

**CITY OF MIAMI COMMUNITY RELATIONS BOARD  
MINUTES FROM THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009**

**Board Members Present**

Barbara Bisno, Chair  
Mary Coombs, Secretary  
Anthony Jennings  
Patricia Maldonado  
Carlos Morales  
Marlene Casar Sanchez  
Marjorie Weber  
Haydee Wheeler  
Teresa Zorrilla-Clark  
Crystal Curry, CRB Student Member  
Dylan Gordano, CRB Student Member

**Board Members Absent**

Lyse Cuellar  
Milton Pizarro

**Guests Present**

Eddie Thomas, Booker T. Washington Sr. High  
Jerry Clark, Booker T. Washington Sr. High  
Danielle King, Booker T. Washington Sr. High  
Derek Cole, Community Activist

**Staff Present**

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

**I. Welcome and Call to Order**

Barbara Bisno, Chair, convened the meeting at approximately 6:15P.M.

**II. Roll Call**

Ada Rojas did roll call of all Board members, and new CRB members, student members, and guests introduced themselves.

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

A. Approval of minutes for the November Board meeting

**Haydee Wheeler moved, seconded by Patricia Maldonado, that:**

*The Board approve the minutes of the November 20, 2008 meeting*

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

**Aye:** Barbara Bisno, Mary Coombs, Anthony Jennings, Patricia Maldonado, Carlos Morales, Marlene Sanchez, Marjorie Weber, Haydee Wheeler, and Teresa Zorrilla-Clark

**Nay:** None

### **IV. Message from Chair**

Prior to the Committee Reports, Barbara Bisno, Chair, reminded Board members the importance of attending the events that Board members RSVP to. An example Ms. Bisno mentioned was the CRB Holiday Party, in which many members stated they would be attending and did not show up without cancelling. Ms. Bisno asked that, in the case a Board member has agreed to be at an event and cannot attend, to at least call OCR staff or other CRB members to inform them.

### **V. Committee Reports**

A. Law Enforcement Committee

#### *Study in Overtown*

Anthony Jennings updated the Board on the study that was done relating to drug crimes and shootings in Overtown. Board members were sent a copy of the study results electronically. Mr. Jennings, along with the students that participated in conducting the study, met with the Miami Youth Council and the Children's Trust and briefed them on the status of the study. An offer has been made by a professor at Florida International University for a graduate student to work on formalizing the study so that it can be published in a formal journal.

In addition, Mr. Jennings mentioned that the students will propose the mapping idea, as well as the idea of curfews, to the Mayor and City Commissioners for them to consider. As per the study, 70% of the residents surveyed were in favor of curfews in order to reduce crime in Overtown.

#### *Jewish Arab Candlelight Vigil*

All Board members had been invited to attend the January 12<sup>th</sup> Jewish Arab Candlelight Vigil. Support from Law Enforcement Committee members was especially expected due to the nature of the event and the recent demonstrations between both groups. Although

Marjorie Weber and Barbara Bisno were present to represent the Board, there was no participation from members of the LE committee.

## B. Programs & Community Outreach Committee

### *Menace to Society*

Haydee Wheeler and Barbara Bisno met with Melba Pearson to discuss further the Menace to Society program that was introduced to the Board during its November meeting. Although the City of Miami Police Department is spearheading this program in the City, more community input is needed. To this end, the CRB has proposed sending a letter to the criminal court, stating their support for the program.

### *Haiti*

Marjorie Weber informed the Board of the toy donations that were given for the children of Haiti. A small group travelled to Haiti to ensure that the donated toys were properly distributed.

### *MLK Day of Service*

Mary Coombs reminded Board members of the MLK day of service that will be held on Friday, January 16, 2009 (9:30am-12pm) at the Association for the Development of the Exceptional (ADE). There will be a carnival presented by the University of Miami School of Law HOPE program. Following the carnival, ADE consumers will present a play about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr..

### *Film Festival*

Patricia Maldonado contacted WLRN and obtained a copy of Mohammad Ali: Made in Miami, a documentary on the life of the boxer and his connection to the nation of Islam and the impact it had on his life, as well as the racial struggles he was faced with. The idea is to share the film with the students of Miami-Dade College, where the film festival will take place, then have a discussion with the producers of the film and community leaders.

