

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY  
OFFICE OF THE CHAIR  
HISPANIC AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD  
BOARD MEETING  
JANUARY 8, 2013

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Magali Abad  
Abbie B. Cuellar  
Lyse Cuellar-Vidal  
Christina F. Gomez-Pina  
Yvelice Gonzalez  
Edilfa E. Perez  
Vivian Rosado

EXCUSED:

Xiomara Casado  
Jorge N. Iglesias  
Felipe Villaraus

Board Chairwoman Lyse Cuellar-Vidal opened the meeting at 6:10 p.m. She welcomed and thanked the members for attending the meeting. She wished them and their families a Happy, healthy and productive 2013. The meeting was held at Cubaocho Art and Research Center 1465 SW 8 St., Miami, Florida.

She asked HAAB Members to review the Meeting Agenda and the Board Meeting Minutes of November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and to make a motion to approve them.

Board Member Magali Abad moved to approve the meeting agenda. Board Member Abbie Cuellar seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Board Member Edilfa Perez moved to approve the November 27, 2012 Board Meeting Minutes. Board Member Magali Abad seconded the motion and the motion passed.

COMMITTEES PLANS FOR YEAR 2013:

HAAB Chairwoman Lyse Cuellar-Vidal explained to HAAB Members that there are many issues affecting the citizenship of Miami-Dade County. The citizens need guidance and education on how to deal with those issues. We as the members of the HAAB need to concentrate and plan the 2013 projects around those issues. We need to host educational programs around those issues.

As you all know the Hispanic community has grown and it keeps on growing. The constituents that have reside in the United States for a while have their concerns and issues and those that just arrived have

even more concerns and issues. We need to give them advice and guidance on their most pressing issues. When we attend community meetings to feel the issues, we try to provide advice to those that approach us with their concerns. I know that our Director Maria Lazo does an excellent job with the constituents that contact the office and those that walk in to the office seeking guidance and advice. The Hispanic community in the United States, as the largest minority group is playing an important role in the electoral process. Take for example the reelection of Obama as the President of the United States to a second term that was decided by the Latino voters. The Hispanic community has grown in all aspects; politically, social and in their cultural influence in America. It has been a long journey full of sacrifices to realize the American Dream.

We have lots of issues out in the community, but one of the most important issues that we need to increase our involvement is the immigration issue. We need to join other groups to advocate for permanent status for the youngsters that are sons and daughters of undocumented parents, but they were born in the United States. We need to advocate for immigration reform.

It is not fair that our Hispanic youth that wants to succeed in life can't do it. Their immigration status doesn't allow their success. Their hands are tied, they can't go to college. They can't do an internship. They can't work. They have no motivation to go to school to get a High School Diploma and pursue higher education when they are facing so many obstacles. That explains the high percentage of Latino dropout at the high school level.

We need to advocate to the President and all the Congress in Washington for immigration reform.

Regarding our Signature Event "Hispanic Art Expressions Exhibit", I think it is an event that the board should keep hosting. It depicts the rich Hispanic culture and raises awareness of visual arts showcasing the many contributions Hispanics have made to enriched today's Miami-Dade County. The events provide an excellent platform for all the ethnic groups to interact and expose their issues and concerns.

HAAB Member Magali Abad asked staff to bring a copy of the HAAB Committees to the February Board Meeting to make sure that each HAAB Member is participating at the committee level.

HAAB Members sustained a discussion and concluded that the most pressing issues affecting the community now are:

- Immigration Status, adopting Immigration Reform
- The economy, high level of unemployment
- Foreclosures and families becoming homeless
- High incident of drugs among the youth. To name some Bath Salts and new ways of consuming Marijuana
- Violence and Guns in East Little Havana. The area around 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Ave from Flagler to 10<sup>th</sup> Street
- Domestic Violence

Board Member Magali Abad the violence in East Little Havana is out of control. The residents of the area are afraid to go out when it gets dark. The area houses a high percentage of undocumented citizens. They have no jobs and they assault and rob people. Around the area of the Jose Marti Park it is very dangerous; there has been killings and rapes.

Board Member Abbie Cuellar explained that she is very concerned with senior citizens losing their homes because they lack the funds to pay their taxes. Lots of senior citizens rely on their social security checks to live. The standard of living has gotten so high that many senior citizens can't afford to pay their property taxes. Even though they have their home paid, their income is not sufficient to pay the property taxes. After two years of not paying their property taxes, the property is sold for the amount of tax liability. Something needs to be done to avoid the situation. It is very sad that when you get to be a senior citizen and you can't work that you lose your home because you can't afford to pay your taxes.

Board Chairwoman Lyse Cuellar-Vidal asked HAAB Members to think of ways for the board to address the issues that could benefit the community.

She reminded HAAB Members that the board will be hosting its elections in February 12, 2013. The new Executive Committee will be selected. In March the board will hold its Annual Retreat to plan the activities that the board will carry out during year 2013.

Board Member Abbie Cuellar recommended that HAAB partner with the State Attorney's Office and other community organizations to host community forums, summits and workshops on the most pressing issues affecting the community. She would like to address the problem of foreclosures in Miami-Dade County and the tax delinquency and senior citizens losing their homes.

Board Chairwoman Lyse Cuellar-Vidal closed the meeting by wishing HAAB Members a Happy and healthy New Year.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Maria Lazo  
Recorder