

Memorandum



Date: July 21, 2009

Agenda Item No.
12(B)2

To: Honorable Dennis C. Moss and Members,
Board of County Commissioners

From: George M. Burgess
County Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Burgess", written over the printed name of George M. Burgess.

Subject: Employee Wellness Center in the Stephen P. Clark Center

At its June 9, 2009 meeting, the Government Operations Committee held a discussion regarding the scheduled relocation of an underutilized satellite office of the Elections Department from an approximately 800-square foot office suite in the ground floor atrium of the Stephen P. Clark Center (SPCC) to an office suite on the sixth floor of the SPCC office tower. The relocation is necessary in order to accommodate a planned expansion of the Employee Wellness Center and will be completed in July in order to avoid a service disruption to the Elections Department.

Recognizing the benefit of worksite wellness, the County opened the Employee Wellness Center in November 2006 operated by DAC Management, Inc. The facility currently occupies 4,347 square feet and is open from 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Approximately 1,100 County employees are currently members. Following a competitive process that yielded proposals from nationally recognized corporate wellness providers, TFC Partners, Inc. d/b/a New Fitness Concepts (New Fitness) assumed management on January 5, 2009.

The Center provides basic fitness center services – including the use of free weights and several styles of mechanical and electronic equipment for cardiovascular and strength exercise – along with locker rooms, showers, and a management office. In addition to its managerial and administrative duties, NFC provides instruction in the use of equipment, floor supervision and personal training services. Additionally, NFC is routinely partnering with AvMed to participate in employee events, e.g. distribution of health-related literature to members, health risk assessments and screenings.

We have always planned to expand the Center to include an area that would allow for the provision of programmed fitness activities (e.g. aerobics, mat pilates, yoga, Zumba, spinning, etc.) and wellness classes (e.g. nutrition and diet, smoking cessation, weight loss, diabetes management, etc.). Due to the recent budget challenges, we have scaled back the original planned expansion of the wellness center to the use of the current Elections space to accommodate classes.

The Election Department's Voter Information Center (VIC) opened in 2004 in the lobby of the SPCC following the department's move to Doral. Activities include the acceptance and processing of new voter registrations, name and address changes, changes to party affiliation, and signature updates. Other services include the distribution of district maps, the acceptance of candidate documents, financial disclosure and outside employment forms as well as notary services and requests for election statistics and other candidate requests. In addition, voters can request and receive an absentee ballot, and are given the opportunity to vote that ballot and return it in minutes. An average of 475 voters per month or only 3 voters per hour visit the office. While it serves a valuable purpose and warrants a presence in the SPCC, its current location is a gross underutilization of prime real estate.

In addition to the services provided by the Elections Department and the Wellness Center, the lobby of the SPCC also houses The Art Gallery, a public exhibition space supported by the Department of Cultural Affairs, which displays works of local artists on a rotating basis, drawing upon the winners and finalists of Cultural Affairs' annual visual and media artists fellowships program. The Art Gallery has operated in its

current location for nearly 20 years. Conversations between the Directors of the Department of Cultural Affairs and the General Services Administration (GSA) have determined that relocating the VIC to the space in the lobby currently occupied by The Art Gallery accommodates the intent to position the VIC in a more visible and central location. At the same time, it would be ideal if we could continue the role of The Art Gallery in helping advance the careers of hundreds of emerging local artists, many of whom have gone on to help establish Miami-Dade County as one of the most dynamic, international centers for the visual arts. To this end, Cultural Affairs is working with GSA on exciting alternatives for the lobby that can provide new kinds of exhibition opportunities to Miami-Dade-based artists. I can assure you that we are committed to pursuing this wider-reaching alternative that can expand the presence of local artists in our lobby and at the same time, energize our lobby to make it more inviting for visitors and employees. Cultural Affairs will be issuing a call for artists' proposals this summer with the objective of developing a project that utilizes new multi-media technology and provides artists with the challenge of using the entire lobby as a canvas. This new, artist-designed lobby feature will be funded through existing Art in Public Places program revenue, by reallocating funds currently included in the capital budget for GSA's future West Lot parking garage. In addition to enabling us to continue to serve and showcase our talented local artists, this is sure to liven up the lobby.

The VIC relocation is a budgeted expense in the FY2008-09 Operating Budget and is limited to a box move that will cost no more than \$5,000. An additional \$20,000 is included in this year's operating budget to ready the space for the classes (soundproofing, new flooring, shelving and equipment), which equates to an investment of merely \$0.70 bi-weekly per current member. Please note that the department has submitted a plan for FY2009-10 that contemplates an increased membership fee in order to eliminate all County support for the Center, with or without the expansion. Being able to offer classes at the same time that the proposed fee increase goes into effect will provide employees with an enhancement in exchange for the increased fee. Because we are sensitive to the financial strains experienced by our employees, fees will always be kept below market rates but will be at a level necessary to ensure members cover the costs associated with operating the center.

According to the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA), well-designed and well-equipped programs lead to real cost savings, reduced absenteeism (especially from illness or injury), decreased visits to doctors and emergency rooms, fewer hospital admissions and shorter stays, reduced long-term disability costs, and reduced numbers of employees with high health risk factors (e.g. obesity, smoking, etc.). Controlling these costs is especially important now that the County is self-insured. In addition, good programs and facilities lead to improved employee morale, less job turnover, and stronger organizational commitment.

These are extraordinarily difficult times and we need to ensure that all funding is spent wisely. Rather than scaling back or eliminating important services, this is exactly the time for us to step up to the plate and demonstrate our commitment to the health and well-being of our employees, especially when there will be no costs borne by our taxpayers.

c: Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
Denis Morales, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
County Executive Office Staff
Department Directors
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor