

# **Miami River Commission Public Meeting Minutes May 6, 2024**

The Miami River Commission's (MRC) public meeting convened at noon, May 6, 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  
City of Miami Commissioner Gabela  
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  
Theo Long, 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  
Spencer Crowley, Member at Large Appointed by City Commission

**MRC Staff:**

Brett Bibeau, Managing Director

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

The Miami River Commission unanimously adopted their March 4 public meeting minutes.

MRC Chairman Horacio Stuart Aguirre provided the following report:

The large AV screen features rotating pictures from the free 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Miami Riverday, which was successfully held on April 6 in Lummus Park featuring free boat rides, live music, environmental education, historic reenactors, children's activities, food and drinks. At Riverday MRC Board member Commissioner Gabela and I presented plaques of appreciation to sponsors, and at this time we would like to thank the following remaining sponsors whom did not receive their plaques at Riverday:

- Island Queen Cruises, Mirna Arce
- The Wharf and Boxvault, Guillermo Vadell
- Greenberg Traurig, Carlos Diaz

- the Adler Group, Morgan Sirlin
- Water Management Technologies, Sophie and Marc Mastriano
- Antillean Marine AND Miami River Towing Company, Alvaro Coradin
- Hurricane Cove, John Michael Cornell
- Melissa Tapanes Bercow, Radell, Fernandez, Larkin and Tapanes
- Spencer Crowley, the Florida Inland Navigation District and Akerman

Chairman Aguirre provided condolences to the family and Community whom lost an amazing leader in Senator Bob Graham. When Senator Graham was Governor he served on the Miami River Commission, and one of his numerous "Work Days" was dredging the Miami River. The MRC's 2004 Annual Report's cover picture is Governor Graham dredging the Miami River.

We have a very full and exciting agenda ahead today, so I will quickly turn it over to MRC Vice Chairman Murley to provide his brief Miami River Voluntary Improvement Plan (VIP) update before we start today's numerous voting items.

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 April 28 and in Sewell Park on March 17 and April 14.

## **II. Discussion Regarding City of Miami, Miami Dade County, and Florida Wildlife Commission Marine Patrol's Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Funding Needs**

MRC Managing Director Bibeau stated over the past several years the MRC passed a couple advisory recommendations respectfully recommending the City of Miami, Miami Dade County, and State of Florida provide increased funding for their respective Marine Patrols to provide more Law Enforcement services on the Miami River for the benefit and protection of public safety and the natural environment. Director Bibeau stated the number of vessels on the Miami River dramatically increased during Covid when restaurants, bars and clubs were closed, and did not decrease after Covid ended. The City of Miami & Miami-Dade County Marine Patrols and Florida Wildlife Commission do a wonderful job with the resources at their disposal, but they need more officers to cover the large number of vessels on the 5.5 mile Miami River and its tributaries. In the past month there were 2 drowning deaths when people fell off of Charter Boats into the Miami River, and on May 3 a woman jumped into the Miami River from the middle of the Brickell Bridge.

City of Miami Marine Patrol LT Tameron concurred with MRC Director Bibeau, and stated more officers are needed on the very busy Miami River, therefore he recommends a dedicated Miami River Marine Patrol team. LT Tameron stated he recommends in the upcoming City of Miami Fiscal Year 2024-2035 (10/1/24 – 9/30/25) an additional 12 Marine Patrol Officers (including Officers on Biscayne Bay), yet the City Marine Patrol thankfully does not need any additional vessels. LT Tameron thanked Spencer Crowley and the Florida Inland Navigation District for recently increasing their derelict vessel grant awarded to the City to \$200,000, matched by \$200,000 from the City of Miami, which is sufficient funding for the City of Miami to remove every currently registered derelict vessel in the City's portion of Biscayne Bay and the 2 derelict vessels in the City of Miami's portion of the Miami River.

Attendees discussed navigation and docking along the Miami River's South Fork tributary.

John Michael Cornell offered the City of Miami a free slip for a Marine Patrol Vessel at Hurricane Cove Marina which is at a central Miami River location which would enhance presence and response times.

City of Miami Commissioner Gabela stated he lives on the Miami River, witnesses vessel activity, and supports the City of Miami increasing funding in FY 24-25 for the City of Miami Marine Patrol.

The MRC reaffirmed their respectful recommendation for the City of Miami, Miami Dade County, and State of Florida to provide increased funding for their respective Marine Patrols to provide Law Enforcement services on the Miami River in their respective FY '24 – '25 budgets.

### **III. Presentation Regarding Miami Dade County Parks Department's Waterfront Recreation Access Plan**

Miami-Dade County Parks and Recreational Open Spaces (PROS) Allie Davis presented the Waterfront Recreation Access Plan (WRAP). The Plan was funded by a Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) grant. The distributed Waterfront Recreation Access Plan (WRAP) Overview stated:

“The WRAP provides a strategic framework and implementation for:

- Improving public access for boating, canoeing, kayaking, shoreline fishing, walking, wadding, paddle boarding, swimming, and other recreational opportunities
- Creating an interconnected system of publicly accessible waterfront destinations that include expanded water-based transportation
- Increasing and enhancing nature-based recreational and eco-tourism opportunities”
- The WRAP efforts include advocacy for education and enforcement of existing regulations

**The MRC adopted a unanimous resolution supporting the WRAP and its implementation.**

#### **IV. Update Regarding City of Miami's Permit Application to Construct the Planned and Funded Improvements to Sewell Park**

Keith Ng, City of Miami's Office of Capital Improvements (OCI) presented plans, awarded FIND Phase 1 Grant Application, and Miami-Dade County DERM letter essentially denying the City of Miami's presented plan because it includes a boat slip for marine patrol and 2 transient boat slips which although would be allowed if the site was zoned residential, since its zoned Parks and Recreation the slips are not allowed under the current Manatee Protection Plan.

Commissioner Gabela stated support for the City of Miami's current plans to improve Sewell Park.

**The MRC adopted a resolution 13-1 to support the City of Miami's plans to improve Sewell Park and send a letter to Miami-Dade County urging the Board of County Commissioners to amend the manatee protection plan to regulate transitory boat slips in the same fashion as Palm Beach.**

#### **V. Update Discussion Item on US Army Corps of Engineers Miami Dade County Back Bay Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study**

An Army Corps of Engineers / Miami-Dade County PowerPoint, Press Release, Feasibility Study, Back Bay Focus Area Maps, and the Miami River Commission's Urban Infill and Greenways Subcommittee's April 23, 2024 public meeting minutes were distributed. This document must be adopted by the U.S. Congress in order to become eligible for significant federal funding needed to protect the Miami River from storm risks. MRC Vice Chairman Murley stated he will assist the MRC drafting a letter to submit to the Army Corps of Engineers before the current 30-day public comment period ends.

#### **VI. New Business**

The public meeting adjourned.

# Miami River Commission

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May 6, 2024 - 12:00 PM

101 W Flagler, Miami FL - Main Library Auditorium

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