

NEWSLETTER **AUGUST 2015**

**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

Presidents Ex-Officio

Mayor Don Slesnick
Jorge Alvarez
Commissioner
Jeannett Slesnick

BOARD MEMBERS

John Allen / Richard Leslie
Patrick Morris
Dorothy Stein
Mayor Dorothy Thomson

**CITY COMMISSION APPOINTS CHARTER
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

The Coral Gables City Commission has appointed a Charter Review Committee to conduct a comprehensive review of the City Charter. The City Charter is the constitutional document that establishes the underlying structure of our city government. The City's charter has not been reviewed for more than a decade. It was previously amended in 2004.

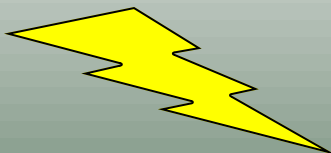
The Committee is comprised of seven (7) members:

- Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli, Chair (Appointed by Mayor Carson)
- Bill Bonn (Appointed by Vice Mayor Quesada)
- Jimmy Morales (Appointed by Commissioner Keon)
- Parker Thomson (Appointed by Commissioner Lago)
- Richard DeWitt (Appointed by Commissioner Slesnick)
- Tom Korge (Appointed by City Manager)
- Angelique Ortega Fridman (Appointed by City Attorney)

At a meeting of the City Commission former Mayor Valdes-Fauli, the Committee Chair, outlined some of the issues that he believed should be considered, not to the exclusion of other issues that may be brought up by other Committee members. These were:

1. Form of government: Maintain the current form with the City Manager as the Chief Executive Officer. The alternative is the strong Mayor form of governance.
2. Date of elections: April or another date? Merits of being apart from a general election? Saturday voting?

Con't on Page 6

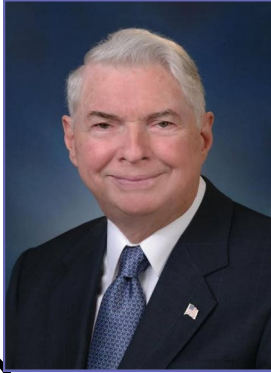


POLICE DEPARTMENT BULLETIN

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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.

Al Quentel, long time Gables Good Government member, community leader and a founding partner of Greenberg Traurig law firm, passed away on August 6, 2015. Among his many accomplishments, he was well known as a mentor to younger attorneys and an outstanding lawyer who assisted the Graham family in creating the City of Miami Lakes. He was a close friend of and advisor to Senator George Smathers with whom he shared Miami Senior High and the University of Florida. One lesson he taught his children: "Always be nice to everybody because God made us all the same way, and you never know when you may need that person or whom they will become." His family has asked that donations be made in his name to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals or the National Parkinson Foundation.



We send Al's family our deepest condolences, and will remember Al with warmth and fondness.

CORAL GABLES BIENNIAL ELECTION RESULTS REVEAL LOW VOTER TURN OUT

On April 4, 2015 The City of Coral Gables held election for positions of Mayor and two Commissioners. Some analysis of the results sheds light on limited voter involvement.

Of the total number of registered voters, 30663, slightly more than 25% (25.45%) or 7803 cast ballots.

The absentee ballots filed, 3770, represented slightly less than 50% (48.30%) of the total number of votes cast. This was the highest number of absentee ballots ever cast. Four thousand and thirty three (4033) ballots were marked at the polls

In the **Mayoral** race, 14.2% of registered voters re-elected Mayor Jim Cason. Of the votes cast, 57% went to the Mayor. The Mayor is entering the third of his four two-year terms. Term limits will apply after 8 years.

In the **Commissioner Group IV** race, Commissioner Frank Quesada was re-elected by 17.5% of the registered voters. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the ballots marked carried the day. Commissioner Quesada will "term out" at the end of the next four years.

In the **Commissioner Group V** race with six candidates competing for the seat vacated by Commissioner William "Bill" Kerdyk after 20 years, due to term limits, Jeannett Slesnick was elected by 32% of the total votes cast in that race. The votes Mrs. Slesnick received represented 8% of the total registered voters. Commissioner Slesnick is eligible to serve three four year terms.

