

**CLERK'S SUMMARY AND OFFICIAL MINUTES
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON TASKFORCE
FOR THE MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
October 30, 2013**

The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce (Taskforce) convened a meeting on October 30, 2013 at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, Board of County Commissioners Commission Chambers, 111 NW 1 Street, Miami, FL 33128.

The following Taskforce members were present: Daniel Alfonso, Marla Alpizar, Charles Auslander, Howard Brown, Se'Adoreia Brown for Jeannette Lebrecht, Barry E. Johnson, Nancy Lawther, John Quick, Max Rothman, Raymond Santiago, Katherine Seaver, Javier Soto, Commissioner Javier Souto, Maria Velez, J.C. Jimenez for Ron Wasson, Lillian Weinberg, Commissioner Deede Weithorn, and Chairman Carlos Gimenez.

The following staff members were present: Lisa Martinez, Senior Advisor, Office of the Mayor; Jennifer Moon, Director, Office of Management and Budget; Gabriela Lopez, Mayor's Aide, Office of the Mayor; and Deputy Clerk Alan Eisenberg.

1. Introductions & Welcome

Ms. Lisa Martinez welcomed the Taskforce members and guests; this was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Taskforce members introduced themselves and the organizations they represented.

2. Setting the Purpose

Mayor Gimenez acknowledged the Taskforce members for their commitment to help define and set the course for the future of the Miami-Dade Public Library System. He described the value of libraries to this community and explained the purpose for which this Taskforce was convened.

Mayor Gimenez' remarks can be found as Exhibit No. 3.

3. Background & Overview of the Current Library System

Mr. Raymond Santiago expressed his appreciation to the Taskforce and working group members on behalf of the Miami-Dade Public Library System's (Library) staff and boards for their assistance on this project. He presented an overview of the Library System; its history, taxing district, core services, special collections, outreach services, programming, and partnerships. Mr. Santiago noted the Library's vision was for it to be a compelling community destination, which it could achieve by providing a five-Star customer service experience.

Mr. Santiago stated that the compelling issues and challenges for the Library to consider as it moved forward were: technology in the library, the library as a learning institution, the library as a civic institution, the library as a social institution and public/private partnerships.

A PowerPoint of Mr. Santiago's presentation can be found on pages 1-21 and 28-30 of Exhibit No. 4.

4. Overview of the County & Library System Budgets

Ms. Jennifer Moon, Director, Office of Management and Budget, presented an overview of the Library's history over the past five years, noting the Library would run out of funds in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013-14; however, collective bargaining concessions enabled the Library to balance this year's budget. She explained that carryover funds were also used to sustain Library operations, stating that one-time revenue was not a preferred method to support recurring programs. Ms. Moon also pointed out that the \$21.7 million gap between the original proposed budget and the no-tax increase budget was closed by reducing \$7.8 million in expenditures, eliminating \$5.307 in reserves, and utilizing \$8.5 million in carryover funds.

Ms. Moon explained that projected County revenues for the current fiscal year would need to be further reduced due to the impact of residents contesting property values, pursuant to an October 21, 2013 memorandum from Mayor Gimenez with FY 2013-14 preliminary budget results. As a result, Ms. Moon noted additional FY 2013-14 budget gaps of \$7.897 million in the Fire Department, \$24.149 million in the General Fund, and \$2.2 million in the Library department budgets. Ms. Moon presented a five-year Library District forecast showing that budget deficits would increase to over \$20 million by FY 2017-18.

A PowerPoint of Ms. Moon's presentation can be found on pages 22-27 of Exhibit No. 4.

5. Overview of the Process for the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce

Ms. Martinez noted a diverse Taskforce membership consisting of municipalities in the Library District and municipalities that were not in the District; from stakeholders who used libraries and those who did not use libraries; from advocates and organizations that provided funding to similar programs.

Ms. Martinez explained that approximately 100 community members would participate in various working groups over the next six weeks. She noted the working group recommendations would be presented to Taskforce members at a December 18, 2013 meeting. Ms. Martinez pointed out that the Taskforce members would then present their finalized recommendations that would be used in January to develop a master plan and budget recommendations for the future of the Library system.

Ms. Martinez noted each working group would meet four times to discuss the following key guiding questions: service models; service needs; funding; and awareness, advocacy and marketing. She said that the individual working groups would then meet as a combined group to discuss interrelated issues and develop recommendations to be presented to the Taskforce.

Ms. Martinez explained that working group meetings would begin on November 5, 2013 and would conclude in the first week of December; that working group reports would be compiled by the Administration; that the Taskforce members would be presented with working group recommendations, community surveys of both library users and non-users and a fiscal report, at its next meeting on December 18, 2013. She noted support materials were compiled for the working groups and included for Taskforce members in the handout entitled: Mayor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce for the Miami-Dade Public Library System, dated October 30, 2013 and that all information would also be available on the Mayor's website at <http://www.miamidade.gov/mayor/blue-ribbon-task-force-mdpls.asp> She said that the final Taskforce recommendations would be used by staff in next year's planning process.

