

MINUTES
Sunshine Meeting
May 7, 2020
7:30 PM
Government Center
6601 Main Street
Miami Lakes, Florida 33014

1. Call to Order:

Meeting began at 7:30 PM.

The following councilmembers were virtually present: Carlos Alvarez, Luis Collazo, Jeffrey Rodriguez, Marilyn Ruano, and Mayor Manny Cid. Vice Mayor Nelson Rodriguez joined virtually 9:20 PM.

The following Town staff were virtually present: Town Manager Edward Pidermann, Assistant Town Manager Tony Lopez, Deputy Town Attorney Lorenzo Cobiella, Town Clerk Gina Inguanzo, Deputy Town Clerk Ashley Shepple, Strategic Planning, Performance & Innovation Manager German Cure, Parks and Recreation Director Danny Angel, Communications and Community Affairs Director Clarisell DeCardenas, Committees & Special Events Coordinator William Sanchez, Marketing & Digital Services Specialist Brandon Diaz, Helpdesk Staff, Communications and Community Affairs Intern Elizabeth Golshteyn, Public Works Engineer Omar Santos Baez, Budget Officer Melissa Hernandez, Building Official Mike Mesa, and Major Javier Ruiz.

There following Miami Lakes Chamber members were virtually present: Sarah Suarez, Janet Waterfield, Fred Senra, Magaly Rubio, Rudy Blanco, Marta Diaz.

The following of the Economic Development Committee members were virtually present: Chairman Eddie Blanco, Jorge Alvarez, Neil Robinson, John Tingle, Romy Portuondo Remoir, and Magaly Rubio, Rudy Blanco, and Vincente Rodriguez.

The following public were virtually present: Edward Paez, Jerry Menendez, and Lynn Matos.

2. Items Discussed:

- **To Discuss the amount of money that is allocated to the Miami Lakes Chamber of Commerce**

Public Comments:

Lynn Matos stated she sent an email on April 10th to the Miami Lakes Chamber, Economic Development Committee Chairman Eddie Blanco, and Town Manager to start a conversation about bringing the Economic Development Committee and Miami Lakes Chamber together to help our Town business community. The Food and Wine is a perfect example of how our businesses were

able to come together and she would like for this to happen again. She is hoping the Chamber and Economic Development Committee can collaborate.

Sarah Suarez from the Miami Lakes Chamber. She stated she is looking forward to working together to bring back our business community. The Chamber has some great ideas on how to do this.

Dennis J. Lyzniak, Treasurer & Theater Manager of Miami Lakes Main Street Players Playhouse, spoke about the success of the theater and how far it has come. He said the theater has fallen on hard times due to the pandemic. The plays, events, and camps cancelled until the end of the year. Many donors to the theater they will be losing due to many being senior citizens. Mr. Lyzniak stated they promote for many of their attendees to visit the local restaurants. He encouraged the council, chamber, and the Economic Development Committee to help the theater. He brings 3,000 visitors to theater every year and out of these audience are outside from Miami Lakes.

Jared from TD Bank stated the Chamber could do virtual luncheon.

Notes on the meeting:

Councilmember Luis Collazo commended the Miami Lakes Chamber members and Economic Development Committee members for having this meeting. He stated it's important to work together to help our small business community and maximize our resources.

Chairman Eddie Blanco began the meeting by stated the Economic Development Committee has financially supported the Miami Lakes Chamber with \$10,000 historically every year. He wants to see the Economic Development Committee to continue to do so given the long legacy of the Miami Lakes Chamber in our Town and how it has supported our businesses. We in unprecedented times and businesses have been closed for 60 days and we need to strategize on how to help businesses get back on their feet.

Chairman Blanco explained there was a request put before the Town Council for \$5,000 from the Economic Development Committee at the Special Call Meeting on April 30th. This funding would be used to educate our local businesses how to grow their business online and a shop small business campaign. The Town Council declined this and stated the Economic Development Committee would need to brainstorm on how to gain accessing to funding to support these initiatives. He explained therefore this meeting was called to brainstorm with the Miami Lakes Chamber.

Chairman Blanco stated that he would like to discuss the Economic Development Committee's budget amount to the Miami Lakes Chamber, transparency, and communication. He would like to open the meeting to discuss opportunities and ideas on collaboration and how to help the local small business community. The Town Council and staff will make the final decisions based on these recommendations.

Economic Development Committee will be having a meeting to discuss their budget on May 15th and due to the times and scarce funding, the committee prepares to take austerity measures.