As there is no system for a "run off" in Coral Gables, the winner of a multiple contender race is the candidate with the most votes.

Coral Gables has 27 precincts. In the next smallest precinct, #639, located at the Bank United Center at the University of Miami, there are 64 registered voters but no votes were cast there in this election.

Precinct #617, located at Fire Rescue Station #3 on Old Cutler Road, has the largest number of registered voters at 3119. In this election, 20% of those registered cast ballots.

The highest percentage of votes cast in any precinct was 39% of the citizens registered at precinct #645, located at the Coral Gables Youth Center located in the center of the north Gables residential area

A random sampling of other precincts gave the following results: At precinct #634, Elizabeth Virrick Park, Coconut Grove; 12.5% of registered voters cast ballots. Six hundred nineteen (619) votes were cast at precinct #611, Coral Gables Senior High School, for a 33% turn out. Coral Gables Country Club, precinct #608, recorded 619 votes for a 35% result.

Data gleaned from the Campaign Treasurer's Reports of April 10, 2015, filed four days before the election, revealed that \$844,050.00 was raised by the ten candidates. The largest amount raised by any one candidate was \$220,790.

This will be the first Coral Gables City Commission which will have two women on the dais.

HOW TO JOIN GGG

Send a letter to: Gables Good Government
1825 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Box #448
Coral Gables, FL 33134
Email us at DSwain@MilianSwain.Com
Phone: Debbie Swain 305 496-2374

ANNUAL DUES LEVELS

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

**A Letter to the Editor of *The Miami Herald*
From Mark Trowbridge, CEO and President
Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce**

Dateline: July 28, 2015 The 'City Beautiful' is Changing
Andres Viglucci was spot on when he declared in his July 14 story, *Redevelopment wave to hit Coral Gables*, that the today's City Beautiful "is not you grandfather's Coral Gables.

I read with great interest about the redevelopment wave, but while the story painted a picture of current projects planned in the Gables it overlooked the direct benefits provided by these new commercial properties and residential units. One thing I know for sure, Coral Gables is cool, especially as we continue to get younger, hipper (think Jugo Fresh) and engage with the increasingly powerful Millennial and Generation X consumers.

The hundreds of thousands of new square footage that will be built will house amazing new restaurants underscoring our recent #1 foodie community rating by Livability.com. Our retailers include everything from uniquely experiential to aspirational fashion tenants active in a global market, as well as emerging global tenants that are pull brands.

Then, there are the corporate headquarters that will join us as well, adding to the 150+ multinationals that already call Coral Gables home. New residents come next, also regarded as discriminating consumers with flourishing incomes and employees who will add to the livelihood of our community.

The growing tax base becomes a solid win for our city. While I think granpa may not completely understand the need for increased density in the core of our business community, his children and grandchildren who own today's businesses certainly do. And they further understand that consumers vote with their feet—and their wallets.

The jewel of the current wave will be the Miracle Mile and Giralda Streetscape project, a \$20 million makeover that will be a game-changer for our community. A long-standing priority for our chamber and partners, the project promises to put the miracle back in the mile and serve as a centerpiece and gathering place for new residents and employees searching for a great meal, the perfect gift or an amazing haircut.

When all is said and done (and built), our Coral Gables will continue to be the sparkling gem envisioned by Merrick 90 years ago. And while we often think of his grand plan as a modern day blueprint, I think the father of the City Beautiful would be most pleased to see what we Gableites have done.

**A response from former Coral Gables Mayor, Don Slesnick
Coral Gables: 'A community with a hometown atmosphere'**

August 7, 2015

I read with great interest and concern Mark Trowbridge's July 28 letter. My interest was caused by the subject matter—commercial development in the Gables. My concern was the somewhat flippant tone of the letter in dismissing the importance of the sophisticated character of the Gables' business district and the trashing of traditional values held by those residents who are products of America's Greatest Generation.

