

**Date:** April 6, 2010

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

Agenda Item No. 9(A)(2)

**From:** George M. Burgess  
County Manager

**Subject:** Recommendation of Tourist Development Council Board Appointments

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board approve the appointment of the following five (5) nominees to the Tourist Development Council: George M. Cozonis, Gene Prescott, Stuart L. Blumberg, William R. Perry, III and Olga M. Ramudo.

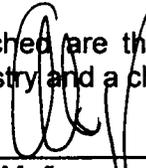
## BACKGROUND

On April 4, 1978, the Board of County Commissioners adopted Ordinance No. 78-28 pursuant to State Statute No. 125.0104, establishing the Tourist Development Council (TDC). The Ordinance and Statute specify that the TDC is a nine (9) member volunteer board that includes: a County Commissioner, who is appointed by the chair of the governing Board of the County; two (2) elected municipal officials, at least one of whom must be from the most populous municipality in the County; three (3) owners or operators of motels, hotels, or other tourist accommodations in the County and subject to the tourist development tax; and three (3) persons involved in the tourist industry and have verifiably demonstrated interest in the tourist development of Miami-Dade County but who are not owners or operators of motels, hotels, or other tourist accommodations in the County and are subject to the tourist development tax.

Further, all members of the Council must be electors of the County and shall serve staggered terms of four years as determined in the appointing resolution. As a result of five (5) anticipated vacancies on the TDC Board due to the expiration of current terms, a public nomination process was implemented to fill these positions. These positions require: two (2) owners/operators of hotels or other tourist accommodations in the county and subject to the tourist development tax; and three (3) persons that are involved in the tourist industry and have a demonstrated interest in tourist development, but are not owners or operators of motels, hotels, or other tourist accommodations in the County subject to the tourist development tax.

In response to the advertisement for nominations, credentials of eligible candidates for the TDC were submitted and reviewed by the Tourist Development Council Nominating Committee. Present at the meeting were: Commissioner José "Pépe" Diaz, Chairperson, Tourist Development Council and William Talbert, President & CEO, Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau. Based on a thorough review of qualifications, the Tourist Development Council Nominating Committee unanimously voted to recommend these candidates to the Board of County Commissioners to fill these vacancies on the TDC Board: George M. Cozonis, Gene Prescott, Stuart L. Blumberg, William R. Perry, III and Olga M. Ramudo. On February 9, 2010, the Tourist Development Council met and endorsed this recommendation.

Attached are the biographies summarizing the extensive experience of these nominees in the tourism industry and a chart specifically identifying their professional or civic affiliations and their designated terms.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Alex Muñoz  
Assistant County Manager



# MEMORANDUM

(Revised)

**TO:** Honorable Chairman Dennis C. Moss  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**DATE:** April 6, 2010

**FROM:** R. A. Cuevas, Jr.  
County Attorney

**SUBJECT:** Agenda Item No. 9(A)(2)

Please note any items checked.

- "3-Day Rule" for committees applicable if raised
- 6 weeks required between first reading and public hearing
- 4 weeks notification to municipal officials required prior to public hearing
- Decreases revenues or increases expenditures without balancing budget
- Budget required
- Statement of fiscal impact required
- Ordinance creating a new board requires detailed County Manager's report for public hearing
- No committee review
- Applicable legislation requires more than a majority vote (i.e., 2/3's \_\_\_\_, 3/5's \_\_\_\_, unanimous \_\_\_\_ ) to approve
- Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required

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Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Mayor  
Veto \_\_\_\_\_  
Override \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Item No. 9(A) (2)  
4-6-10

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION APPROVING THE RE-  
APPOINTMENT OF THREE (3) MEMBERS AND  
THE APPOINTMENT OF TWO (2) MEMBERS  
TO THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

**WHEREAS**, On April 4, 1978, the Board of County Commissioners adopted Ordinance No. 78-28, establishing the Tourist Development Council; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ordinance directs that each member shall be appointed by resolution of the Board of County Commissioners; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ordinance specifies that the Tourist Development Council shall be composed of 9 members, including a County Commissioner, who is appointed by the chair of the governing Board of the County, two (2) elected municipal officials, three (3) owners or operators of motels, hotels, or other tourist accommodations in the county and subject to the tourist development tax and three (3) persons involved in the tourist industry but who are not owners or operators of motels, hotels or other tourist accommodations in the County subject to the tourist development tax; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ordinance specifies that all members of the Council must be electors of the County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ordinance specifies that Council members shall serve staggered terms of four years as determined in the appointing resolution; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ordinance specifies that any member of the Council who ceases to be a qualified elector of Dade County shall immediately forfeit his or her office and the County Commission shall fill the vacancy created thereby by appointment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Ordinance specifies that there shall be at least one elected municipal official from the most populous municipality in the county and the County Commission shall fill this seat thereby by appointment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Tourist Development Council board recommends that Stuart Blumberg, William Perry, III and Olga Ramudo be reappointed to the Council; and

