

**CITY OF MIAMI COMMUNITY RELATIONS BOARD
MINUTES FROM THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2009**

Board Members Present

Barbara Bisno, Chair
Anthony Jennings, Vice Chair
Mary Coombs, Secretary
Patricia Maldonado
Marjorie Weber
Haydee Wheeler

Board Members Absent

Lyse Cuellar
Carlos Morales
Marlene Sanchez
Teresa Zorrilla-Clark
Crystal Curry, CRB Student Member
Dylan Gordano, CRB Student Member

Guests Present

Jonathan D'Oleo
Danielle King
Brandon Tate
Lakamora Wright-Rose
Eddie Thomas

Staff Present

Ada Rojas, Community Relations Coordinator
Natasha Colebrook-Williams, Community Relations Outreach Specialist
Yarenis DeFalco, Administrative Aide II

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Barbara Bisno, Chair, convened the meeting at approximately 6:00P.M.

II. Roll Call

Yarenis DeFalco did roll call of all Board members, and guests introduced themselves.

III. Items to be approved by the Board

A. Approval of minutes for the March Board meeting

Anthony Jennings moved, seconded by Marjorie Weber, that:

The Board approve the minutes of the March 19, 2009 meeting

The motion was passed by the following vote:

Aye: Barbara Bisno, Mary Coombs, Anthony Jennings, Patricia Maldonado, Marjorie Weber, and Haydee Wheeler

Nay: None

IV. Committee Reports

A. Programs and Community Outreach

OCOB Housing Committee Meeting

Barbara Bisno and Marjorie Weber attended the Overtown Community Oversight Board Housing Committee meeting, which has set goals and objectives for housing in the Overtown community. In the near future the CRA will issue a bond for \$150 million dollars that will include housing. The OCOB Housing Committee has been asked to notify the CRA about the projects they are interested in so that they can be listed on the bond issue.

Immigration

Ms. Bisno and Ms. Weber also attended an Immigration Committee meeting (Miami-Dade County CRB), where they learned that a coalition of several groups will be demonstrating in favor of immigration reform and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) on Friday, May 1st, 2009, from 1PM until 7PM, in front of the Miami-Dade County Stephen P. Clark building. A second demonstration will take place on the same day, from 4PM to 7PM, at Chopin Plaza. The second demonstration favors immigration reform as well, but also includes issues related to the Employee Free Choice Act, in addition to housing and social issues.

Additionally, another group composed of individuals from Miami, Atlanta, Boston, and Washington, D.C. will converge on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 and Thursday, May 14, 2009 in Washington to lobby and demonstrate in favor of TPS for Haitians and for immigration reform.

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Task Force

Marjorie Weber attended the Federal Home Loan Bank Board Task Force meeting on April 16, 2009. New legislation from the 11th Circuit Court mandates that homeowners living in their homestead go through mediation prior to foreclosing their home. The

mediation will be available to all Miami-Dade county primary homeowners at no cost to them. All costs will be incurred by the lenders. Mediators and consultants are needed, and Citibank will be providing training for these positions.

HOPE Conference

On Wednesday, April 22nd and Thursday, April 23rd, HOPE, which is the national not-for-profit organization that is providing assistance to homeowner, is having a large conference at the Miami Beach Convention Center. The conference is geared to provide homeowners with information and advise them of the options they have available. Any homeowner that is experiencing difficulty, or that would like advice on their loan can attend. The event is open to the public and is free of charge. Marjorie Weber will e-mail the flyer the Office of Community Relations staff so it can be forwarded to CRB members and NET offices.

Urban Gardens

Marjorie Weber and Anthony Jennings met with Dr. Marvin Dunn, and a few others, to discuss the urban garden. One of the biggest concerns is the watering needs of the gardens. Fortunately, however, the land that was donated for the gardens lies near Dr. Dunn's present collard greens farm. Ms. Weber suggested contacting the City of Miami to inquire about what could be done. Anthony Jennings mentioned that, while visiting the site for the garden, he came across employees from Capital Improvement. He mentioned the need for watering and they said it should not be a problem. However, in the meantime Dr. Dunn will be watering the land.

Ms. Weber was able to get a commitment from a landscape architect who will do a pro bono plan for the garden. In addition, several plants will be donated to the garden by the Miami Beach Botanical gardens, as well as other organizations.

The meeting also included a tour of Dr. Dunn's collard greens garden. Because of the over abundance of collard greens, Dr. Dunn expressed interest in selling some, and using the money from the sales to pay the laborers working the land. Ms. Weber put Dr. Dunn in communication with Claire Tomlin, who operates several organic vegetable stands throughout the county. Through that partnership, collard greens from Dr. Dunn's gardens were sold for the first time on April 16th, 2009.