Miami-Dade County is a wonderful quilt of diverse cultures, races, languages and communities. Each municipality has its own personality, vibe, and image. The quilt would be less beautiful if any one of our cities were to disappear or try to be something it isn't.

Coconut Grove and Bal Harbour are good examples of the proposition the South Florida has room for different types of life styles and different degrees of "coolness." Within a 20-mile radius of the center of our county there's no lack of opportunity for "Millennial and Generation X consumers" to meet their entertainment, foodie and purchasing needs. Coral Gables residents, young and old, live here because of the quiet neighborhoods, the beauty of the architecture, the lush foliage and the city services.

When residents and visitors choose Coral Gables for dining opportunities they are looking for good food, pleasant surroundings, affordable parking and an atmosphere that's conducive to conversation and relaxation. During my ten years in the Mayor's Office, many constituents, young and old, told me that they worked in the hectic urban settings of Downtown Miami or Brickell, but that they had chosen to live in Coral Gables because it is different: a community with a home town atmosphere and a very special sense-of-place.

It's easy to use a reference to George Merrick to defend any position one wishes to argue, but there is no argument with his written records, which clearly indicate that he wanted to create a visually attractive Mediterranean residential community supported by a business district that was distinguished by its grace and charm. Oh, and by the way my grandchildren think I'm cool.

"Merrick was Coral Gables. This city will be forever his city, quiet and beautiful—a poet's dream in stone and steel and concrete, in murmuring fountains and lazy waterways, in striking archways, streets and parkways, to imposing mansions and charming homes."

Editorial, *Miami Herald*, March 26, 1942

MODERN ARCHITECTURE PROJECT RECEIVES MULTIPLE REVIEWS

Distinct and dramatic architecture being proposed for the northeast corner of Catalonia Avenue and Segovia Boulevard has received multiple reviews by the City's Board of Architects.

The site location for this project is identified as having several two-story duplex configured structures as well as one- and two-story single and multifamily homes. The construction dates of these buildings ranges from the mid-1920s through the 1940s. The concern is the insertion of dramatically different architecture

into this older, more traditional, established neighborhood. Though the Segovia Boulevard corridor is not officially designated as an historic district, due in some part to the lack of architectural cohesion among the structures, the existing inventory is generally compatible based on size and scale.

In late June 2015, project architect Roney Mateu, who has produced several developments in Miami and Coral Gables, presented to the Coral Gables Board of Architects the plans of the three components which make up the total project. After their thorough review and much discussion the project was rejected as presented. Another meeting was scheduled for the project to come back for additional perusal.

At that meeting, after detailed discussion and recommended changes, the Board moved to defer to a third meeting. At the third meeting, held on July 23, 2015, after



no definitive resolution, a fourth meeting was held on July 30, 2015. This presentation was made before a panel of two Board of Architects members. After a lengthy review and discussion, a motion to approve the project failed for lack of a second vote. A fifth meeting was scheduled for August 6, at which there was a panel of three Board members. After continued discussion, a two to one vote approved the project.



Opposition parties in attendance and who were considered "aggrieved" as they reside within 1000 feet of the proposed building site, came prepared with a request for a "Trial de novo" which is a request to start the proceeding anew. A meeting is now scheduled for September 9, 2015 at 3:30pm at 285 Aragon Avenue, the Museum of Coral Gables in the Community meeting room.

To voice an opinion or provide other in-pur contact Ramon Trias, Director of Planning and Zoning at RTrias@CoralGables.com.



Upper Center: Casa Gran Dobles de Segovia.

Lower Right: Casa Catalonia.

Lower Left: Casa Segovia

Renderings of elevations have changed and are subject to further changes.

Images are the products of Mateu Architecture and provided by the City of Coral Gables

NEWS & NOTES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

When Are We Going To Light Up Ponce?

For the safety of our University students and staff; our residents out for a jog or perhaps walking their dog, we need more lighting on Ponce de Leon Blvd between Red and LeJeune Roads.

