Barbara Reese	A	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	P	E	E	Vice-Mayor Michael Mena
Bonnie Seipp	P	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	E	P	E	Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Carmen Cason	A	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	A	P	P	P	Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Vanessa Torres*									E	P	P	P	Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez
Alexis Ehrenhaft	P	-	-	-	P	P	P	-	P	P	P	P	City Manager Peter Iglesias
Joanne Meagher	P	-	-	-	P	P	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: Warren Adams, Historic Preservation Officer, Kara Kautz, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Colette Worm, Docent Coordinator

RECORDING SECRETARY/PREPARATION OF MINUTES: Nancy Kay Lyons, Administrative Assistant

The meeting was called to order by Chair Meagher at 8:35 a.m. and attendance was stated for the record and announced guest Dorothy Thomson.

OPENING STATEMENT

Chair Meagher opened the meeting with a quote from George Merrick: "I never allowed a dream to put me on the run before I knew where I was going." She addressed the board and said that they knew where they were going, that they had a fabulous dream and were going to pull off a fabulous event and do great things for the Merrick House.

APPROVAL OF ABSENCES:

A motion was made by Ms. Cason and seconded by Ms. Torres to excuse the absences of Bonnie Seipp, Ana Lam and Barbara Reese. The motion was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETINGS:

A motion was made by Ms. Ehrenhaft and seconded by Ms. Cason to approve the minutes of August 9, 2021, with minor punctuation and spelling corrections. The motion was unanimously approved.

DOCENT COORDINATOR REPORT:

Ms. Worm provided updates on the refrigerator filter, air conditioning units, Christmas decorations, phone fiber cable, credit card machine, security alarm panel, flagpole, children and mask-wearing by visitors, Caribee Colony display,

- Docents:** Ms. Worm stated she had advertised for new in the Villagers newsletter with no response. One visitor to the Merrick House had become a docent. There are four docents in training.
- Linens:** One of the docents offered to go through the linens and inventory, photograph, and research them. They could be on display once completed.
- Meeting with Ms. Kautz, Chair Meagher & Ms. Levasser:** A meeting was held to go over items in the house. The following was noted: There are 60 pieces of art or documents displayed in the house, only seven are copies. There are 661 pieces of written material (books, newspapers, magazines, and documents) at the house. 93 have been fumigated and are in the archives.
- August 2021:** \$121 funds collected, 70 visitors, making a total since July 10th of 213 visitors. Forty percent of the visitors in August were children, a 400 percent increase from before COVID.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chair Meagher welcomed Dana Pezoldt and Dorothy Thomson from the DAR. Ms. Thomson provided the Board with anecdotes about the House and DAR involvement over the years. Regent Pezoldt noted that their membership had dwindled to about 140 members, not all were active, and many were elderly. They had been meeting outside during COVID and wanted to continue. They would love to meet at the Merrick House in the more temperate months, January through May, possibly December. The DAR is working with a very small budget and were hoping to get the insurance and the security deposit waived and also keep the same \$50 meeting fee they had paid in the past.

As an aside, Chair Meagher noted that the DAR donated the silver tea set in the house and she would like it cleaned for Doc Dammers Day. Chair Meagher then asked Ms. Kautz if the fee was still \$50 per meeting. Ms. Kautz said that she would check, noting that she was unsure if the board had the ability to waive the insurance requirement. Ms. Pezoldt indicated that the DAR met monthly on the second Tuesday of the month, at 10 am with a brief setup before. They contemplated not serving food and possibly meeting on the porch or in a shady area. They would require the flag and chairs to be set out. Ms. Thomson commented they were not a fundraising organization and relied solely on membership dues.

The Board discussed various ways to help them. Chair Meagher said that the per meeting fee was intended to cover staff time for when they had meetings inside the house as there was a lot of setup and furniture moving required. Ms. Pezoldt asked if there was an option for the porch or a shaded area. Chair Meagher said that the public could come to the house at any time without needing insurance. Chair Meagher asked staff if they could get a confirmation as to whether the insurance was per meeting, or if the City could make an exception on a temporary basis for this year's meetings. She asked if the insurance could cover all the meetings, as they were not using the inside of the house. Ms. Pezoldt requested help finding insurance that was cost effective as it was now \$180 including the \$50 fee.

