

Community Relations Board

July 17, 2013

1. Welcome/Moment of Silence

Chair Dr. Walter Richardson: Thank you for coming. We have several items on our agenda. First, the action items from our last meeting have to be reviewed because we did not have the appropriate quorum. We apologize for this inconvenience. Let us have a moment of silence before we begin our meeting.

2. Roll Call

Richardson: We will proceed with non-action items, since 14 members are present, and the quorum is 15 members.

3. CRB Chair's Report

Richardson: This is the Chair's report. Most of our activities for the last two months have been associated with the Zimmerman trial. I was invited to take part in the Homeland Security Task Force, and to work with the community in Sanford. In particular, the Seminole County Police Department brought the pastors together to engage the community and deter any negative action that would result from the verdict of the trial. They put together a coalition of 40 pastors entrusted with serving as the community's advocates and ensuring that the community knew that they had a resource to take their concerns to the Mayor and the authorities. This group of pastors was able to bring some presence to the community and during the trial they were guaranteed seating in the courtroom. This group was known as the Sanford Pastors Connection (SPC). They were neutral and prayed for the Zimmerman family as well as the Martin family. They came to Miami on several occasions to see how we were preparing for the trial, and we worked closely together. As an outgrowth of this initiative, similar efforts have ensued in Orlando, Jacksonville and Broward County. I am relieved that our efforts were not in vain, as we have had no negative reaction to the verdict in the way of violence.

4. Approval of Agenda

Richardson: It appears that we now have a quorum, and a motion to set the agenda is in order.

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the Board approve today's (7/17) agenda. This motion was seconded by Dr. Larry Capp, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

5. Special Action Items

i. CRB Chair

Dr. Larry Capp: Good afternoon. For each office we will accept nominations from the floor.

For the office of Chair, two names have been submitted by the Nominating Committee: Dr. Richardson, and Reinaldo Valdes. All persons nominated have been contacted.

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the nominations for the Office of CRB Chair be closed. This motion was seconded by Mr. Edward Shohat, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Dr. Capp: Dr. Richardson has been re-elected as Chair of the CRB.

ii. CRB Vice Chair

Dr. Capp: The floor is open for nominations for the office of CRB Vice Chair. Mr. Kabani is declining the nomination of Vice Chair.

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the nominations for the Office of CRB Vice Chair be closed. This motion was seconded by Mr. Adam Tavakoly, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Dr. Capp: Pursuant to the election for the office of Vice Chair, there is a tie between Mr. Shohat and Mr. Valdes. We will now have a run-off between these two candidates.

Dr. Capp: Mr. Edward Shohat is the new Vice Chair. The vote was close: 10-9.

iii. CRB Secretary

Dr. Capp: The floor is open for nominations for the position of Secretary of the CRB. We have one nominee: Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz.

It was moved by Ms. Lovette McGill that the nominations for the Office of CRB Secretary be closed. This motion was seconded by Rev. Eddie Gervais, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Dr. Capp: Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz is hereby elected as Secretary of the CRB.

iv. Executive Committee

Dr. Capp: There are four positions for at-large membership of the Executive Committee. The floor is open for nominations for additional members of the Executive Committee.

Shohat: I nominate Mr. Valdes to the Executive Committee.

It was moved by Mr. Edward Shohat that the nominations for at-large membership of the Executive Committee be closed. This motion was seconded by Dr. Harold Vieux, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Richardson: Mr. Shohat is now the Vice Chair so his name should be crossed out of the list of Executive Committee at-large members.

Dr. Capp: Three persons were elected as at-large members of the Executive Committee: Mr. Valdes, Dr. Vieux, and Ms. Smith-Jackson. There is a tie between Mr. Fulton and Mr. Tavakoly.

Capp: The fourth and final member of the Executive Committee is Mr. Fulton.

6. Presentation by Renita Holmes, WAAIVE

Richardson: Ms. Holmes, we are ready for your presentation. You have 10 to 15 minutes.