**WHEREAS**, the Tourist Development Council board recommends that George M. Cozonis and Gene Prescott be appointed to the Council,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA**, that the Board approves the re-appointment of three (3) members and the appointment of two (2) members to the Tourist Development Council as follows:

<u>NAME/AFFILIATION</u>	<u>TERM (Month/Year)</u>
George M. Cozonis Owner/Operators of Hotels or other Tourist Accommodations	03/10 – 03/12
Gene Prescott Owner/Operators of Hotels or other Tourist Accommodations	03/10 – 03/14
Stuart Blumberg Involved in the Tourist Industry	03/10 – 03/14
William Perry, III Involved in the Tourist Industry	03/10 – 03/14
Olga Ramudo Involved in the Tourist Industry	03/10 – 03/12

The foregoing resolution was offered by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_,  
who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_  
and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

- |                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Dennis C. Moss, Chairman        |                    |
| Jose "Pepe" Diaz, Vice-Chairman |                    |
| Bruno A. Barreiro               | Audrey M. Edmonson |
| Carlos A. Gimenez               | Sally A. Heyman    |
| Barbara J. Jordan               | Joe A. Martinez    |
| Dorin D. Rolle                  | Natacha Seijas     |
| Katy Sorenson                   | Rebeca Sosa        |
| Sen. Javier D. Souto            |                    |

The Chairperson thereupon declared the resolution duly passed and adopted this  
6<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2010. This resolution shall become effective ten (10) days after the date of  
its adoption unless vetoed by Mayor, and if vetoed, shall become effective only upon an  
override by this Board.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY FLORIDA  
BY ITS BOARD OF  
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
  
HARVEY RUVIN, CLERK

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Clerk

Approved by County Attorney as  
to form and legal sufficiency. 

Stephen Stieglitz



FY 2009-2010 Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council

TDC Board Members:

MEMBERS	AFFILIATION	TITLE	Term
<b>Elected Municipal Officials</b>			
Mayor Matti Herrera Bower	City of Miami Beach	Mayor	01/08 – 11/10
TBD	City of Miami	Commissioner	02/10 – 12/12
<b>Owners/Operators of Hotels or other Tourist Accommodations</b>			
Rex R. Oleson	Redland Hotel	President/CEO	07/09 - 11/10
George M. Cozonis*	W Hotel	General Manager	03/10 – 03/12
Gene Prescott*	Biltmore Coral Gables	President	03/10 – 03/14
<b>Involved in Tourist Industry</b>			
Stuart L. Blumberg*	Tourism Educator / Consultant	Educator / Consultant	03/10 – 03/14
William Perry*	World Wide Concessions	Partner/Owner	03/10 – 03/14
Olga Ramudo*	Express Travel of Miami, Inc.	CEO / President	03/10 – 03/12
<b>Chairperson</b>			
Commissioner José "Pepe" Diaz	Miami-Dade County Commissioner	Vice Chairman	01/09 - 01/11