In addition to Miami-Dade College, the CRB would also like to show the film to the students of Booker T. Washington and MAST academy, where the CRB student members attend.

### *ADL/MCCJ*

ADL has received funding from Dade County Public Schools to implement the *No Place for Hate* program at six schools (two high schools, two middle schools, and two elementary schools). ADL credited the CRB for establishing relationships between ADL and Booker T. Washington High School and Dade Marine Institute. The Programs and

Community Outreach Committee will explore opportunities to implement the No Place for Hate Initiative in upcoming CRB projects, such as screening films at schools that have already experienced an ADL workshop, like Dade Marine and Booker T. Washington Senior High.

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

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the CRB and OCR, along with the Goodwill Ambassadors, were asked to participate in a rally/march protesting the death of a ten-month-old baby in Liberty City. The infant's death was caused by a stray bullet. Ms. Rojas thanked Barbara Bisno and Milton Pizarro for attending the march.

On Wednesday, January 14, 2009 the Miami-Dade County CRB held a planning meeting for safe marches and demonstrations due to the recent Gaza/Israeli demonstrations. The meeting focused on ways of protecting free speech while ensuring the safety of those demonstrating.

Rumors concerning the death of Cuban President Fidel Castro are circulating again. In the case that the rumors are confirmed, CRB presence will be appreciated during the manifestations that follow the death of the former Cuban President.

The Office of Community Relations staff, along with City Goodwill Ambassadors, will be assisting the County CRB and GWA during the January 19<sup>th</sup> MLK Parade & Festival. All Board members are invited to attend and assist as well.

Future Law Enforcement Committee meetings will meet on the third Tuesday of each month; however meetings will now be at 12pm, instead of 6pm.

All Board members were provided with a copy of the latest CRB newsletter, CRB/OCR calendar of events, and CRB/OCR budget.

## **VII. New Business**

### A. Election of the CRB Vice Chair

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

*Anthony Jennings be elected the Vice-Chair for the Community Relations Board*

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

**Aye:** Barbara Bisno, Mary Coombs, Anthony Jennings, Patricia Maldonado, Carlos Morales, Marlene Sanchez, Marjorie Weber, Haydee Wheeler, and Teresa Zorrilla-Clark

**Nay:** None

#### B. Venezuelan Elections

The Venezuelan Presidential election is scheduled to occur on Sunday, February 15, 2009 at Jose Marti Park, from 7am-7pm. However, due to the limited parking, the Venezuelan Consulate is looking for an alternate location. In the event that the election does occur in the City of Miami, all Board members are encouraged to participate. More information will be forwarded to Board members as it becomes available.

#### C. Overtown Strategic Planning Meeting

On Saturday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, CRB members Mary Coombs and Barbara Bisno along with Ms. Rojas attended the Overtown Community Oversight Board's strategic planning meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to look for different strategies to improve the Overtown community. The individuals in attendance were asked to divide into groups. Ms. Rojas was part of the Crime & Safety group, which focused on the Menace to Society program and monitoring Overtown with cameras, among other things.

Ms. Coombs participated in the Youth Committee. This committee focused on two concrete ideas: organizing a march/rally in the summer for "Youth for Peace" and organizing a system for students to link up on a continuing basis with adults to learn about job opportunities. The project would involve 20 Booker T. Washington Senior High School students.

Barbara Bisno joined the Housing Committee. An idea from this committee was to identify abandoned houses in Overtown, and work with the City's Code Enforcement to bring them up to code. One of the individuals brought up the idea of a housing trust. Through this trust, people in community can collectively contribute money toward the purchase of a building. The individuals can then attempt to obtain financial help in order to do the necessary repairs. In the end, the individuals who purchased the building can become residents. The idea of receiving investments from within community will free them from depending on government funding.

As per Ms. Rojas, the minutes of the meeting, once available, will be forwarded to CRB members. At that time, CRB members will be able to see all of the committees, as well as their meeting times and dates. CRB members are encouraged to become involved with one of these committees.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:40P.M.