

**Miami River Commission  
Public Meeting Minutes  
March 4, 2024**

The Miami River Commission's (MRC) public meeting convened at noon, March 4, 2024, in the Downtown Library Auditorium, 101 W Flagler. Sign in sheets are attached.

**Miami River Commission (MRC) Policy Committee Members and/or Designees attending:**

Horacio Stuart Aguirre, Chairman, Appointed by the Governor  
Jim Murley, Vice Chairman, designee for Miami-Dade County Mayor Cava  
Megan Kelly, designee for City of Miami Mayor Francis Suarez  
Eddie Marti Kring, designee for County Commissioner Eileen Higgin  
Betty Hermida, designee for City of Miami Commissioner Gabela  
Patty Harris, Appointed by the Governor  
William Gonzalez, designee for Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez-Rundle  
Barrett Long, designee for Neighborhood Representative appointed by Board of County Commissioners  
Eileen Broton, Neighborhood Representative Appointed by City of Miami Commission  
Alvaro Coradin, designee for Sara Babun appointed by Miami-Dade County  
Bruce Brown, Miami River Marine Group  
John Michael Cornell, designee for Luis Garcia  
Neal Schafers, designee for the Downtown Development Authority  
Philip Everingham, designee for the Marine Council

**MRC Staff:**

Brett Bibeau, Managing Director

**I) Chair's Report and Vice Chair's "Voluntary improvement Plan" (VIP) Update**

The Miami River Commission (MRC) unanimously adopted the MRC's February 5, 2024 public meeting minutes.

MRC Chairman Horacio Stuart Aguirre distributed bilingual flyers for the free 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Miami Riverday which will be held April 6, 2024, 1-6 PM, Lummus Park, 250 NW North River Drive, featuring free boat rides, live music, environmental education, historic reenactors, children's activities, food and drinks.

On behalf of the MRC., Chairman Aguirre welcomed new MRC designees Barrett Long, designee for Theo Long whom is the Neighborhood Representative appointed by Board of County Commissioners, and William Gonzalez, designee for Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez-Rundle.

MRC Vice Chairman Jim Murley, provided the following Voluntary Improvement Plan (VIP) Report:

The Miami River Commission has been actively assisting the efforts of the City, County, State, and private sector to clean up the Miami River District. The MRC pays professional maintenance companies daily to remove litter, invasive plant species, graffiti and provide landscaping, pressure washing, vac truck, street sweeper and Scavenger Water Decontamination Vessel services along the Miami River. The MRC thanks the Hands-on-Miami volunteers for picking up garbage along the Miami River in Curtis Park on February 25.

## **II) Review Updated “Miami Riverbridge”**

Carlos Diaz and Brian Dombrowski, Greenberg Traurig, Allen Matis, HRM Owner, Alejandro Gonzalez, Ben Hutchens and Audrey Flynn, Arquitectonica, presented plans, letter of intent, and Restrictive Covenant for Miami Riverbridge, 400 and 298 SE 2 Ave. The plans were approved by the public at referendum. The presented plans include a publicly accessible riverwalk with seamless connections to existing public Riverwalks to the west and east. Mr. Matis noted the site had a seawall upgrade in 2017, and they surveyed the current seawall, to which they will be adding an additional 1.5-foot seawall cap. The project will provide the City of Miami \$1.5 million for FT Dallas Park featuring the historic Flagler Workers House. That payment will be provided when the building permits are executed, which is estimated in a couple years. Langan Engineering conducted a Traffic Impact Study, and the project includes 1,180 parking spaces which is more than required by code. The sites 2 current boat slips and Marine Operating Permit will remain. Attendees discussed the safe balance between bike and pedestrian users along the public Riverwalk.

**The Miami River Commission unanimously recommended approval of Miami Riverbridge’s presented plans, letter of intent and restrictive covenant.**

## **III) Review Plans To Restore the Historically Designated Flagler Workers House in FT Dallas Park**

Richard Heisenbottle, R.J. Heisenbottle Architects, presented the “City of Miami, Office of Capital Improvements, Flagler Workers House (Palm Cottage) Restoration – Construction Documentation Progress Set 12-10-23”, featuring a depiction of the restored historic structure constructed in 1897 is on the National Register of Historic Places and currently in need of restoration. In addition, the City will demolish the 2 non-historic structures on the site

**The Miami River Commission (MRC) unanimously agreed to continue supporting the expedited restoration of the historically designated Flagler Workers House, reconstruction the public Riverwalk, and reopening Fort Dallas Park.**

#### **IV) Review Plans to Restore the Historically Designated Wagner Homestead in Lummus Park**

Richard Heisenbottle, R.J. Heisenbottle Architects, stated in 4 weeks he will commence design for the City of Miami to restore the historically designated 1856 Wagner Homestead in Lummus Park, which is the oldest standing home in Miami-Dade County. (The wooden Wagner Homestead will be tented for termites in the near future.)