Renita Holmes: I will reserve two minutes for the ladies of the community to speak. I am an organizer and facilitator in Miami-Dade County. I have been working with the County for 22 years. I was raised in public housing, created a non-profit organization, and hired people from my community. Right now in Miami-Dade we are in a state of emergency. I am here to report to you in regards to the status of African-American, inner-city mothers and children. I have been to 347 funerals of African-American children in the last 4 years. In the last 17 years, I have buried two sons and a godson. Our children are still dying. Our people are traumatized. The Social Services budget has decreased. No one talks about the grieving mothers. Some of the women with me here today have lost three children, some have lost five family members. Why is the County only buying back the small hand guns and not the guns that are shooting our babies? How can you contain pain? Hurt people hurt people. We need your help. We need these issues to be addressed. The County has a no kill zone for animals, but does not have one for humans.

Ms. Pat: Since moving to Overtown, I have witnessed five to six murders, and the last one to be killed was my nephew. I have watched kids die. I can't work anymore.

Pastor Jerry Miller of the Church of Christ: There are a lot of killings in our neighborhoods. Next to my house there is a vacant lot with grass that is as tall as a person. Drug addicts go there to hide, and I am afraid that one day one of them will be found dead. The city should do something about this.

Dynette McCoy: President of Broadmore Homeowners Association, 87th Street, and 32nd Ave. We have made several requests in the past, we have collected signatures from the community, and we have not gotten any response. We have trucks driving through our community. We need speed bumps.

Holmes: The Liberty City Mothers and Fathers Task Force against Violence requests to meet with you to express our concerns. Provide us with no kill zones in our community. I would like for us to get along. There needs to be a conflict resolution between Ms. Amy Carswell and myself. We have a right to participate in our government as citizens.

Richardson: I was not at the last meeting. At that meeting, the Board members were very specific about Ms. Holmes' presentation. We asked that the presentation be presented to the staff and to Dr. Capp before the meeting, in order to help her formulate her recommendations. We have had private meetings with Ms. Holmes, so that we could help her advance her cause. Before the meeting ensued, I met with staff to ensure that this meeting with Ms. Holmes was productive. The suggestion was that we help Ms. Holmes package her presentation properly. I don't know if this was in fact done, but with the exception of what was proffered at the end, I am not sure what she expects from us. I am open to suggestions regarding how to proceed with this agenda item.

Lovette McGill: Does the city not have a CRB? Commissioner Spence Jones would seem to be the appropriate person to deal with their concerns. Maybe we should have a separate meeting with Ms. Holmes and her group to direct them to the correct persons who can help them resolve their issues.

Richardson: Everything that you have suggested has already been done. We have asked Ms. Holmes to give us her suggestions, so that we could help her formulate them properly, and forward them to the appropriate authorities. We have been doing that for years.

Dr. Capp: A lot of Ms. Holmes' concerns are also our concerns. Through our Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee we could help her address these concerns.

Ahmed Kabani: What I have observed, is that there are issues, and they continue to grow. We should have a Task Force to deal with these issues and bring them to the County Commission and other appropriate authorities. Young people should not be dying, and as the CRB, we should feel pain about this situation.

Richardson: We have two suggestions: to have a Special Meeting or a Task Force to meet with Ms. Holmes and find out how to address her concerns.

Herman Martinez: At the last meeting we offered Ms. Holmes more time for her presentation, about 30 minutes.

Richardson: I will take total responsibility. I gave her a time-certain of 15 minutes for her presentation and recommendations, understanding that this would be followed by questions.

Harold Vieux: We should give her more time to voice her concerns, even though we may be aware of some of these concerns already.

Valdes: We have gone out to the community before. I agree that we should convene a Task Force and have an outreach meeting to listen to these issues that have been raised.