SPIRIT

Mary Coombs and Haydee Wheeler engaged in a conference call with Mildred Dupree de Robles from the Department of Justice to learn more about their SPIRIT program. The program is presented through the Community Relations Services of the Department of Justice, and is offered to schools interested in getting students involved in identifying conflicts and finding solutions.

Ms. Coombs and Ms. Wheeler were interested in the follow-up process of the program and want to ensure that there is something that will measure the end results and will give a response to the students' concerns. The Department of Justice is currently working on collecting information and materials from schools that have already participated in the program. The Board will revisit this item once the information becomes available.

Economic Initiatives

William Porro from Economic Initiatives had spoken with Ada Rojas and Natasha Colebrook-Williams about Ready for Work Fair. The Ready to Work Fair is not a job fair where jobs will be offered to those in attendance. Instead, the purpose of the fair is to prepare individuals to qualify for job openings and have a competitive opportunity in being hired. Mr. Porro is interested in doing the Ready for Work Fair with the Community Relations Board. However, due to the high rate of unemployment, Mr. Porro stated that it will need to be very well organized in order for it to be a success. Mr. Porro suggested working with South Florida Work Force on this project, and recommends that we hold several small, classroom-like sessions throughout the City of Miami, based on pre-registration. He will attend the next Programs & Community Outreach committee meeting to discuss the logistics of the project with the CRB.

Human Services Coalition

During the March Board meeting, the CRB agreed that when working with the Human Services Coalition's Neighborhood Leadership Project (NLP), the projects would be approved by the Programs & Community Outreach committee without having to come before the Board because of time constraints. Barbara Bisno asked that the Board modify this agreement.

Barbara Bisno moved, seconded by Mary Coombs, that:

The Board support the NLP projects adopted by the Programs & Community Outreach Committee. However, any project requiring CRB funds must be brought to the Board early enough to determine how to best support it, and for final approval.

The motion was passed by the following vote:

Aye: Barbara Bisno, Mary Coombs, Anthony Jennings, Marjorie Weber, and Haydee Wheeler

Nay: None

Abstained: Patricia Maldonado abstained from voting due to the fact that she is employed by the Human Services Coalition.

B. Law Enforcement Committee

The Law Enforcement committee has not met due to lack of member attendance. However, there are plans to continue holding meetings upon new member appointments that will take place at the May commission meeting.

C. Nominating Committee

The members of the Nominating Committee met by telephone and via e-mail. Nominating slates were submitted to the Mayor, Commissioner Gonzalez, Commissioner Sanchez, and Commissioner Regalado, who will need to reappoint Haydee Wheeler because of exceeded absences in 2007. Appointments are expected to take place during the first commission meeting in May.

V. Announcements

Booker T Washington student cookbook

The students at Booker T. Washington will be at the Fairchild Tropical Gardens on Saturday, April 18, 2009 from 1pm-3:30pm, presenting a culinary presentation themed "Green Cuisine Challenge." Admission is free for guests of Anthony Jennings.

B.A.M.

The first Becoming a Man (B.A.M.) session was held in March and was attended by over 60 youths. The second session will take place on Saturday, April 25, 2009. Pictures of the kick-off event will be posted on the website.

VI. New Business

MLK Day of Service

During this year's MLK Day of Service, the CRB partnered with a local non-profit, ADE, and invited the commissioner of the district, Commissioner Sarnoff. Attendees from Commissioner Sarnoff's staff were very impressed with the work Helena Del Monte is doing, and the Commissioner has made his staff available to her to offer additional help.

Barbara Bisno stated that the concept of working with non-profits, and inviting the commissioner and press is something the CRB should continue to do in the future for events like Hispanic Heritage month, Black History month, MLK Day of Service, etc.

Budget

The Office of Community Relations will start to work on the budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 soon. Once most of the verbiage has been completed, those Board members that wish to meet with the OCR can do so to review and revise the budget proposal.

Arbor Day

On Friday, April 24th, 2009 the staff of the Office of Community Relations and Marjorie Weber, on behalf of the CRB, will participate in Arbor Day, planting trees and plants in the Little Haiti community.

May Board meeting

Mary Coombs proposed that the students of Booker T. Washington demonstrate their cooking skills for the next Community Relations Board meeting. Anthony Jennings suggested holding the meeting at the Chapman House, which is located within the school.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10pm.