



## Cocoanut Grove Village Council

### Monthly Meeting Minutes

**Marcelo Fernandes, Chairman**  
**Linda Williams, Vice Chair**  
**S. Larissa Ozols, Treasurer**  
**Zachary Elliott, Secretary**  
**Thaddeus Scott, Sergeant at Arms**  
**Johannah Brown**  
**Rachel Cardello**  
**Steven Dloogoff**  
**Hank Sanchez-Resnik**

*Every Third Friday*  
*3500 Pan American Drive*  
*Miami, FL 33133*  
[www.CoconutGroveVillageCouncil.com](http://www.CoconutGroveVillageCouncil.com)

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**Thursday, January 19, 2018**

**6:30 PM**

**Miami City Hall**

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1. Call to Order at 6:35 PM
2. Roll Call
  - a. Present
    - i. Marcelo Fernandes, Chairman
    - ii. Linda Williams, Vice Chair
    - iii. S. Larissa Ozols, Treasurer
    - iv. Zachary Elliott, Secretary
    - v. Thaddeus Scott, Sergeant at Arms
    - vi. Johannah Brown
    - vii. Rachel Cardello
    - viii. Steven Dloogoff
    - ix. Hank Sanchez-Resnik
  - b. Quorum Present
3. Pledge of Allegiance
  - a. The Pledge was recited by all those in attendance.
4. Police / Net Office Report
  - a. No member of the police were present.
5. Chairman Fernandes' Introduction
  - a. Wished to deviate from the standard meeting format and use a town-hall format to address the Coconut Grove Playhouse.
  - b. All of the Members of the Council wishes to no longer have the status quo and want what is best for the Grove.
  - c. The Council tried to focus more on the financials side of each plan.
    - i. However, the Council understands that the main aim of the Playhouse is cultural and not profit.
6. Playhouse Question and Answer Session (Conducted by Chairman Fernandes)
  - a. Questions to the Director of Miami Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Michael Spring
    - i. Current plan, how many theatres and seats?
      1. 300 seat theatre, and possibility of an artist's studio (non-funded).

- ii. Garage?
  - 1. MPA will develop a parking garage.
- iii. How many parking spaces?
  - 1. Just over 300 parking spaces (recently reduced).
- iv. Commercial Space?
  - 1. Commercial space on the ground floor of the front building and façade of garage.
  - 2. Approx. 15,000 sq/ft of commercial space total.
- v. No residential?
  - 1. No residential.
- vi. Commercial space will be leased space.
  - 1. Will likely be market rate.
  - 2. Revenue will go towards the theatre.
- b. Same Questions to Mr. Lewis "Mike" Eidson
  - i. Mr. Eidson asked if apartments were still part of County plan.
  - ii. Introduced himself.
  - iii. 700 seat theater and a 200 seat theater. 200 seat theatre could be used by Gablestage until Mr. Adler retires.
  - iv. We have a very robust educational plan.
  - v. All of Coconut Grove can use it.
  - vi. Would restore the whole building, would have commercial and offices as well as actor studios.
- c. Questions on Funding
  - i. County
    - 1. Total funding is two bonds.
      - a. \$20 million
      - b. Plus interest on money that has been held.
    - 2. Surface parking lot net revenue.
    - 3. \$21.5 million in secured funding.
    - 4. None of the \$21.5 million will be used to construct the garage, which will be funded by the MPA.
    - 5. All funds must be used for capital, not for operating.
    - 6. What role does the State play?
      - a. The State owns the property and is leasing it to the County and FIU.
      - b. The bond money is committed to the County's plan.
  - ii. Mr. Eidson
    - 1. Money could be voted to our plan.
    - 2. Background on Playhouse.
    - 3. \$48 million would be needed.
      - a. Exclusive of the garage.
      - b. \$20 million from the county.
      - c. \$500k from the state.
      - d. \$10 million from GOP bond.
        - i. Spoke with Tomas Regalado, would allocate if he was still mayor.
      - e. Would need to raise \$17 million.
        - i. Have \$12 million promised.
      - f. Would have \$11 million for cost over runs.
      - g. Would set up a \$5 million endowment.

