



**GABLES  
GOOD GOVERNMENT  
COMMITTEE**



**NEWSLETTER**

**MAY 2016**

**GABLES  
GOOD GOVERNMENT  
COMMITTEE**

*Founded February 2009*

**OFFICERS**

**Deborah Swain** President

**Evelyn Budde / Richard Dewitt**  
Vice Presidents

**Tom Snook** Treasurer

**Susi Davis**  
Membership Secretary

**Gay Bondurant**  
Recording Secretary  
Newsletter Editor  
Janebond@Comcast.net

**Presidents Ex-Officio**

**Mayor Don Slesnick**  
**Jorge Alvarez**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

**Richard Leslie**

**Patrick Morris**

**Dorothy Stein**

**Mayor Dorothy Thomson**

# GGG Weighs in on Police Officer Shortage

During the past several years the City has failed to carry a full roster of sworn police personnel, despite the budget being set aside for a full contingent; there is a troubling deficiency of approximately 20 officers. If this issue is not aggressively addressed, it could get worse with impending retirements and other officers applying to neighboring departments. Public safety is the City's most important service to its citizens and police protection in Coral Gables should be the #1 priority. Here is our President's letter to the City Manager.

**April 29, 2016**

**Ms. Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark**

**City Manager**

**Subject: Police Department Staffing – Sworn Officers**

Dear Ms. Manager:

We continue to hear reports that the Police Department is approximately twenty-three (23) sworn officers short of its budgeted table of organization. This situation has seemingly continued for a protracted amount of time – without improvement. It is disconcerting to discover that citizens cannot obtain officers for off-duty details and that some street closure details are being assigned to other departments (e.g.: Sweetwater) due to this shortage. Since these situations are occurring, it leads us to believe that there is also a strain on the Department to properly man the regular shifts which are designed to protect our citizens 24/7. It is rumored that the City is experiencing significant difficulty in identifying qualified individuals to fill the vacancies which seems strange in that other Departments are hiring new officers and we are allowing personnel from other jurisdictions to work in our community as armed law enforcement officers (as noted above).

We urge you to take whatever action is necessary to fill these vacancies as soon as possible so that our City's residents are provided the superior quality of public safety for which our community has historically been known. Sincerely, Debbie Swain, President Gables Good Government Committee [Copies to Mayor and All Commissioners]

Gables Good Government Committee was organized to support issues and causes that preserve and improve the quality of life in Coral Gables and promote the effective and efficient management of its government.

---

## City Manager's Response to GGG Letter on Police Shortage

May 2, 2016

Ms. Deborah Swain, President  
Gables Good Government Committee  
1825 Ponce de Leon Boulevard  
Coral Gables, FL 33134

Dear Debbie:

Thank you for your letter regarding Police Department staffing and the availability of off-duty details. At my request, City Staff researched the last 60 days of off-duty details. The off-duty details are identified as permanent and temporary off-duty assignments. In the last 60 days, the department has staffed 74 temporary off-duty jobs and 32 permanent off-duty jobs. There were 3 jobs that could not be filled by our personnel on 2 different dates (3/5 and 4/28). In looking at the calendar, there were several large events that likely impacted personnel availability for these off-duty jobs. On 3/5, the City hosted Carnival on the Mile. On 4/28, UM(BankUnited Center) hosted a large scale special event, the Corporate Run also occurred that day and an important Critical Incident Management training was hosted by the department.

Based on the review conducted by staff and circumstances outlined (large special events) for the two days in which an outside agency assisted, we believe

we are able to manage the demands regarding the off-duty assignments. As it relates to the services provided by our patrol officers on a daily basis, the staffing levels on the street have been maintained and services to the community have not been compromised or reduced.

Tomorrow (5-3-16) we will be presenting a review of our new Public Safety strategy involving several new initiatives such as: ●The deployment of neighborhood team leaders utilizing problem oriented policing methodologies. ●A strategic police recruitment campaign ranging from print materials to advertising to social media. ●The installation of CCTV and LPR cameras (and the creation of a crime intelligence center to monitor the cameras 24/7.) ●The passage of new Public Safety legislation ranging from anti-squatters to stricter measures for unlawful vehicle entry, to a quick connect alarm program ordinance; and ●The layering and leveraging of public safety and other services to maximize the full use of City resources.