Recommended Candidates\*

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## **GEORGE M. COZONIS**

**Nine Island Avenue, 1503  
Miami Beach, FL 33139**

**(305) 467-1464  
gcozonis@hotmail.com**

### **EMPLOYMENT HISTORY**

<b>W South Beach General Manager – August 2009 until present</b>	<b>Miami Beach, Florida</b>
<b>W Retreat &amp; Spa Vieques Island General Manager, Pre-opening, Task Force – February 2009 until August 2009</b>	<b>Puerto Rico</b>
<b>The Atlantic Resort &amp; Spa General Manager – August 2008 until January 2009</b>	<b>Fort Lauderdale, Florida</b>
<b>Sonesta Bayfront Hotel Coconut Grove Vice President &amp; General Manager – April 2004 until August 2008</b>	<b>Miami, Florida</b>
<b>Omni Houston General Manager – 2001 to 2004</b>	<b>Houston, Texas</b>
<b>Omni Colonnade General Manager – 1994 to 2001</b>	<b>Miami - Coral Gables, Florida</b>
<b>Omni at Independence Park General Manager - 1993</b>	<b>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</b>
<b>Omni Park Central Resident Manager – 1992 to 1993</b>	<b>New York, New York</b>
<b>Regional Controller – 1989 to 1992</b>	
<b>Accounting Manager/ Budget Manager – 1986 to 1989</b>	
<b>Front Desk Manager – 1985 to 1986</b>	
<b>Omni Parker House Assistant Front Office Manager - 1985</b>	<b>Boston, Massachusetts</b>
<b>Assistant Executive Housekeeper and Laundry Manager- 1984 to 1985</b>	
<b>Management Trainee – 1983 to 1984</b>	

# GEORGE M. COZONIS

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## EDUCATION

### **CORNELL UNIVERSITY - 1993**

**Ithaca, New York**

- General Managers' Program.

### **OMNI HOTELS**

**Durham, New Hampshire**

- Fast Track Management Development Program

### **NEW ENGLAND CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION - 1989**

**Durham, New Hampshire**

- Stradex International Markstat Seminar

### **UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE - 1983**

**Durham, New Hampshire**

- Bachelor of Science in Hotel Administration, Cum Laude; highest grade point average in graduating class.
- Eta Sigma Delta, Hotel Administration National Honor Society; Chapter President.

## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

### **Present**

- Chair, Visitor Industry Council
- Board of Directors, Greater Miami Conventions and Visitors Bureau
- Executive Committee, Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau

### **Recent**

- Appointed, in October 2007, by City of Miami Commissioner Mark Sarnoff, to serve on the Coconut Grove Business Improvement Committee.
- Appointed, in 2006, by the Miami Dade County Board of Commissioners to serve on the Tourism Development Council (TDC) until 2011. The TDC appropriates grants, funded by hotel occupancy taxes, to special events. It is comprised of one County Commissioner, one City of Miami Commissioner, the Mayor of Miami Beach, the President and CEO of the Greater Miami Conventions and Visitors Bureau, the President and CEO of the Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association and five business leaders.
- Served for nearly ten years on the Board of Directors of the Greater Miami & the Beaches Hotel Association, including on its Executive Committee in 1999 and 2000.
- Spearheaded and coordinated annual Coconut Grove summer marketing campaign, funded by hotels and public monies.
- Served on the Board of Directors of the Visitor Industry Council (VIC), since 1995, with the exceptions of 2001-2004. The VIC is an organization that raises funds for and awards scholarships to individuals of African descent for studies in hotel and restaurant management.
- Board of Directors of the Coconut Grove Chamber of Commerce.
- Fort Lauderdale Beach Business Improvement District
- Serving a fourth term on the Board of Directors of Nine Island Avenue Condominium Association. Has served as Secretary, Treasurer and is currently Vice President.

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**COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP POSITIONS (CONTINUED)**

**Past**

- Board of Directors, Hotel & Motel Association of Greater Houston
- Board of Directors, Florida Hotel & Motel Association
- Board of Directors, Coral Gables Community Foundation
- Rotary Club of Coral Gables
- Coral Gables Cultural Affairs Council
- Vice-Chair, Board of Directors, Coral Gables International Festival of Craft Arts
- Guest Lecturer, New York University
- Guest Lecturer, Conrad Hilton School of Hotel Management, University of Houston
- Guest Lecturer, Florida International University School of Hospitality Management
- Guest Lecturer, Miami Dade College School of Tourism

**INTERSESTS**

Cooking, photography, cycling, swimming, hiking, fitness, reading, fine arts, history, current affairs.

**LANGUAGES**

Fluent in English, French, Greek; conversational Spanish.

## **T. GENE PRESCOTT**

### **CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AND CEO *SEAWAY HOTELS CORPORATION***

T. Gene Prescott is principal shareholder of Seaway Hotels Corporation. Prescott grew up on an Idaho cattle ranch and graduated from the University of Idaho. He holds a M.S. Degree from Carnegie-Mellon University, is a Certified Public Accountant (Touche-Ross, Cleveland) and was a management consultant in the United States and in Italy for Olivetti. Mr. Prescott served as an officer and director at a number of publicly-owned companies before striking off on his own by purchasing interests in a variety of business ventures.

