

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES FROM  
THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2008**

**Board Members Present**

Haydee Wheeler, Chair  
Lyse Cuellar  
Roudy Thomas  
Marjorie Weber  
Teresa Zorrilla-Clark  
Mary Coombs  
Gaurav Sen, Student Member

**Board Members Absent**

Barbara Bisno, Vice Chair  
Tonja Carter, Secretary  
Samantha Imbert, Student Member

**Guests Present**

Amy Carswell

**Staff Present**

Ada Rojas, Community Relations Coordinator  
Yarenis Diaz, Administrative Aide II

Haydee Wheeler, Chair, convened the meeting at approximately 6:20 P.M.

Each Board Member introduced himself/herself to new Board Member Lyse Cuellar as a form of Roll Call.

**III. Items to be approved by the Board**

**A. APPROVING THE MINUTES/NO ACTION NEEDED**

Because there was no quorum at the March Board meeting, there were no March minutes to approve.

**IV. Committee Reports**

**A. PROGRAMS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

*I. Foreclosure Prevention*

Marjorie Weber reported that the foreclosure clinics that were taking place in the NET offices had little response from the community. However Rasha Cameau, the Little Haiti NET Administrator, would like to make an effort during the month of May, which is Haitian appreciation month, to reach out to the community again.

Ms. Weber also mentioned that the City of Miami is the only city that is involved with the Homeownership Preservation Task Force that meets monthly at the Federal Reserve Bank in Doral. Ms. Weber and Natasha Colebrook-Williams, the Outreach Specialist, have become involved in the Task Force, which is now in the process of training the trainers, putting together a manual, and trying to educate the not-for-profit organizations. As part of the FHLBB Task Force, the CRB has been asked if they could space for the training of not-for-profit groups, such as home owners associations and the various chambers of commerce in the City and perhaps the county. The CRB will not provide the training, merely the space for the training. The trainers will be members of the task force and other knowledgeable individuals. The task force will provide the training, handouts, and a calendar of events that will be available to citizens in order to better educate everyone on how to approach the issues. It is the goal of the task force to educate the people who are confronted with mortgage issues (delinquency and default).

In response to Al Sunshine's TV appearance, a call-in phone bank has been made available. Ms. Weber is also providing counseling through this service. This provides a means for people to call in with their questions/issues and get help. Although this has been successful, the majority of the callers are Anglos, and those that do not speak English, or for whom English is a second language, are not able to benefit from this counseling.

Marjorie Weber has requested a room that can hold between twenty to twenty-five people for trainings of the non-profits.. Teresa Zorrilla-Clark suggested using Commissioner Joe Sanchez's conference room at City Hall. Haydee Wheeler asked Ada Rojas, the Coordinator, to follow-up with a location.

## *II. Other reports*

Ms. Weber stated that Mr. Ed Cooke, from the United Nations, sent a thank you note to the Community Relations Board for their participation at the United Nations Association Traveling Film Festival.

Ms. Weber also mentioned the Workshop for Human Services Organizations on Immigration Issues, that is taking place on April 28 at Temple Israel. Board members are encouraged to attend.

### III. *ADL Educational Workshops & Haitian Resolution TPS*

The Community Relations Board is working with the Anti-Defamation League in order to provide seminars at local high schools. Natasha Colebrook-William has contacted Booker T. Washington High and Miami High to offer these workshops. Miami High has accepted the offer. A response from Booker T. Washington has not yet been received.

The seminar, *Hate Comes Home*, is a three-hour workshop where high-school children are trained to eventually hold their own meetings to resolve the problems that arise. The cost of each workshop is \$800.00 and it was proposed that the Board fund one workshop at each school.

**Teresa Zorrilla-Clark moved, seconded by Mary Coombs, that:**

*The Board approve the allocation of \$1,600, \$800 per high school, to fund the ADL workshops*

**The motion passed by the following vote:**

**Aye:** Haydee Wheeler, Lyse Cuellar, Teresa Zorrilla-Clark, Gaurav Sen, Mary Coombs, Roudy Thomas, and Marjorie Weber

**Nay:** None

Teresa Zorrilla-Clark explained another issue for the Board to consider, Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for Haitians. Barbara Bisno wrote letters to President Bush, Senators Mel Martinez, and Bill Nelson, local Congresspersons and, Governor Crist, asking that TPS be granted to Haitians in the United States. Mrs. Bisno also drafted a resolution in regard to Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for Haitians living in the United States. Teresa Zorrilla-Clark asked whether a letter should be written as a Board, or as individuals. Mary Coombs stated that although this is a humanitarian issue, it is also political in nature and therefore she is not sure if the resolution should be done on behalf of the Board.

Amy Carswell, a member of the Miami-Dade Community Relations Board, stated that the county CRB considers TPS for Haitians a local issue because it creates local problems, and it creates a big rift between people in our community.

Ms. Zorrilla-Clark suggested that Board members send personal letters requesting that TPS be granted to Haitians. Gaurav Sen also suggested

encouraging students at the high schools where the workshops will be taking place to write their own letters if TPS is an issue they are interested in.

**Teresa Zorrilla-Clark moved, seconded by Haydee Wheeler, the following:**

*The City of Miami Community Relations Board, after reviewing the current situation, believes that several thousand undocumented Haitians living in Miami and throughout the country should be eligible for “temporary protective status” for eighteen months to be renewed as necessary. By statute, certain undocumented individuals from countries facing crises such as armed conflicts and natural disasters, may be granted this status by the United States government and thus avoid deportation for a limited time. We believe Haitians qualify for this status on many grounds, including armed riots and natural disasters. Accordingly, we are transmitting a letter signed by our Chairperson to President George W. Bush requesting this status as well as sending letters to out state and federal officials seeking their support.*

**The motion was passed by the following vote:**

**Aye:** Haydee Wheeler, Lyse Cuellar, Teresa Zorrilla-Clark, Gaurav Sen, Mary Coombs, Roudy Thomas, and Marjorie Weber

**Nay:** None

Mary Coombs also suggested that the Board urge the City Commission to pass a similar resolution. In response, Haydee Wheeler suggested that this issue be discussed at the next Community & Outreach Committee meeting. Teresa Zorrilla-Clark mentioned that such a resolution will be presented at a forthcoming City Commission meeting.

Haydee Wheeler asked Ada Rojas to inform Rasha Cameau of the Board’s resolution since she works directly with the Haitian community.

#### *IV. CRB’s Role if Castro Dies*

Last year the Community Relations Board had several meetings and organized a plan which describes the Board’s role when Castro dies. The

City Manager had asked for the Community Relations Board to present its plan on how they would assist the community. On April 4, 2008, the Executive Committee met and reviewed the plans and Ms. Wheeler drafted a synopsis from the previous minutes. This new draft will serve as a guideline, in addition to the regular policy involving the activation of Goodwill Ambassadors, for Board members.

According to the plan, the CRB would form two sub-committees, the Media Sub-Committee, and the Education Sub-Committee. Both committees will respond to the community as events take place. The main role of the Media Sub-Committee will be to develop a message that speaks to all communities encouraging sensitivity and understanding for the reaction of Cuban Americans. The Education Sub-Committee will focus on encouraging dialogue among all cultures to educate others on the Cuban American history.

This draft will be presented to the City Manager as setting out the Community Relations Board's role.

## **V. New Business**

### **A. Bylaws and Procedures of the Board – Review and Approve**

Ada Rojas reviewed the changes that were made to the Bylaws and Procedures with the Board. Mary Coombs commented that some of the verbiage was confusing and conflicting. Some additional changes to the bylaws were suggested and it was recommended that George Wysong, the legal liaison, review all the new changes to the bylaws. The Board also suggested that prior to the bylaws being forwarded to Mr. Wysong, Mary Coombs review them and track changes.

**Mary Coombs moved, seconded by Teresa Zorrilla-Clark, that:**

*The Board return the bylaws to George Wysong for legal review and modification.*

**The motion was passed by the following vote:**

**Aye:** Haydee Wheeler, Lyse Cuellar, Teresa Zorrilla-Clark, Gaurav Sen, Mary Coombs, Roudy Thomas, and Marjorie Weber

**Nay:** None

## **B. CRB Board Retreat – Proposed Dates in September**

Ada Rojas proposed two possible dates for the Board retreat, -- September 20, 2008 or September 27, 2008. The location has not yet been confirmed, but two options are Parrot Jungle or the Coconut Grove Doubletree.

The Board agreed to hold the Board retreat on Saturday, September 27, 2008 from 8:30am to 3pm.

## **C. 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Fair Housing Luncheon**

On Friday, April 25, 2008, the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Fair Housing Luncheon will be held at Parrot Jungle Island. The Board decided to reserve a table, at a cost of \$385.00, so that Board members and staff can attend.

## **VI. Coordinator's Report**

Ada Rojas briefed the Board on the current budget expenses, and stated that there is still approximately \$4000.00 available for the Board to spend on future projects.

Ms. Rojas also gave an update as to how the Office of Community Relations responded, at the request of the City Manager, to the incident at Miami Edison Senior High.

Ada Rojas also mentioned a workshop that was organized by the Miami-Dade CRB on Behavior Pattern Recognition at Miami International Airport. Ms. Rojas attended the workshop and described what the workshop consisted of to Board members. Ms. Rojas mentioned that Major Galindo, from the Miami Dade Police Department, would be willing to hold the same workshop for the City of Miami Community Relations Board. Board members expressed interest in attending this workshop, and a date will be confirmed with Major Galindo.

The Nominating Committee met on Thursday, April 17, 2008 and a new slate of proposed names for Board members to be appointed is being forward to the City Clerk. The Nominating Committee also presented new nominations for the 2008 Executive Committee. Barbara Bisno was recommended for Chairperson, Roudy Thomas was recommended as Vice Chairperson, and Mary Coombs was recommended as Secretary.

**Marjorie Weber moved, seconded by Teresa Zorrilla-Clark, that:**

*The Board accept the slate for the new Executive Committee.*

**The motion was passed by the following vote:**

**Aye:** Haydee Wheeler, Lyse Cuellar, Teresa Zorrilla-Clark, Gaurav Sen, Mary Coombs, Roudy Thomas, and Marjorie Weber

**Nay:** None

**VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:00PM