I would be happy to meet with you at your convenience to discuss the important initiatives and answer any other questions you may have.

Sincerely,  
Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark,  
Coral Gables City Manager

---

# Buttons Begone!



The City of Coral Gables has passed a new ordinance that prohibits buttons, pyramids, reflectors and other permanent encroachments in the public right-of-way without approval from the City. To ensure your property is in compliance with City Code, please follow these simple steps: **REMOVAL & REUSE:** ● Remove all concrete domes (buttons) and pyramids, reflectors and similar items from the public right-of-way swale adjacent to your property by **July 12, 2016**. ● Fill in and level any holes or indentations that remain after these materials are removed. ● Consider re-using them on your private property. Otherwise

place them **next to your trash pile** and the City will pick them up. **BEFORE YOU DISCARD:** ● Place no more than 10 buttons per pick-up at your trash pile. ● Wait until you have other yard waste before you place the buttons out for pick-up. **Do Not Place Buttons in Your Garbage Containers.** **CODE ENFORCEMENT:** ● If these materials are not removed within 90 days the City will remove them and may assess the cost to the property owner. ● Property owners who obtained permits to install these items may apply for a refund of the permit fee within 30 days of removing the items. ● Reinstallation of these items after their removal is a code enforcement violation punishable by a fine of \$100 per day.

---

# Proposed Charter Amendments Under Review by Commission

Recommendations for Revisions to the City's Charter are being considered by the Commission, and will go forward for inclusion on an upcoming ballot. The first presentation of the revisions and the discussion took place on April 12, and then was followed up on April 26 with the discussion about the balloting mechanism. The second reading of the proposed revisions is anticipated to be heard at a Commission meeting later in May.

GCG has been keeping an eye on this important issue from the beginning. We have already weighed in on the balloting mechanism, sending a letter to the Mayor and the Commissioners stating our opposition to a special mail-out ballot. And now, after hearing the presentation and discussion about the specific proposed charter revisions, we have the following position on each one. Please note that the stated proposed revisions are a summary to provide the general concept.

## **Proposal #1: Addition of run-off election procedures (new section)**

"... if a majority of the vote is not received by any one candidate of a group, a run-off between the two candidates receiving the most votes in the respective group shall be held two weeks after the general election, on a Tuesday."

***GCG agrees with this proposal, but recommends that the subsequent run-off election be held three weeks after the general election, rather than two weeks.***

## **Proposal #2: Modify procedures regarding expulsion of members of the Commission (amending section)**

"The Commission may determine its own rules of procedure, censure its own members for misconduct, and may compel the attendance of its members..."

***GCG does not support this proposal. A member of the Commission should not be subject to expulsion by a vote of the other members. Any action warranting expulsion should be taken by the Governor, which is provided for by state law.***

## **Proposal #3: Suspension of members of the Commission for incapacity (new section)**

Upon a good faith belief that a member of the City Commission is temporarily incapacitated and unable to perform the duties of office, with reasonable accommodations, a vote of four members of the Commission may suspend the incapacitated Commissioner. The City Commission may appoint a replacement during the time of the suspension.

***GCG agrees with this recommendation, but expresses concern about the definition of and use of the term "incapacitated" without specific definition.***

## **Proposal #4: Appointment of Vice Mayor and presiding officer (amending section)**

"The Mayor shall preside at the meetings of the Commission and perform such other duties consistent with the office... The Vice-Mayor shall be appointed by the Mayor..."

***GCG agrees with this recommendation.***

## **Proposal #5: Elimination of Trial Board (amending section)**

"Officers and employees appointed by the City Manager or under his or her authorization may be removed, suspended, laid off, or reduced in grade by the City Manager..."

***GCG agrees with this recommendation.***

## **Proposal #6: Removal of certain authority of the Commission to direct or require hiring, discharge, or reduction in grade; modification of forfeiture provision (amending section)**

"None of the Commissioners may direct or request the appointment of any person to or his or her removal from the service of the City by the City Manager or any of his or her subordinates."

***GCG agrees with this recommendation.***

## **Proposal #7: External Auditor (new section)**

"...the (external auditor) individual or company must be changed every six (6) years."