Tavakoly: At the last meeting, I made the motion to give Ms. Holmes 30 minutes for her presentation. Her main concerns are not being relayed to us. I would like to make a motion to create a committee to hear her concerns.

Richardson: Your motion is not in order at this time, because I would like to hear from the other Board members.

George Yap: Do we have enough people to go out into the community? Something is wrong because they are shooting young people. We need to investigate, but do we have the staff to do it?

Rev. Eddie Gervais: We should use the Task Force as a filtering process in order to save time. Let the Task Force meet with Ms. Holmes, and what is worthy will be brought to the full CRB. Who will be our ears and eyes, because the Board members probably do not have the time to do this.

Maritza Lopez: I agree that we should have some type of Task Force. I am a sexual assault advocate and we have a Sexual Assault Committee, but this committee has resources. We need people who are properly trained to do this work. The Task Force will need to include people who have the authority to investigate. Otherwise, it may be dangerous.

Dr. McGuire: Some of the members of the Board have gone out there before, and we are eager to do this. All we need are some parameters on how this work will be done, who will volunteer, when we will go out, and what we will bring back.

Marjorie York: We did go out as a Board to the African Heritage Community Center.

Richardson: There seems to be consensus that we should address the issues that were raised, and our first task should be to meet with Ms. Holmes to determine what the issues are. Amy will coordinate this effort.

The following members will serve on the Ad hoc Committee that will meet with Ms. Holmes at a time certain to determine the issues: Shohat, McGuire, Martinez, Kabani, Dames, Fulton, Valdes, Tavakoly, Yap, Vieux, Lopez, and Gervais would like to serve on this Task Force.

Lopez: The meeting should include the other families as well.

Richardson: Let's try to do this between now and our next meeting.

Priscilla Dames: There is some tension between Ms. Holmes and Ms. Carswell. I would like to work with Ms. Carswell to organize this meeting.

Richardson: In fact, Ms. Dames could you chair the Task Force?

7. Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee Report

Ms. Smith-Jackson and Mr. Shohat: You have in your materials the report of the Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee. The action plan of the committee was put into effect as much as possible under the difficult circumstances of the on-going Zimmerman trial. This report summarizes what has happened since we last met. The last item on the first page of the report, the community briefing at the North Dade Regional Library, was an exceptional event. By some estimates we had 250 to 300 participants. There were presentations by religious leaders, and the law enforcement community, and a legal briefing on the status of the trial and issues in the trial at that time. The participation of the Wilkie D. Fergusson Jr. Bar Association was much appreciated. As a Board we need to think of a more permanent place for the Wilkie Fergusson Bar Association and its members. They are all on the American Bar Association (ABA) Committee for Review of the Stand your Ground Laws. That committee will be holding hearings in the fall in South Florida, and the CRB is sure to be invited to make a presentation. We should be thinking of creating a legal atmosphere for change in the Stand your Ground laws. As a result of the Zimmerman trial, the application of self-defense laws is right at the forefront of the issues that need to be addressed.

The Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee worked for close to 10 months to prepare for the verdict in the Trayvon Martin case with the central purpose of partnering with various organizations to help ensure a non-violent reaction. So far, in spite of the verdict, we have gotten a non-violent reaction in our community.

Ms. Smith-Jackson: Over the last year, we have been working on the Trayvon Martin case, and it has been a complete pleasure working with Mr. Shohat, and watching him in action. I spoke with Carlos Harrison from the New York Times about the case.

Richardson: Congratulations Ms. Smith-Jackson and Mr. Shohat for your work. Mr. Shohat and Dr. Capp represented us last Sunday on Channel 4.

8. Fair Immigration Committee Report

Reinaldo Valdes: We had several attendees at the Fair Immigration Committee meeting. A coalition of organizations got together in Homestead to seek approval of an ID card for immigrants to use as a form of identification. These ID cards would be useful because people could use them to open bank accounts, be integrated into the economy and feel safer. For more information, please read our report. We are waiting to receive news on similar ID cards in other municipalities. We built a coalition to lobby Commissioner Gort of the City of Miami to adopt similar cards. We are also hoping to involve Commissioner Suarez and Mayor Regalado to lobby the County Commission.

We are requesting that the CRB convene a Fair Immigration Summit in September 2013 to bring immigrant and non-immigrant communities together to discuss the impact of current policies and practices in Miami-Dade and create a consensus on legislation and other remedies. Commissioner Moss sponsored a resolution on immigration reform last December, and an expanded version was later sponsored by Commissioner Zapata.

Martinez: We are very excited that the Homestead officials seem to agree with the issuance of ID cards. We think this would be positive for the community and would stop abuses.

Tavakoly: Is this only for illegal immigrants?

Valdez: It will serve many other purposes for other groups, such as the elderly, or veterans.

Richardson: I will entertain a motion for this action item.

It was moved by Mr. Adam Tavakoly that the CRB convene a Fair Immigration Summit in September 2013 to bring immigrant and non-immigrant communities together to discuss the impact of current policies and practices in Miami-Dade and create a consensus on legislation and other remedies. This motion was seconded by Mr. Edward Shohat, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Shohat: Will the Fair Immigration Committee convene this summit?

Richardson: I assume so.

9. Videotape of CRB Meeting with Community at North Dade Regional Library

Richardson: We were offered the opportunity to videotape our meeting with the community at the North Dade Regional Library. We seized this opportunity at a cost of \$189. We need to approve this expense.

It was moved by Ms. Lovette McGill that the CRB approve the expense of \$189, as payment for the videotaping of its meeting with the community at the North Dade Regional Library. This motion was seconded by Dr. Helen McGuire, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

10. Proposed CRB Special Meeting on Next Steps to Promote Non-Violence

Ronald Fulton: The tragedy of the death of Trayvon Martin and the public interest generated by the verdict have presented unique opportunities to engage our community in discussions about actions to address issues of bigotry, inequity and profiling that are pervasive community relations problems. The CRB can help to inspire the intergroup conversations and dialogue needed to inform, empower and protect our community going forward. It is proposed that the CRB convene a special meeting in the Board of County Commission Chambers in the next two or three weeks in order to provide information to the community about possible next steps. Preliminary conversations indicate that the following personalities may be available to participate:

- Congresswoman Frederica Wilson is interested in participating via video recording or a direct video link from Washington D.C. to describe newly-introduced federal End Racial Profiling Act;
- A Representative of the U.S. Justice Department/U.S Attorney's Office to provide information about the investigation of the killing of Trayvon Martin as a civil rights violation;
- State Senator Dwight Bullard Jr., is helping to lead efforts to modify/repeal Florida's "Stand Your Ground" law;
- State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle has also served on the Governor's Task Force reviewing "Stand Your Ground" and has made recommendations;
- The CRB CJLE Committee on current and upcoming activities to enhance public trust in the investigation of police-involved shootings and other killings and to enhance police/criminal justice community relations; and
- Ronald Fulton on a community dialogue on race, stereotyping and racial profiling.

Carswell: Congresswoman Frederica Wilson asked to have a meeting with the CRB, as soon as possible. She is willing to do a video-conference. Others on the list wish to share with the community possible solutions.

Richardson: Could this be our next meeting?

Carswell: Usually you don't have an August meeting, but you could have one this year. The only issue is the availability of the Commission Chambers. The commissioners will be meeting throughout August.

Shohat: It could be a meeting of the Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee, anywhere, and as many members of the Board who wish to do so could attend.

Dr.McGuire: It should be a meeting of the full Board.

Valdes: We had planned to hold today's (7/17) meeting in the Commission Chambers, but it did not work. Congresswoman Frederica Wilson's staff spoke with Ms. Carswell, and we planned a meeting for next week because she will be in town. She suggested that a video could be made.