Mr. Prescott purchased the Sheraton Sand Key Resort, a 390 room beachfront property in Clearwater, Florida in 1980 and became a principal investor in the Biltmore Hotel, a 275 room destination resort in Coral Gables, Florida in 1992. In addition to these prestigious hotel properties,, Mr. Prescott's portfolio holdings include two public refrigerated warehouses in New Jersey and a wholesale travel agency in Chicago. The hotels are the largest revenue generators among his business interests, and accordingly, receive Mr. Prescott's primary attention. His corporate offices are at the Biltmore Hotel where he oversees the day-to-day operations of the Hotel and its award-winning golf course. In 1992, Mr. Prescott and his partners bought the Biltmore Hotel out of bankruptcy and have returned it to its original grandeur. In large part through Mr. Prescott's efforts, the Biltmore Hotel, originally built in 1926, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1996 and has become a social, civic and political center in south Florida. The Biltmore Hotel employs over 650 direct employees and has an economic impact of over \$100 million in the community. The Sheraton Sand Key Resort has more than 350 direct employees with an estimated economic impact of more than \$75 million.

As part of the Biltmore Hotel operations, Mr. Prescott has ultimate responsibility over all culinary activities including four restaurants, among them the nationally acclaimed, Palme d'Or Restaurant which recently received Zagat's 2010 rating as the best restaurant in south Florida for food, décor and service. The Sheraton Sand Key Resort property also operates four restaurant outlets.

In October 2009, he concluded a two-year term as the Chairman of the Greater Miami Conventions and Visitors Bureau. Tourism is south Florida's number one industry. The GMCVB, the community tourism promotion agency, has a membership of over 1,100, that represent a broad range of tourism related activities. His term as Chairman of the Board coincided with the most difficult economic period for the tourism industry in recent times. Mr. Prescott and the GMCVB staff worked on developing creative solutions and increasing the cooperation of public and private partners. He remains on the Board of the GMCVB in the capacity as immediate past-chair which brings his total to eight years serving on that

Board. He is considered an expert on the tourism industry and is frequently quoted in press articles and trade publications.

Mr. Prescott is active in many aspects of the community. His Board memberships include:

- Immediate past Chairman of the Greater Miami Conventions and Visitors Bureau
- Vice Chairman of Florida International University Foundation
- Member of the Board of Miami Children's Hospital
- Member of Orange Bowl Committee
- Former director, Eastern National Bank
- Founding director, Bank of Coral Gables

He also served on the Miami Dade Expressway Authority for 10 years, 6 of them as Treasurer.

Seaway Hotels Corporation and its affiliates own and manage – *The Biltmore Hotel* in Coral Gables, FL, the company's flagship, National Historic Landmark resort; the *Sheraton Sand Key Resort* in Clearwater Beach, FL, Seaway's longest held property, recipient of numerous Sheraton awards of excellence; and the all-suite *Alexander Hotel* on famed Miami Beach.

He resides in Coral Gables, Florida and has three adult children.

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**AZTEC RESORT**

Miami Beach, Florida

**General Manager**

- . Managed all operations of 435-room resort property

Prior to 1974

**Significant Career Highlights:**

- . Marketing Director: Large chain of Florida based men's retail clothing properties.
- . Executive Vice-President: Hilton Plaza Hotel-472 room property on Miami Beach
- . Consultant: Hotel/Tourism properties
- . Assistant Manager: Miami Beach Convention Center
- . P.R Director: Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce

**EDUCATION:****UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA**

Gainesville, Florida

- . Bachelor of Science
- . Major: Political Science

**AFFILIATIONS/MEMBERSHIPSPROGRAMS**

- Partnering with Best Buddies to provide career opportunity  
For challenged young people- 30 placed to date.
- Partnering with Habitat for Humanity Greater Miami to form  
A Hotel Division providing furnishings for homes
- Chairman: Host Committee, MPI Convention-2005
- . Chairman: ASTA World Congress Host Committee-2003
- . Founding Member-Miami-Dade Sports Commission-(2003-)  
Vice-Chairman (2003-2005)
- . Member; Florida Hotel & Motel Assn Execs Committee
- . Miami -Dade Mayors Marketing Council (1998-2003)
- . Visitor Industry Task Force-One Community (1998-2000)
- . Board of Directors, Performing Arts Center Trust  
(1991-2007)
- . Chairman: Management Committee-PACT (1997-2000)
- . Creator: Voluntary Educational Service Training Trust  
VESTT: Trained over 10,000 hotel employees in  
Attitude and Customer service.
- . Chairman: Community Awareness Service Training-  
CAST-Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce
- . Chairman: Airport Customer Service Training Committee
- . Member: Taxi Driver Incentive Board
- . Co-Chairman: Miami Dade Limousine/Taxi Committee(1998-2009)
- . Board of Directors, Academy of Tourism (1991-)  
Member-Tourist Development Council-(2006-)
- . Founder: Academy of Travel & Tourism (1987)
- . Academy of Tourism "Champion" (1999-)
- . Chairman Student Conference (1994-95-96)