***GCG agrees with this recommendation.***

---

**Got Buttons?**

See Pages 2 & 5

# Miracle Mile Re-Do Breaks Ground



You can tell by the “Golden Shovels” that real work is under way! Taking advantage of the generosity of the McBride Family which owns the little “pocket park” near Barnes and Noble Bookstore, the City Commission “*broke the ground*” on Thursday, April 28, 2016, signifying the beginning of a monumental re-do, rehabilitation, restructuring and reconfiguring of Miracle Mile. Known as “The Mile” since the 40’s, the center of the city’s retail shopping activity has been located between LeJeune Road and Douglas Road. Now it is the center of shopping, fine dining and nightlife.

One of the initial activities of the plan is to “root prune” many of the trees on the street so that they can be safely moved to their new locations.

At the Dade Heritage Trust awards presentation: Left: Vinson Richter, DHT Board Member; Cathy Swanson -Rivenbark, Coral Gables City Manager; ElizaBeth Guin, Coral Gables Historic Preservationist; Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick; Dona Spain, Coral Gables Director of Historical Resources and Cultural Arts and Christine Rupp, Executive Director of Dade Heritage Trust.



**Dade Heritage Trust**, Miami-Dade’s oldest and largest historic preservation organization, at its 2016 Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner, has honored the City of Coral Gables for its recent purchase of the H. George Fink building on Ponce de Leon Blvd.

## HOW TO JOIN GGG

Send a letter to: Gables Good Government  
1825 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Box #448  
Coral Gables, FL 33134 or  
Email: [GablesGoodGov@Gmail.Com](mailto:GablesGoodGov@Gmail.Com)

## ANNUAL DUES LEVELS

\$50 Individual / \$75 Household  
\$250 Sponsor or Advertiser / \$500 Donor  
\$1000 Corporate Donor

# Frank Button, A Focus of Arbor Day Celebration

**FRANK MORSE BUTTON**



Amid a gathering of City dignitaries, school children, Coral Gables Garden Club leaders, recipients of Garden Club awards and many others who are appreciative of the legacy of the Chief Landscape Architect of Coral Gables, Frank M. Button, were members of his family who came from far distances to attend this event. *See photo at right.*



**Portrait sketch of Frank Button by Nancy Giacci, Granddaughter of Denman Fink. Property of Arva M. Parks.**

A new marker in honor of Button is located at the intersection of Alhambra Circle and Majorca Ave. It was unveiled on April 29, 2016, Arbor

**Left: Deborah Button Broughton, granddaughter of Frank Button and Henry Neale, great nephew. Far Right: Debbie Lang, local professional landscaper who assisted in bringing the family members in for the event.**

Day. Button met George Merrick, Founder of Coral Gables, in 1920. Shortly after the meeting a contract was agreed upon "to make the plans of Coral Gables for \$1 per acre." He continued to work on the project and designed the successive additions of land to Coral Gables until 1929. Later as an employ of Dade County and while working in the area of Bird Road he was killed when he was hit by a truck as he was supervising the planting of trees. [ **Historical information obtained from, *Coral Gables: An American Garden City*, by Roberto M. Behar & Maurice M. Culot, University of Miami School of Architecture and the Institut Francais De Architecture.**]

## Commission Approves Purchase of 6 "Park Parcels"

The Coral Gables City Commission has acted upon the resolutions related to the purchase of six parcels of residential property to be configured as small local, neighborhood parks. Under the Neighborhood Renaissance Program the lots were chosen based first on availability but three additional criteria had to be met: 1) Access to the park had to be safe to walk to which was defined as having no major thoroughfares to cross. 2) There had to be sufficient open space to encourage enjoyment of the area. The smallest piece is 5,000 square feet and the largest is 24,000 square feet. 3) The neighborhood should have limited access to other parks or recreational areas.

The locations of the parks are identified as 807 Catalonia Avenue; 937-939 Majorca Avenue, where Granada Boulevard and Majorca meet; 241 Sarto Avenue, 6540 Marlin Drive and 1047 Venetia Avenue.

Neighbors of the properties were actively involved in the process where such concerns as the extended future use of the parcels was discussed. The City has committed to the proposition that the subject properties will never be used for any thing other than parks.



**TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT  
GGG**