

**BLACK AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Minutes for January 10, 2007**  
**9:30 a.m.**  
**Stephen P. Clark Center**

*Board Members present: D.J. Fabien; Dannie McMillon; Priscilla B. Dames; Gerri Lazarre.*

*Excused Absences: Mr. Brian Person, Ms. Emma Sumpter*

*Unexcused absences: Ms. Suzan McDowell; Mr. Juvais Harrington*

*Staff: Ms. Retha Boone, Program Officer*

*Guests: Lissie Salazar (Legal Services of Greater Miami); Stanley Alexis (Roots & Culture, Inc.); Joseph Luis ((Galata, Inc. of Homestead); Jason Thompson (The Arbor Group/Homestead One Stop Career Center).*

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by the Interim Chair, Mr. D. J. Fabien. Following a silent meditation, Mr. Fabien asked that the agenda be approved. The agenda was approved as presented. Ms. Boone announced that the November 2006 minutes were not available, but that they would be available at the next meeting and sent to members.

Introductions of Guest(s): Ms. Boone requested that the guests introduce themselves, which was done.

**Board Membership Status and Appointments:**

Ms. Boone informed the Board that Dr. Sands had submitted a formal resignation for personal reasons. Consequently an interim chair will need to be appointed. She updated the Board by informing them that she had sent out information requesting applications from interested community members to join the board and had received at least one thus far. All respondents will be contacted to attend the next meeting. Ms. Boone informed members that Commissioners Moss and Heyman have been diligent in monitoring all boards, so we must make special effort to make sure our board is up to par. She then invited the BAAB members to attend the Dr. MLK observance/program this coming Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Boone also informed the board that the Office of Community Relations will be interviewing for Ms. Desire-Lanier's position—a Community Relations Assistant.

**Program Officers' Report:**

*Ms. Lissie Salazar* was introduced and gave an overview of her project, which is a free law firm which provides assistance in "Poverty Law" or whether someone who's been denied government assistance. She is new on board for the Special Education Advocacy Program. She has experienced some difficulty in having children diagnosed, which is the "gateway into Special Education Programs." Several comments were made by BAAB members McMillon and Dames regarding the status of the Special Education program in Miami-Dade County and the lack of understanding and resources available to parents and students. A suggestion was made to hold another "Village Dialogue" on education. Ms. Salazar agreed to assist with this project, which would be held within the next two months. Ms. Dames and Ms. McMillon agreed to co-chair these Dialogues. It also works well with our Respect Life! Project and we will work toward developing collaborative partnerships, which will include this project.

(more)

### **Program Officers' Report (con'td)**

An overview of the Respect Life! project was given and the idea of a "Diversion Center" was discussed. The Arbor Group, Legal Services and Galata, Inc. are thought to be excellent candidates to collaborate with for the Respect Life! Campaign.

Our next guest, *Mr. Jason Thompson* from the Arbor Group gave an overview of the project. The Arbor project does FCAT tutoring, GED preparation, College Prep, paid internships, mentoring, daycare students, case management and other services to support students ages 16-21 in becoming successful. They receive funding from The Children's Trust. The Arbor Group was also invited to become a collaborative partner with the Respect Life! project.

Next, *Mr. Joseph Louis* from the Galata, Inc. Program of Homestead was introduced by Mr. Fabien. The project is based in the Florida City/Homestead area and is designed to focus on providing services to youth and the elderly. They recently received funding for the program and are in the process of renovating a building that will be used to house the project. According to Mr. Louis, Galata, Inc. and the Black Affairs Advisory Board would benefit tremendously by collaborating on establishing a "Diversion Center" in the South Dade area and will be working to do so in the near future. This would be an excellent place for the center and for the "Respect Life! program and a direct feed-in for the School Truancy Hotline.

The Board further discussed the possibility of locating the Diversion Center in Florida City, in which they currently obtained a building. As a result, Galata, Inc., the Arbor Group and the BAAB will explore the possibility of establishing the Center as a Pilot Program. Funding and assistance will be requested from the Dade Schools Board and The Children's Trust. A partnership agreement will be drawn up within the next thirty days. A subcommittee comprised of Ms. Priscilla Dames, Ms. Dannie McMillon and Gene Hitchens was established to work on this project.

Ms. Boone also announced that Dade County Public Schools would be holding a Job Fair for the Construction Industry this upcoming Saturday and asked attendees to spread the word to interested adults and young people. They will provide 240 hours, tuition and books for training once applicants complete the application/entrance aspect.

### **Board Membership Status and Appointments:**

A brief discussion was held on the meeting times. It was suggested that the BAAB change the by-laws to allow for the monthly meeting to begin at 10 a.m. to 12 noon allowing for traffic and other issues affecting the meeting times. The by-laws would have to be changed. Some discussion was held on membership status. The Board was again informed that Dr. Sands had submitted a formal resignation and that several members would be notified prior to the end of February that their status is being reviewed based on attendance. Those members include Mrs. Emma Sumpter, who is working full time and is unable to make the meetings; Mr. Juvais Harrington, and Ms. Suzan McDowell.