Ms. Ehrenhaft asked if they would be able to afford the insurance. Ms. Pezoldt replied that it would cut down on the number of meetings. She asked if they could get a blanket policy to cover more than one meeting. Ms. Kautz suggested that they contact David Ruiz, the City's Risk Manager.

Ms. Kautz clarified for the Board that when a rental application is made, the application should be filled out and sent to staff first. This would allow them to note any needs or special requirements before the application is presented to the board. Ms. Kautz suggested that they come back to the board next month. Ms. Pezoldt said she wanted to walk around and look for a safe space for meetings. She said they would have coffee and pastelitos and about 25-30 people at the meetings, noting that more people come when they meet at the Merrick House.

Chair Meagher asked Mr. Adams to weigh in. He said that he thought that risk management would have to be contacted. He stated that there is city policy, but he would reach out to them to see if there were any solutions. Chair Meagher requested that when he spoke to risk management, he would communicate how strongly the board wanted to assist DAR, which has always had a nice relationship with the House. Ms. Pezoldt said she would investigate the insurance issue, expressing appreciation for the board and regret that she missed the porch gathering in July. Ms. Thomson thanked the board members for their service.

Chair Meagher said that Ms. Thomson's video on Doc Dammers would be running on the television at the museum on Doc Dammers Day.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Fee Changes:** Chair Meagher said that this would be revisited later as it was tied to the Citywide fee ordinance.
2. **Accepting Credit Cards:** Chair Meagher asked if staff had discussed this item with finance. Mr. Adams said they were trying to set up a meeting to discuss the various options available. Chair Meagher asked if Ms. Worm would be at the meeting, to which Mr. Adams replied affirmatively.
3. **House Wish List:** Chair Meagher said that she, Ms. Worm, Ms. Kautz, and Ms. Levasser met to discuss mold remediation and art preservation and the different entities responsible. They were working on prioritizing items

to be addressed in the house. Ms. Torres asked if any mold tests had been done on the area by the chimney. Chair Meagher said it was important as there is evidence of mold on items in the house.

4. **DOC Dammers Event:**

- i) MG Developer will sponsor of the bar. Chair Meagher spoke with their public relations person, Veronica, who indicated that Alirio Torre Alba, owner of MG Developer, was very interested in supporting the Merrick house. Chair Meagher will be scheduling a tour within the next two weeks with them both.
- ii) **Sponsors:** Chair Meagher reported that they currently have 25 sponsors. The last two possible sponsors were Plymouth Congregational Church and Coral Gables Congregational Church. Chair Meagher then read a list of the company/persons who had provided ads, underwriting and sponsors which added up to approximately \$13,275.00. Chair Meagher noted that sponsors' logos need to go up on the website.
- iii) **Funding:** Chair Meagher listed some estimates for possible event expenses: Program = \$3000, Catering for 250 guests = \$13,000, Musicians = \$1000, Trolleys = \$1,200, totaling approximately \$19,200. She estimated the auction, sponsorships, and ticket sales would bring in approximately \$36,000. Their profit could be around \$16,000.

Auction Items: Chair Meagher asked Ms. Cason if she had contacted Snow's Jewelers. Ms. Cason has not and was encouraged to do so. Chair Meagher then listed the auction items, urging the board to get some gift certificates from local restaurants and stores. Chair Meagher said Mr. Ehrenhaft has some antique furniture for the auction. Ms. Torres offered her secretary to call all the restaurants and shops on Miracle Mile. Chair Meagher asked if anyone would contact the Colonnade to donate a weekend. With no response, she said she would.

For the event auction items will be set up against the back wall of the museum loggia. The museum will provide the tables and tablecloths, which will be supplemented with vintage tablecloths from Chair Meagher. Melanie Zargham is an event stager and will help set up on the day. Chair Meagher stated that acrylic frames were needed for item descriptions.