If \$10,000 dollars will be given to the Chamber, the Economic Development Committee needs to make sure this money is well spent to help businesses recover and grow. Chairman Blanco would like to see the reporting and financials from the Miami Lakes Chamber to see how this allocation

of money is being spent. The money from the Town is taxpayer dollars and taxpayers do like to know where their money is going.

As far as transparency and communication, Chairman Blanco believes the Town, as a member of the chamber, should have access to the bylaws, minutes and agendas from the meetings, and financials. The Economic Development Committee would like to know what they can do to help the Chamber and the Chairman Blanco would like to become a Trustee member of the Chamber.

In the Chamber bylaws, Chairman Blanco stated there is a section about setting up committees. Chairman Blanco would like to know would it be possible to setup committees, such as COVID-19 recovery or Social Media Branding committee. This would expand the Chamber's capacity and create innovative opportunities.

Lastly, the Town funding of \$10,000 goes to the Chamber networking luncheons and the Business Expo. Due to COVID-19, these events will most likely not be happening for awhile. Chairman Blanco would like to know what the Chamber plans to do to replace these events like this to help businesses.

Councilmember Ruano asked what it means to be a Trustee member of the Chamber. Chairman Blanco explains it is when an individual or business pays a \$1,500 membership level and clarified he would be personally, or his business would become a Trustee member. Councilmember Ruano also asked if Chamber financials have ever been given to the Town. Marta Diaz from the Miami Lakes Chamber stated this has never been done. Mrs. Diaz stated what has been provided to the Town was information regarding their platinum membership benefits and what the money would be used for. Councilmember Ruano stated that if financials are requested from the Chamber then every Town committee will need to be requesting from every entity they are partnered with.

Councilman Alvarez asked Chairman Blanco by obtaining the Chamber financials what is the Economic Development Committee looking to accomplish once the financials from the Chamber are given. Chairman Blanco said in the Chamber bylaws this is allowed of members to ask for copies. The Town of Miami Lakes is a member.

Councilmember Rodriguez stated the collaboration of the Economic Development Committee and Miami Lakes Chamber is going to serve our business community best during these difficult and unprecedented times. He commended both for having this conversation.

Economic Development Committee member Vicente Rodriguez asked if the \$10,000 dollars for the funding of Miami Lakes Chamber would be coming out of the committee budget. Chairman Blanco stated that is ultimately up to the Economic Development Committee on the funding amount. Chairman Blanco stated \$3000 went to the Chamber membership and the rest went to the Chamber Expo.

Economic Development Committee member Jorge Alvarez stated he wants to make sure the Economic Development Committee is budgeting for good resources for Town businesses.

Economic Development Committee member Neil Robinson asked for clarification from Marta Diaz from the Chamber of what the EXPO is. Mrs. Diaz explained how the EXPO works, around 500 business participate in the EXPO. Mr. Robinson also asked what the membership levels are and how many members the Chamber has. Mrs. Diaz stated there are 200 businesses that belong to the Chamber and there is non-profit level, business member level, corporate level, and trustee level. Mr. Robinson asked for clarification from Chairman Blanco of what exactly he is looking for.

Chairman Blanco stated the Town is a member of the organization and according to the Chamber bylaws that members are entitled to receive copies of the financials.

Economic Development Committee member Romy Portuondo Remoir stated that she agreed with Chairman Blanco. She explained this is a healthy exercise done by any business, corporate setting, and public service organization that is using taxpayer dollars. She stated this coming fiscal year is different due to the times we are living in and we need to make sure this money is being used in the best way possible to help our businesses.

Economic Development Committee member John Tingle need to assess where the committee can allocate \$5,000 for the two campaigns.

Economic Development Committee member and Miami Lakes Chamber member Rudy Blanco stated there has been no need to provide financials to the Town and the chamber has always allocated the funds appropriately. He does agree there needs to be a collaboration between the Chamber and the Economic Development Committee.

Miami Lakes Chamber member Fred Senra stated the Chamber has always collaborated with the Town, but financials have never been requested has never been requested in the 19 years. The EXPO budget and revenue of this past year earned was sent to Economic Development Committee. The EXPO has always been great businesses. He explained the Chamber membership benefits of the Town. He stated there has been over 100 email blasts about what each Town business is doing during this crisis. He feels the Town has been provided all the documentation needed. He would like to continue the relationship to be harmonious.