Approximately 25,000 new jobs will be created at the Port of Miami because of the Panama Canal. The Port will double or triple over the next seven years. The Board should follow this very closely to ensure that those people most in need of jobs are considered. Perhaps these two issues could be discussed at the same time.

Tavakoly: It would be good for the entire Board to be involved and the meeting should be held in the Commission Chambers.

Fulton: It would be very important for the Department of Justice to participate.

McGill: Since this is time-sensitive, and it would be important for Congresswoman Frederica Wilson to participate, we need to make a special effort to accommodate her schedule.

Kabani: There are issues related to the outcome of the tragedy of the Trayvon Martin case. Since Miami-Dade reacted better than some other parts of the country, because of the way we prepared the community for the verdict, we need to prepare some action items to present at this meeting.

Dr. Capp: I commend Mr. Fulton for his proposal. South Florida remains the epicenter for this issue. The full Board should meet in August, and we should invite the elected representatives, including the commissioners, to participate. Commissioner Jordan has commended the CRB publicly. The entire community should have some input and we should look at all of the next steps.

Ruiz: I congratulate Mr. Fulton. This initiative summarizes what the main purpose of the CRB should be. I was going to propose that we could write to Congress urging the passage of the newly-introduced federal End Racial Profiling Act.

It was moved by Mr. Wilfredo Ruiz that the CRB write a letter to Congress urging the passage of the newly-introduced federal End Racial Profiling Act. This motion was seconded by Mr. Adam Tavakoly, and upon being put to a vote, passed by a unanimous vote of those CRB members present.

Richardson: It appears that there is consensus with regard to Mr. Fulton's proposal. Mr. Shohat and Mr. Ruiz will draft the letter to Congress.

11. Any Other Business

Dr. McGuire: When I got off the elevator today Channel 4 put me on the spot and asked me about the stand your ground laws.

Richardson: Only certain Board members are authorized to speak on behalf of the CRB. The Chair is the voice for the Board.

McGill: We are commemorating the 50th anniversary of the march on Washington. This will be an exciting day. Commissioner Monestime will be writing to Chairman Richardson to request the CRB's participation.

Smith-Jackson: The NAACP will have buses going to Washington.

York: The Miami-Beach Community Relations Board will be holding the Peace Poll event on 22nd, September, from 3-5 p.m., at the Botanical Gardens.

Mr. Anthony Williams (MDEAT): You are invited to the Caleb Center on July 23rd, from 6-8 p.m., to the Chief of Police Youth Summit, sponsored by the Teen Court and the Youth Action Committee.

Dames-Blake: In trying to move forward with Ms. Holmes, we should have a small committee meeting, not a town hall meeting.

12. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Community Relations Board, the meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

	MEMBERS	PRESENT	LATE	ABSENT
1	<i>Mario Artecona,</i>			x

2	Dr. Larry Capp	X		
3	Lyse Cuellar-Vidal			X
4	Priscilla Dames-Blake	X		
5	Valerie Lynn Davis-Bailey			X
6	Michell Dunaj Lucking	X		
7	Ronald Fulton	X		
8	Rev. Eddie Gervais	X		
9	Martha Gonzolez-Rovirosa			X
10	Ahmed Kabani	X		
11	Harlene Kennedy	X		
12	Maritza Lopez	X		
13	Herman Martinez	X		
14	Lovette McGill	X		
15	Dr. Helen Lawrence McGuire	X		
16	Dr. Walter Richardson	X		
17	Wilfredo Ruiz	X		
18	Brian Siegal			X
19	Rabbi Solomon Schiff			X
20	Edward Shohat	X		
21	Vickie M. Smith Jackson	X		
22	Farzana M. Tapia			X
23	Adam Tavakoly	X		

24	<i>Reinaldo Valdes</i>	x		
25	<i>Dr. Harold A. Vieux</i>	x		
26	<i>L. George Yap</i>	x		
27	<i>Marjorie York</i>	x		
28				