The street lights on Ponce have been out of order for years and all I've ever been able to get is that "we're working on it". The light poles are there, the bulbs are there but the bulbs are blown out so there are no lights with the exception of a passing car. I live in this area and nightly I see students walking to and from the U as well as the many joggers and Ponce is almost dark due to poor lighting!

Summer is when we have a much lower amount of traffic and our streets are not as busy as they are when the University is open. However, now it is the end of August, university classes have begun and thousands of students are back. Again, we have missed a perfect opportunity to have the street lamps re-lit on Ponce. What are we waiting for, a terrible accident, a robbery or a molestation right before our eyes?

Evelyn Budde

CG POLICE DEPARTMENT POSITIONED FOR MAJOR REALIGNMENT

This "Sunshine Meeting" will be held to allow the Mayor and Commissioners to discuss the realignment of the executive level of the Police Department being proposed by City Manager Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark. The proposal establishes positions for two police chiefs, one to oversee operations and the other to oversee criminal investigation, as well as an assistant chief to oversee administration. The three executives staff will all report to Frank Fernandez, who was recently appointed Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Safety. The positions will be filled by Interim Chief Ed Hudak, who will serve as Chief of Operations; Major Raul Pedroso, who will become Chief of Criminal Operations and Assistant Chief Michael Miller, who will be in charge of administration.

Coral Gables Interim Chief of Police, Edward J. Hudak, Jr., on July 24, 2015, released the following six-month comparison Uniform Crime Report for our community. All percentages are compared to the first six months of 2014:

- ◆ Violent crime offenses are down 4.4%.
- ◆ Non-violent crime offenses are down 20.1%.
- ◆ Total reported offenses for Coral Gables are down 19.5%.

Also, during the targeted time period, our police communications personnel handled 473 more calls for service. In 2014 calls numbered 26,598; in 2015 calls numbered 27,071.

BULLETIN

**SUNSHINE MEETING FOR
POLICE DEPARTMENT
EXECUTIVE STAFF REALIGNMENT
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 3:30 PM**

US 1 Holiday Inn Site of *Paseo de La Riviera*

In a packed Coral Gables City Hall chamber, affected residents, presenters, City staff and other interested parties came and stayed for some 3 hours to listen and participate in one step of the lengthy system which moves a development and building project from idea to modification to completion.

The 2.67 acre site of an existing Holiday Inn Hotel, 1350 U.S. 1/Dixie Highway, in Coral Gables, is the host of a proposed mixed use project. The project is currently being reviewed by the city's Planning and Zoning Board. At its meeting on August 12, 2015, the Board heard presentations by attorneys representing the developer, Nolan Properties International, as well as the lead architect, Prof. Jorge Hernandez. City's Director of Planning and Zoning, Ramon Trias, reported on the process of communication with affected residents which was begun in November 2014. Many emails, city e-news bulletins and mailed notices from the City were implemented in an effort to engage all impacted residents. Some 48 meetings with impacted neighbors as well as 46 individual and small group meetings of up to 6 people have been held. According to Mr. Trias, many letters have been received from residents both for and against the project. These letters were incorporated into the materials presented to the Board. In July, 2015 two "visioning" meetings were held. During these meetings held on Friday, July 17, in the evening and on Saturday morning, July 18, more than 200 people were able to walk the site, see visual displays, ask questions, give in-put and express opinions.

The essentials of the developer's presentation were addressed by Prof. Hernandez. Visuals included site plans, details of traffic and parking containment, original maps of the affected area which is dominated by the campus of the University of Miami. As University Metrorail station is



approximately 700 feet from the project, a rendering of the proposed pedestrian overpass across U.S. 1 was shown. A sample of stone finishes to be used on the main structure, 360 degree elevation views and many other details were displayed. The dimensions of the footprint are approximately 360 front feet on U.S. 1 and 325.6 feet deep. The building height is essentially the same as the Gables 1 tower. The developer also plans to be involved with the proposed **Underline** project which is focused on improving the area under the existing Metrorail infrastructure.

Also present at the August 12, Board meeting was attorney Tucker Gibbs, represented the group *Riviera Neighborhood Association*. Among other concerns, Mr. Gibbs focused on the timing and scheduling of the meeting at hand, as many of the residents were away for the summer. Issues of increased traffic affecting the neighboring residential areas and height and massing of the project related to visual impact, were also brought forth.

As all of the presentations were somewhat lengthy and the hour was late, it was felt that a deferral was necessary in order to give all residents who wished to speak ample chance to provide their in-put. The meeting will resume on September 16, 2015.

Continued from Page 1: Charter Review

3. Run-offs: Should there be run-offs in case no one attains a majority? Any other form of voting?
4. Commission powers: appointment of staff, powers to remove employees, question and inquiry, communications other than through the City Manager?
5. Terms of Office: number of years for Mayor?
6. Shall the City be divided into electoral districts: like Miami, Pinecrest or Sarasota?
7. Term limits? These were recently implemented
8. Appointment of Vice Mayor: Charter states Commission will appoint. Current practice is that the Mayor appoints.
9. Requirements for board membership: Residency? Possible conflicts of interest?
10. Miscellaneous issues: Issues of non-attendance, filling of vacancies, emergency powers, residency requirements to run for office and others.
11. The Committee will meet periodically to discuss proposed amendments for consideration by the City Commission for potential inclusion in an upcoming referendum.
12. The Charter Review process will be managed by City Attorney, Craig Leen. Resident input is encouraged. Send written comments to CityAttorney@CoralGables.com.

Why The Fiscal Issue That Matters Most Isn't Pensions

At *Governing's* Summit on the Cost of Government last September, I asked a group of city, county and state chief financial officers what they saw as the biggest challenge facing their governments. Every member of the group said it was public pensions. I have a great deal of respect for these individuals. They are dedicated public servants, and many of them are far more knowledgeable about state and local government finance than I am. But I think they're wrong. I think the No. 1 challenge facing state and local governments is infrastructure, not pensions.

First, the dollar estimates for the infrastructure deficit are simply larger than those for pensions. Don Boyd and Peter Kiernan, in a January 2014 paper, pegged the underfunding of state and local government defined-benefit pension systems at \$2 trillion to \$3 trillion. That's a lot of money for sure, but the American Society of Civil Engineers estimated the country's infrastructure deficit at \$3.6 trillion, and that was back in 2013.

Second, infrastructure issues are comparatively pervasive, even if they vary by type across the country -- the need, for example, for water-related infrastructure in California and the Southwest or for fixing aging bridges and rail systems in the Northeast. As for pensions, Alicia Munnell, director of the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, points out that plans are well funded and argues that we should "dispense with some of the hysteria."

Finally, the consequences of not coming to grips with the infrastructure challenge seem more dire for the country as a whole. There is, of course, the very real threat to life and property. Beyond that is the loss of economic competitiveness. Governments with modern, well maintained infrastructure are going to enable their businesses to operate more efficiently and their citizens to enjoy a better quality of life.

I see two reasons why pension problems may have captured the attention of policymakers. There are

those who have made it their mission to call attention to pension problems because it fits a small-government ideological agenda. The real abuses that have occurred, such as pension "spiking" in some plans and the abject failure of some governments -- notably Illinois and New Jersey -- to manage their pension systems with any fiscal discipline, have given plenty of fuel to those folks. And fixing pensions by cutting benefits and making public employees pay more into them is simply easier than finding the new money needed to invest in infrastructure.

My hope is that CFOs and other government finance experts will consider these arguments and use their influence to heighten government's focus on infrastructure. The issues confronting pensions, while not trivial, are manageable. But while you may be able to pass a law to better fund a pension by sticking it to public employees, infrastructure is different: You cannot repeal the laws of physics.



This essay, published in June, 2015, is printed with permission from *Governing* magazine. *Governing* is published by **Mark Funkhouser**, a former Mayor of Kansas City.

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See link: <https://www.governing.com/gov-institute/Funkhouser/gov-fiscal-issue-that-matters-most-infrastructure-pensions.html>



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