- i. Would create \$250k in income per year.
  - d. What would the procedure be for removing the County from the Playhouse?
    - i. Mr. Eidson
      - 1. The State could change the lease. We have spoken with the Lt. Governor.
    - ii. Chairman Fernandes
      - 1. What obstacles do you see in amending the lease?
    - iii. Dir. Spring
      - 1. The lease had to be approved by numerous bodies and individuals.
      - 2. Took almost a year to get the lease negotiated and finished.
      - 3. Required an operator with a record and all the money in place.
      - 4. Would likely be very rigorous process to amend the lease.
    - iv. Mr. Heisenbottle
      - 1. Money could be given out as grants, and therefore there would not need to be as rigorous a process.
    - v. Dir. Spring
      - 1. We oversee grant money to cultural institutions. They are all done on reimbursement basis. Lease states that the project must be done by 2022. We will not need all that time, however there have been delays due to others.
  - e. Chairman Fernandes Statement
    - i. I agree that private money moves faster.
    - ii. I looked over three documents, the 2013 state issued budget, feasibility study done by AMS (Foundation) 2014, new operating budget issued in 2017.
    - iii. While reading over the AMS report, interviewed industry leaders and locals. Identified numerous performing arts centers.
      - 1. Those in the industry had lower support for a larger theatre, while those outside the industry supported a larger theatre.
    - iv. Dir. Spring
      - 1. Will have a new Gablestage operating budget by end of January.
      - 2. Parking revenues, \$135k a year. Working with AMS to update predicted revenues. Currently generated \$25k a month net from surface parking.
    - v. Mr. Eidson
      - 1. Most important thing should be the theatre.
      - 2. 300 parkings spots generates roughly \$880k a year, \$660k net. Would like the parking garage money to support the theatre.
    - vi. Dir. Spring
      - 1. All money made net of costs on the parking garage will go to the theatre.
  - f. Chairman Fernandes
    - i. 2014 AMS study assumes \$9 million of revenue and \$8 million of operating budget. Will there be a ramp up period.
    - ii. Mr. Eidson
      - 1. Feel comfortable using the number we do for contributions.
7. Chairman Fernandes reviews numbers of comparative theaters from 2014 AMS report.
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Will bring in the best people from across the world.

- ii. Has many people who are sending letters asking for jobs that don't exist.
- 8. Many of these comparable theaters don't seem to have such high budgets.
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Need to start really high end, world-class theatre operation.
- 9. How can we be guaranteed the money is there?
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Would want to produce one new show a year, rather than just a presenting theater.
- 10. How would you keep the theater going if sales are not high enough?
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Return off endowment
    - ii. Used the Geva theater of Rochester NY as a comparison.
- 11. Asked questions regarding ticket sales.
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Assumed Geva would be slightly smaller then what we would start.
- 12. What is the timeline on raising the full amount necessary.
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. We have raised \$12 million raised.
    - ii. \$48 million for construction.
    - iii. \$33 million in public money.
    - iv. Need \$15 million.
    - v. If we had a deal we could raise the rest of the money.
- 13. You have enough money to build, but what happens if you fall short operating in the first three years.
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Trust me.
- 14. What is being proposed by county is more conservative.
- 15. What you (Mr. Eidson) want is a state of the art theater.
  - a. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Miami is lacking a theater.
- 16. What is the status of Commissioner Suarez.
  - a. Dir. Spring
    - i. He withdrew the statement, I don't speak for Commissioner Suarez.
  - b. Mr. Eidson
    - i. Speaks on raising money for the mayor.
  - c. Dir. Spring
    - i. Mayor did not feel comfortable with the viability of Mr. Eidson plan, however if the Commissioners thought differently he was open to it.
- 17. Chairman Fernandes
  - a. It is going to take more convincing to deviate from the current County plan.
- 18. Public Comment (two minutes per speaker)
  - a. Katrina Morris
    - i. Thanked Coconut Grove Village Council
    - ii. Got involved and is most concerned with preservation.
  - b. William (Undecipherable) Sr.
    - i. Does not want a large project on the site, because of the impact on the residential along Charles Avenue.
    - ii. Traffic impact is also a concern.
  - c. Ms. Stern