### **Community Task Force Matrix.**

Ms. Boone asked that the establishment of the Diversion Center be added to the Matrix and if there are other issues they should be provided.

**School Truancy Hotline:**

Ms. Boone informed members that she has not spoken with Chief Darling or Assistant Chief Martin, but that she had been informed that there was some restructuring going on with the Truancy Hotline. An update will be provided at the next meeting. The Diversion Center will become a focus point for the Truancy Hotline as students will be recommend to attend the Diversion Center instead of Outdoor Suspension.

**Violence in the Black Community:**

A fifth Village Dialogue featuring students instead of just elected/community officials is planned to cover this topic. We are in need of Board members to coordinate this project.

**Black Profile:**

Dr. Boswell has completed the tables and has requested that we provide him with our comments and changes. We are looking at a publication date of May 2007.

**Toy Guns:**

Ms. Boone spoke with Ms. Sullivan in Commissioner Jordan's office and she is still working on the issue.

**Old Business:**

An update on the website and its contents was discussed. Mr. Oscar Braynon will provide assistance for placing events or information on the website.

**Committee Reports:**

***Black Heritage Planning:*** Mr. Stanley Alexis updated the BAAB on the *Roots and Culture Festival* which is scheduled for the Memorial Day weekend this year. He invited the Board and guests to participate in this event. He invited the Board to have an informational booth at the festival. Ms. Boone also presented a Countywide Calendar of Cultural Events, which would be put on our website as well. Several other events related to Black History Month were discussed including the kickoff on Feb.1<sup>st</sup> with the Historical Museum of Southern Florida, etc. The group will also be participating in a theatrical event on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

***Education:*** Ms. McMillon reported that the first two Village Dialogues were successful and that she will be working diligently to do two more within the next three months. She also reported on the revised Attendance Boundary Committee, which is in the process of revamping the school attendance requirements and sending out information to parents and the general community. She expressed some concern for the schools which might be impacted by these recommendations and advised members to pay close attention to the situation. Ms. Dames commented that she had been contacted regarding this same issue by a group that was interested in utilizing her expertise and that she is concerned about the fact that Black parents were unaware of the impact they could have on the decisions being made on behalf of their children. She is encouraging the Education Committee to make parents aware of their influence through Village Dialogues and other means of communication. Ms. McMillon stated that she is on the education committee for the NAACP and that they have agreed to partner with the BAAB on this and several other forums. She also announced that the NAACP has a new president, Bishop Victor Curry and that she has invited him to attend one of our meetings.

***Judicial/Civil Rights: No report***

**Health Care: No report**

Ms. Ledan was unable to attend the meeting.

**Housing: No report**

Ms. Boone reported that Mrs. Sumpter is currently working and that it is difficult for her to attend meetings. This situation needs to be addressed so that they Board can have a quorum.

**Crisis Intervention/Respect Life**

Ms. Dames reported that the department she works for with the Dade County Public Schools has obtained a grant to work with school violence and that the BAAB should work with them since they have more resources including the Schools Police. She indicated that her focus now is on Crisis Intervention/the Respect Life! Campaign, School Truancy and the Hotline. Ms. Dames currently serves forty-one (41) schools on the South end; consequently the meeting with Ms. Neyda Navarro who is the Regional Superintendent for the South was to the benefit of the BAAB. As a result, Ms. Navarro is extremely interested in the Diversion Center as well as the work being done with the BAAB and its collaborative partners with the Respect Life! Campaign. She also announced that a workshop/Village Dialogue is planned for March 16<sup>th</sup> on the south end and that she would like for BAAB members to attend. She would also like to target the Goulds community for a forum. Another issue is the meetings being held by the Superintendent at various schools. Ms. Lazarre and Ms. McMillon agreed to attend the meeting on Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> at Miami Edison.

**Economic Development:**

***No report.***

**Budget and Finance:**

Ms. Lazarre will be heading up our Budget and Finance Committee and plans to meet with Ms. Boone next week.

**New Business:** Ms Boone announced that Ringling Bros Barnum and Bailey has agreed to work with us again after reconsidering our proposal. They will be giving a scholarship at the Pillars Banquet. RBBB will be forwarding vouchers for the circus this week and they will be given to BAAB and Black Heritage Committee members. She also announced that she is chairing the City of Miami Gardens MLK celebration.

Ms. Boone requested that members fill out the survey in order to comply with the Active Strategy Enterprise (A.S.E.) requirements prior to leaving.

With all business being concluded, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Recorded by: Retha S. Boone, Program Officer