**The Miami River Commission (MRC) unanimously recommended approval of needed restorations to the historically designated Wagner Homestead in Lummus Park.**

#### **V) Review Plans to Create the New Riverfront Simon Bolivar Park**

Keith Ng, City of Miami Office of Capital Improvements (OCI) Parks Department presented the distributed City of Miami's current Plans for "Simon Bolivar Park" located at City owned 1 SW South River Drive and beneath the Flagler Bridge. The plans include a new dog park, and state, "Future Sea Wall and Riverwalk Improvements" and "Future Landscape Improvements". The City of Miami recently commenced improvements at Simon Bolivar Park with the installation of new sod and removal of the uprooted tree hanging into the Miami River.

**The Miami River Commission (MRC) unanimously recommended approval of the planned improvements to Simon Bolivar Park and encouraged the "Future Sea Wall and Riverwalk Improvements" and "Future Landscape Improvements" noted in the presented plans to be included ASAP.**

#### **VI) Discuss Status of Miami-Dade County's Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's Recommended Revisions to Miami-Dade County's Manatee Protection Plan**

Copies of the following documents were distributed for review and discussion:

- 1) Memo Version of Miami-Dade County's Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's Recommended Revisions to Miami-Dade County's Manatee Protection Plan (2010 after \$1,000,000 in data, analysis, and 2 years of public meetings - never considered by the Board of County Commissioners)
- 2) Track Changed Version of Miami-Dade County's Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee's Recommended Revisions to Miami-Dade County's Manatee Protection Plan (2010 - never considered by the Board of County Commissioners)

3) Miami Dade County “Report on the County’s Marina Capacity and Long-Term Plans for Addressing Shortages in Marina Capacity” (2016)

The Miami River Commission’s Economic Development and Commerce Subcommittee’s distributed February 15, 2024 public meeting minutes state:

“Rockell Alhale, Miami Dade County Department of Environmental Resource Management (DERM), stated they have been working on a new set of proposed draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan, which will be ready for release and public input in 2 months, followed by County Commission consideration before the end of 2024.

Attendees discussed the Memo Version of Miami-Dade County’s Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee’s Recommended Revisions to Miami-Dade County’s Manatee Protection Plan Motion 22 recommending the creation of a “Manatee Protection Fund, \$5,000,000 per year, 10% for public Education, 40% for increased law enforcement and 50% for environmental restoration or mooring modification projects benefiting manatees.” If the Manatee Protection Fund had been implemented when recommended in 2010, it would have already generated \$70 million for the protection of Manatees. Attendees noted the Committee’s Motion #1 recommends increasing fines for violations of the idle no wake speed zone, which should be supplemented with additional marine patrol resources. The documents recommendations also include increasing the number of allowable boat slips at some County owned marinas such as Black Point, Oleta, and Rickenbacker Marinas.

Attendees noted a significant number of Manatee fatalities are not caused by vessels, docked vessels do not generate any threat to manatees, and enforcing the Miami River’s idle no wake speed zone is the best way to protect the Manatees from potential harm from vessels. Attendees noted boat slips on the Miami River are needed to protect the increasing number of registered vessels during Hurricanes. Transitory slips provide an opportunity for a vessel to dock and turn off their engines for hours of their outing, therefore reducing potential harm for manatees. Orin Black suggested considering it has been over 20 years since the Manatee Protection Plan was adopted, upcoming revisions should allow for 1,000 new boat slips.

Philip Everingham, Chairman of the MRC’s Economic Development & Commerce subcommittee, suggested the MRC recommend the Board of County Commissioners adopt the Miami-Dade County Manatee Protection Plan Review Committee’s recommended revisions to Miami-Dade County’s Manatee Protection Plan as a starting point, in addition to the following revisions:

- 1) The regulations for Transitory Slips in Miami-Dade County should be the same as Broward County and West Palm Beach County. FIND gave funding for transitory docks allowed an installed in FT Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, yet the Miami-Dade County Manatee Protection Plan doesn’t currently allow for them.

- 2) Existing boatyards need to be encouraged to thrive or there is a risk we will lose them. The very limited number of slips a boatyard may have has been capped for over 20 years. Therefore, need to create a process to consider increased slips (without a transfer of slips) at boatyards.
  
- 3) The City of Miami's few remaining parcels zoned D3 and D1 with Port Miami River Land Use require job generating marine industrial businesses, yet the Manatee Protection Plan doesn't allow enough boat slips for a successful marine industrial business to survive, therefore several of the few remaining sites with this marine industrial land use and zoning are vacant which is not in the best interest of the property owners rights nor potential marine industrial businesses which generate good jobs which pay well above the County average. Therefore, allow the few remaining properties with Port Miami River Land Use and Zoning designations more flexibility in order to allow them to operate successful marine industrial businesses."

**The MRC deferred voting on this item until DERM completes the draft revisions to the Manatee Protection Plan, but before it is presented to a subcommittee of the County Commission.**

## **VII) New Business**

The public meeting adjourned.

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- 4 -

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# Miami River Commission

## Public Meeting

March 4, 2024 - 12:00 PM

101 W Flagler, Miami FL - Main Library Auditorium

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