- iv) **Auction System:** Chair Meagher noted one of the nice features of the online auction system was if you don't want to pay attention to the auction you can put in your top bid, and you will be notified if you are outbid. Ms. Kautz asked which bid platform was being used, to which Chair Meagher replied Rally Up.
- v) **Binder Boys:** Members of the Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity from the University of Miami will help with check-in and assist with the auction. They would be called the binder boys and will be provided with hats and suspenders so that they would be easily identifiable.
- vi) **Publicity:** Chair Meagher said that she was meeting with Nicholas Cabrera on Wednesday re: social media. She said she was waiting for Ms. Lyons to get back to get with Martha Pantin to start sending out notices. Event items had been in Gables Insider and Great Gables Guide, which will continue to include the information each week up until the event. They were also in Edible South Miami's calendar and would be in their October issue that comes out a week before the event. An article written by Villager Karen Buchsbaum about Doc Dammers will be in Coral Gables Magazine's current issue. Miami Pioneers and Natives of Dade came for a special tour at the Merrick House and Chair Meagher was able to promote the event. So far, they had only sold four tickets, so she urged everyone to send out the information to their email lists. Ms. Cason volunteered to write an article about the event for the Miami Herald.
- vii) **Flowers:** Ms. Cason will handle the flowers at the event and described the decorations she will create. Chair Meagher shared a recipe book with the board and suggested that they copy the recipes and tie them to the flower decorations.
- viii) **Music:** Chair Meagher said that she forwarded an invoice from the Jazz Survivors, a trio consisting of bass guitar, keyboard, and trumpet, who play all the old standards. She said she would talk to Ms. Kautz about their speaker setup. They require a \$100 deposit. Ms. Cason had followed up with a harpist, but they were under 21. Because there is alcohol being served, the city ordinance would not allow them. Ms. Torres said her daughter was in the music school at the University of Miami, so she could contact them. Chair Meagher said she was thinking about a classical guitarist at the Venetian Pool, someone with a small speaker from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm. Then either strings or another guitar for the same time on the porch at the Merrick House. Christopher Harrel will be on the piano inside the Merrick House
- ix) **Program:** Chair Meagher said that guests would not want to carry around the program, so they were going to have a slide show of the program with the music "Moon Over Coral Gables" playing in the lobby of the museum. The programs will be on the table below.

- x) **Antique Cars:** Guy Lewis is providing two antique cars – one at the Merrick House and one on the museum plaza.
 - xi) **Actors and Personnel:** Chair Meagher is trying to confirm Tim Crowther as a Doc Dammers impersonator. Docent Juan Riera will be the interpreter for the postcard display at the Merrick House. A University of Miami student and her friend have agreed to be the bathing beauties at the Venetian Pool. They will be cavorting, creating stories, and interacting with the guests in their 1920s bathing attire.
 - xii) **Food and drinks:** There will be honey ham biscuits and Coral Gables punch (grapefruit) at the Merrick House, prosecco at Venetian Pool, and a full bar at the museum. Donated Shine water will be at each venue.
 - xiii) **Exhibits:** There will be a poster with interior shots of Doc Dammers house from 1924. Carol Berg will set up an Althea in the garden (Halloween themed). Chair Meagher said she would talk to the Garden Club to get a flyer to hand out.
5. **December Open House:** Chair Meagher said she wasn't sure how Santa and the masks would work. Ms. Kautz will contact Parks and Recreation to see what they had done about Santa. The date of the open House is December 12, 2021.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Ms. Ehrenhaft asked if there was something that board members could send out to their friends about the event. Ms. Worm said that she already had a PDF made up and she would send it to Chair Meagher. Ms. Kautz said that they needed to finalize the holiday open house at the next meeting. Chair Meagher said she needed to get with Ms. Kautz and Mr. Adams to come up with the list of persons whose tickets should be comped for the Doc Dammers event. Chair Meagher asked everyone to send information on the auction items and their value.

CITY COMMISSION ITEMS: None

ITEMS FROM THE SECRETARY: None

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:59 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Warren Adams
Historic Preservation Officer