- . Chairman: City of Miami Beach- Collins Avenue Reconstruction Project (2001-2003)
- . Chairman: City of Miami Beach Blue Ribbon Committee on Tourism (2001) (2009)
- . Co-chair-Tourism Roundtable-Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce (1997-98)
- . Board of Directors, Florida Tourism Association (1996-97)
- . Board of Directors, Jobs For Miami (1991-1994)
- . Adjunct Professor-FIU School of Hospitality Mgt(1997-2007)
- . Visitor Industry Council
  - Board of Directors/ Executive Committee (1996-)
  - Vice Chairman (1998-1999)
  - Chairman (1999-2002)
- . Chairman, Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce (1987-1990)
- . Board of Governors, Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce (1985-)
- . Founder and Chairman of "Pillars"-Mia. Beach Chamber (1988-1991) (1997-1999)
  - Board of Directors, Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (1986-1989) (1991-2004)
- . Executive Committee-Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau (1999-2004)
- . Vice-Chairman, Miami Beach Convention Center Advisory Board (1987-1990) (1991-1997)
  - Chairman (1998-2000) (2009-)
- . Vice-Chairman, Miami Beach Tourism Convention Center Expansion Authority (1985-1990)
- . Chairman, Public Facilities Trust (1989-1990)
- . Board of Trustees, Bass Museum (1988-1990)
- . International President, Tau Epsilon Phi National Fraternity (1989-1991) (1997-)
- . President, Tau Epsilon Phi Scholarship Foundation (1991-1993) (1995-1997)

## **AWARDS**

Recipient of Miami Today Gold Medal Award for Professional Achievement-2003  
 Recipient of Miami Beach Chamber Tourism Hall of Fame-2004  
 Delegate: White House Conference on Tourism-1995  
 Miami Beach Resort Hotel Association "Man of the Year-1989  
 Leukemia Society "Volunteer of the Year" -1994  
 South Florida Tourism Professional of the Year-1995  
 Awarded by Academy of Travel & Tourism  
 James McDonnell "Outstanding Board of Governor Award"  
 Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce-1997  
 Honored by Florida International University for Extraordinary

Contribution to the Hotel Industry and Hospitality  
Education-1997  
Recipient of 2000 Paul Brown Award by FH&MA for  
Outstanding Achievement in Hospitality Education  
Chairman-Transplant Foundation Golf Tournament (1995-)  
Recipient of Miami Today's "Best of the Best" Gold Medal  
Host Committee-Super Bowl (1989/1995)  
Hotel Co-Chair, Super Bowl-(1999)  
Operations Chairman-POW WOW (1994/1999)  
Chairman-Host Committee-MEDIM (1997)  
Operations Chairman-PCMA (2001)  
Member: 2003 NACCP National Convention-Host Committee  
Lifetime Achievement Award-GMBHA  
Publisher: Miami Beach-A History 1994  
Publisher-A History of Miami Beach's Hotels  
Woggles and Cheese Holes  
Recipient 2007 "Arts Hero" Award from Arts & Business Council  
Recipient 2007 Founders Award from Academy of Hospitality &  
Tourism  
Recipient 2007 Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce Diamond  
Palm Award as Founder of the "Pillars" and Past Chamber Chairman  
Recipient "Best Buddies Champions Award" 2008  
Recipient "Community Service Award", Advertising Federation  
Of Greater Miami-2008  
Recipient : March of Dimes Community Award-2008

# William R. Perry, III

340 NE 94th Street ° Miami Shores, FL 33138 ° 786-290-9810 ° Dperry1965@aol.com

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## Summary of Qualifications

Sixteen years of hands on business ownership experience that includes the development, financing, marketing and operation of a multi-million dollar business.

Nine years of government experience that included the development and implementation of policies and procedures of a quasi-governmental agency.

Keen ability to maximize the potential of those management personnel that work for the concerns.