- i. Historic neighborhood will be impacted.
    - ii. The playhouse should be preserved as is.
  - d. Joyce Nelson
    - i. Went to the playhouse long ago, wasn't very good.
    - ii. We need to put in a playhouse that has a "feel."
  - e. Lowell Kuvin
    - i. Concerned about the amount of commercial space and that restaurants will fail.
  - f. Barbara Mills
    - i. Concerned about traffic, especially the main exit on Main Highway.
  - g. Max Pearl
    - i. Financial viability and historic preservation are intertwined.
    - ii. Does not think Gablestage and Mr. Adler are appropriate.
- 19. Council Members Questions
  - a. Zachary Elliott
    - i. AMS study showed that people most likely to consume live theatre ranked avant-garde and experimental theater as the least likely they would go see. Is Mr. Adler going to change his artistic direction to cater to gain a wider audience?
      - 1. Mr. Spring: I would not characterize the work of Gablestage as experimental or avant-garde, they are mostly mainstream American theater. Character of work will evolve.
  - b. Interruption by Mr. Pearl
  - c. Johannah Brown
    - i. 300 seat theater, do you have any other comparables of theaters that are this sizes?
      - 1. Mr. Spring: Yes, 300 seat size theater is the best size for intimate theater. The County looked at many sized theaters, both larger and smaller than 300 seats.
    - ii. Admissions assumptions. Where did you get the data for these assumptions?
      - 1. Mr. Spring: Updated operating pro forma will be done by end of month and will have more detailed assumptions.
    - iii. What are the other revenue grants?
      - 1. Gablestage will receive larger grants to reflect their larger budget.
    - iv. All garage revenue will go to theater?
      - 1. Mr. Noriega: Yes.
    - v. Why didn't you use Actors House in Coral Gables as a comparable?
      - 1. Mr. Eidson: No.
    - vi. Board contributions, size of the board?
      - 1. Mr. Eidson: 30 people at \$10,000 in contributions a year.
    - vii. Why is there \$780,000 if the board only contributes \$300,000?
      - 1. Mr. Eidson: Because we think we can get some people to pay more than \$10,000.
    - viii. Is there any outdoor space.
      - 1. Mr. Heisenbottle: Small outdoor space at the rear and ground floor retail area.
  - d. Larissa Ozols
    - i. Has there had been any change to Mr. Parson's opinion, since his letter that would make the County's plan eligible for the special category grant.

1. Dir. Spring: He supports our project personally, however he cannot give the grant under the criteria. We disagree with his decision. We can also apply to the other side, which is the cultural affairs portion.
- ii. Would you apply for the grant?
  1. Mr. Heisenbottle: Yes, we would. This is a full preservation scheme. We would apply for the grant.
- e. Steve Dloogoff
  - i. Theaters in New York City are small. Our choice is between a conservative, well-funded project, with a proven theater management and something more of a pipedream.
- f. Linda Williams
  - i. My primary concern for both proposals is traffic. Village West touches the backside, and people will find a way to cut through. Secondly, how will neighborhood schools participate in the new Playhouse. Finally, community engagement. We have a lot of entrepreneurs from Village West, we don't want to leave out talent that is local.
    1. Mr. Eidson: Hallmark of our plan is community engagement. Reduced the size of the theater, so traffic should be less of an issue.
    2. Dir. Spring: Prominent feature of our plan is the promenade that goes through the theater and connects with West Village. The cultural department has a history of putting programs in place, so that underserved communities have opportunities.
- g. Rachel Cardello
  - i. Will there be off-site improvements to alleviate traffic?
    1. Mr. Heisenbottle: We have not done a traffic study.
    2. Dir. Spring: This is the issue we hear the most. The smaller the theater less traffic it will generate. We have to create a traffic study for the city, we have not yet. We think we will need to do some off-site improvements. We will also have to use off-duty police to direct traffic, same as the other theaters do.
    3. Mr. Noriega: We are looking into slowing traffic and redoing the intersection.
  - ii. Will there be phasing of construction of the theater and garage.
    1. Dir. Spring: Everything will be built at once, to minimize disruption.
  - iii. Is there a way to phase in other theaters (directed to Mr. Eidson).
    1. Mr. Heisenbottle: Best to build all at once.
  - iv. Clarification of the restoration of the interior?
    1. Dir. Spring: The designation report did designate the whole property as historical, but only the façade of the front building as having historical integrity. Other elements will be saved and reincorporated.
    2. Mr. Heisenbottle: The entire building should be restored.
- h. Thaddeus Scott
  - i. Mr. Spring how will you nurture the talents of the people and children of Village West.
    1. Dir. Spring: Yes. We have a partnership with FIU to teach theater.

- ii. Mr. Eidson have you spoken with any groups in Village West about educational programs.
    - 1. Mr. Eidson: We have spoken with many groups and have more room to educate children.
  - i. Hank Sanchez-Resnik
    - i. Thanks Chairman for research.
    - ii. We wanted to get facts.
    - iii. Ultimately this will be a political decision, which will be made by people not in this room.
    - iv. I am skeptical of the larger theater plan and of finding an audience in general.
    - v. I would like us to pass a resolution, but not tonight.
    - vi. We made the top twenty of Amazon, we are not getting it.
  - j. Marcello Fernandes
    - i. I think the smaller the garage the better.
    - ii. Historic preservation. South Beach is historic, but they keep the facades and redo the building.
    - iii. The Grove is the most desirable place to live, there are lots of restaurants opening.
20. Meeting Adjourned at 8:50 PM