Economic Development Committee member and Miami Lakes Chamber member Magaly Rubio stated she has been a 50-year resident of Miami Lakes and started Miami Lakes Business Association that is now the Miami Lakes Chamber of Commerce. She has been as the president of the Chamber for many years. She stated the Chamber has done everything could do for businesses for many years.

Miami Lakes Chamber member Marta Diaz stated the Chamber has dedicated time during this crisis to let everyone know via email of what businesses are open and what services are being offered.

Chairman Eddie Blanco apologized if his request upset the Chamber. He explained his intention was not to question the legacy or integrity of the Chamber. He stated he is a believer and supporter of the Chamber. He has known many the members for years and they are all competent individuals. He is just bringing to light that the Economic Development may not be able to provide \$7,000 to support an EXPO that will not be happening this year due to the COVID-19. If \$7,000 is given to the Chamber, where will it go if the EXPO does not happen.

Chairman Blanco asked for clarification from Chamber Member Fred Senra was he comfortable or not comfortable of opening the books of the Chamber. Mr. Senra stated he was not, and he did not think it was necessary. Mr Senra explained the EXPO has not been cancelled yet. Mr. Senra also clarified it would just be postponed and if it cannot be done the money would be returned to the Economic Development Committee. Furthermore, the money could also be used for another opportunity.

Miami Lakes Chamber Member Sarah Suarez mentioned the Chamber could offer webinars in lieu of the luncheons.

Miami Lakes Chamber member Marta Diaz stated the Shula's Hotel are working on guidelines with the state and county. There would be social distancing practices put into place at any event. Shula's Hotel will be in touch with her on the final decisions. The EXPO the Chamber is still planning to have it, but adjustments will be made.

Mayor Cid stated, after hearing everyone speak and Dennis J. Lyzniak, he would hate to lose business like the Miami Lakes Playhouse. He said that the movie theater company is now filing for Chapter 11. The small theaters do not have national credit behind them, and we cannot lose these small businesses.

Chairman Blanco commended the Town staff for organized webinars for business. Marta Diaz from the Chamber stated she could promote these webinars via Chamber email blast.

Chairman Blanco would like to create leadership committees that would be apart of the Chamber who meet more regularly like COVID-19 business task force and Social Branding Committee. Fred Senra stated that this is a possibility.

Miami Lakes Chamber Member Marta Diaz stated the Chamber is hoping to have an in-person luncheon in June.

Economic Development Committee member Vicente Rodriguez could do one EXPO outside and have another one done inside Shula's Hotel.

Councilmember Collazo is happy to hear with ideas discuss tonight. He said the Chamber task force is a great idea. It is important to help these businesses to adapt to the new normal. Online resources and making them centralized are key.

Councilmember Ruano stated just take it one step at a time and the focus needs to be on opening businesses. There needs to be guidelines that do not suffocate our businesses. There needs to be more education on COVID-19. She stated she is not crazy about the COVID task force, but she leaves that up to the digression of the Chamber and Economic Development Committee. She would like to see a campaign on COVID-19 education is needed because she feels we are safer than we believe.

Councilmember Alvarez again commended both entities for this meeting and encouraged for the Chamber to collaborate with other Chamber of Commerce throughout the Northwest Dade County area. The Chamber could learn new best practices.

Councilmember Rodriguez said this meeting gives the Council a lot to think about and he loves the ideas of webinars. Businesses may be opening but it is not going to go back to normal in the beginning.

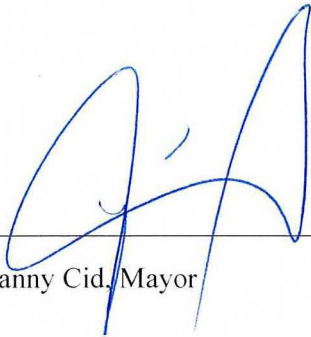
Mayor Cid commended Chairman Blanco for his determination, hard work, and innovative efforts. He stated the Chairman Blanco has been advocating for businesses to open. He stated change is always difficult, but we need to move with the times. The Chairman's heart is in the right place.

Vice Mayor Rodriguez said it is crucial that businesses get the help that they need and will be connecting with Eddie to go over the recommendations discussed tonight. He apologized he was working and could not fully participate in the meeting.

Chairman Eddie Blanco closed the meeting by stating the May 14th the Economic Development Committee will be discussing and deciding on the budget.

Adjournment:

This meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.



Manny Cid, Mayor

Attest:



Gina M. Inguanzo, Town Clerk