Resourceful and quick to adapt to challenges that ultimately lead to positive and productive results.

## Relevant Experience

2007-Present - Lecturer, Barry University, School of Business. (ACE)  
Services marketing and marketing concepts and applications lecturer with emphasis placed upon examining and analyzing first-hand case studies as well as reviewing the theoretical components of developing and implementing viable marketing plans. Also teach organizational behavior with emphasis placed upon maximizing understanding the behavior of organizations and how to work more effectively in organizational settings.

2006-Present - Adjunct Business Professor, Florida Memorial University, School of Business - Small Business Management, Entrepreneurship.  
Lecturer relative to the theoretical methodology of small business management that include the creation and analysis of a viable business plan.

1996-Present - Owner/Partner World Wide Concessions  
Franchisee/owner of several Chili's, Chili's Grab & Go, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Budweiser and Sam Adam Sports Bars, World Wide Café.

1993-Present - President WRP & Associates & WRP Transportation, Inc.  
Provider of parking management services and transportation for the elderly and physically impaired community of South Florida.

1989-1996 - CEO Miami Sports and Exhibition Authority  
Responsibilities included the management and operation of a 100 million portfolio that included the Miami Arena, James L. Knight Center and the Coconut Grove Exhibition Center.

## Education

Bachelor of Science, Morgan State University, 1982  
MBA, Morgan State University, 1984

**Affiliations**

Orange Bowl Committee, Tourist Development Council, Association of the Developmentally Exceptional, Movers Inc. (Chairman), Bayside Marketplace Foundation, NAACP Executive Committee

billresume.2  
5/23/07

## *Olga M. Ramudo*

### *Express Travel*

#### *President & CEO*

*After years of being a stay at home mother, Olga Ramudo decided to venture into the travel business by becoming an independent contractor for a small travel agency. Partnering with her sister and a best friend, that part time job took them further when they decided to start their own business in 1989.*

*Specializing in the Hispanic market and with a strong commitment to community involvement and customer service, Express Travel became one of the top ten travel agencies in Miami, later expanding its reach to the State of Florida as well as offering services all over the world.*

*Olga Ramudo has conspicuously pioneered and led the charge to not only promote and grow the South Florida tourism industry, but also has provided an outstanding public role model as a successful women owned business who has always found the time to serve the South Florida community and her industry through leadership appointments on numerous local, state and international organizations. She has been a prominent tourism community leader for over 20 years and has volunteered for leadership positions on hundreds of local events, which have resulted in millions of dollars of economic impact and new jobs for South Florida's local and State tourism. Additionally, Olga has donated her time and experience to many organizations serving on committees to promote bilingual education in order to maintain the "Gateway of the Americas" designation for South Florida.*

*Express Travel has received numerous awards and recognitions throughout the years. Some of these are: ranked among the largest Hispanic companies in the nation and one of the 100 fastest growing Hispanic Companies in 2008 as reported by Hispanic Business Magazine; included as one of the largest minority businesses in Dade County by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and listed among the largest women owned business in South Florida by the South Florida Business Journal. Express Travel ranked the number sixth fastest growing Hispanic company in the nation in 2007 as reported by Hispanic Trends Magazine. The Academy of Hospitality and Tourism recognized Express Travel in the Meetings and Business Tourism category in 2007.*

*Olga Ramudo has also been recognized as one of the top influential women business leaders in Miami Dade County by Camacol (Latin Chamber of Commerce and listed as one of the "Best of Miami 2007" by Miami Today in recognition for promoting international trade. Owit of Florida bestowed her with the 2008 International Business Woman of the Year award and most recently the American Society of Travel Agents paid tribute to Olga at their annual gala dinner by bestowing her with the national advocacy award in recognition of her significant contribution on behalf of the travel agency community before federal state and local governments .*

*Express Travel is comprised of corporate, leisure, groups and meetings, cruise and study abroad departments.*

*Olga Ramudo sits on the executive board of the Beacon Council as well as on the Board of Directors of the World Trade Center, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Camacol (Latin Chamber of Commerce) and Ana G. Mendez University of Puerto Rico. Miami's Board of County Commissioners appointed Olga to Dade County's Tourism Development Council. Olga chairs the International Business Initiatives Committee for the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce.*

*Olga studied in Puerto Rico and has two grown sons , Luis and Daniel.*

*[www.expresstravelus.com](http://www.expresstravelus.com)*