The handout mentioned above can be found as Exhibit No. 6

Ms. Martinez noted Mayor Gimenez would be the Taskforce's Chairman. She said that all working group recommendations would be presented to the Taskforce; that recommendations must reflect a comprehensive understanding of the community's perspective, must be substantiated with best practices, and must be of value to the community. Ms. Martinez noted these recommendations would then be evaluated by the Taskforce members and would be adopted with a consensus vote.

Mayor Gimenez asked Commissioner Souto, Cultural Affairs & Recreation Committee Chairperson, to address the Taskforce.

Commissioner Souto said that identifying the means to keep the libraries open was one of the most important tasks confronting the County and congratulated Mayor Gimenez for his vision and initiative to address this issue. He noted libraries were an important community resource needing to be preserved; that a solution was needed to help the community without placing a financial burden upon County residents; and that libraries were essential to Miami's role as one of the great global cities and to the future of this community. Commissioner Souto said that it was the people's libraries; that the community needed to be closely engaged in this process; that foundations needed to be contacted as a potential source of funding; and that he believed there were individuals in this community who were in the position to provide financial assistance once they were asked to do so.

Mayor Gimenez observed that necessity was the mother of all invention, noting the necessity currently was the lack of funding for the libraries. He clarified the County's taxing structure, noting all residents paid into the General Fund; only residents using the

County's Fire and Rescue Department services paid the Fire Rescue tax; only residents living in unincorporated Miami-Dade County paid the Unincorporated Metropolitan Service Area (UMSA) tax; and only residents in the Library System District paid the Library tax. Mayor Gimenez pointed out that funds could not be transferred between these accounts. He said that the current problem existed because the Library System's millage rate was not generating sufficient income to cover current expenses. Mayor Gimenez noted the millage rate was set at the current level based upon what County residents were willing to pay for these services.

Mayor Gimenez noted the County currently had a wonderful Library system; however, he asked the Taskforce members to create a Library system for the future and to consider the number of libraries and services that should be provided to meet the residents' needs. He said that Miami would be on the cutting edge of technology making it among one of the next great cities. Mayor Gimenez pointed out that the role of this Taskforce should not simply involve raising the millage rate, because this would be perpetuating the status quo by being satisfied with the current system without looking toward the future. He concluded by noting having a crisis was sometimes beneficial because it opened the door to self-evaluation, to determine whether existing resources were being utilized optimally, or whether additional resources could be generated in a different manner. Mayor Gimenez said that he encouraged open communication and the interchange of ideas in order to create a good product.

The floor was opened to questions from the Taskforce members.

In response to Ms. Marla Alpizar's question regarding whether the needs assessment surveys were included in the handout materials provided, Ms. Martinez explained that demographic information was included; however, the surveys were currently being developed.

Ms. Lillian Weinberg noted was critical for Taskforce members to think about robust engagement when thinking about transforming the library; engagement of all people and demographics. She said that if we want citizens to pay for the libraries it would be useful to have demographic data which included information on the patrons and their usage.

Mayor Gimenez clarified that surveys would include information on both users and non-users of the Library system. He said he believed that users would be willing to pay more for library services than would non-users.

Ms. Weinberg suggested that the data collection period be extended to more than one month.

Ms. Martinez explained that demographic data of current library usage and similar data on the communities surrounding the libraries was included in the materials provided. She noted additional information that was not already provided would be forthcoming.

Responding to Ms. Weinberg's question regarding how municipalities were being included in this process, Ms. Martinez explained that municipalities were represented on the Taskforce and all cities were invited to participate in the working groups.

Mr. Max Rothman stated that the Friends of the Miami-Dade Public Library System raised approximately \$50,000 per year through the annual book sale. He inquired whether any other fundraising efforts existed and if so, could this information be shared with the Taskforce.

Mayor Gimenez explained that tax funding, charitable donations, and the establishment of foundations would be discussed in the funding working group. He noted although there were people in this community who might be willing to make contributions to the Library, the majority of the Library system's operations should be funded by County residents rather than through charitable contributions which were not a continuing source of revenue.

Mr. John Quick explained that the Friends of the Miami-Dade Public Library System raised funds for the Library through many different programs. He noted information on the many fundraising campaigns and grants, which provided several hundred thousand dollars annually, would be presented at the funding working group meeting.

Mr. Quick inquired whether surveys would be conducted at all library branches or only at specific targeted branches and how information for non-users would be obtained.

Ms. Martinez explained that a contract was being developed to obtain telephone and on-line surveys, as well as surveys to be used with focus groups at the libraries. She indicated that this would be a comprehensive study and the data would not be gathered from only one sector of the community.

Mayor Gimenez noted telephone surveys could reach a large number of community residents and this approach would be helpful to obtain information on non-library users.

Mr. Raymond Santiago explained that the Library system primarily conducted satisfaction surveys of its users, noting surveys and focus group discussions provided additional information on individuals' perceptions, needs and the future direction of the library.

Mr. Charles Auslander congratulated Mayor Gimenez, Mr. Santiago, Ms. Martinez and staff for their efforts in creating this Taskforce. He noted it was clear to everyone that libraries were designed for learning and developing relationships and should be a treasure in the community. Mr. Auslander inquired whether the materials would provide the baseline budget for Taskforce members to use in their analysis.

Ms. Martinez clarified that the materials included detailed information on the current budget broken down by line item, past budgets, strategic plans, as well as budgets from other library systems. She noted additional information to make informed recommendations would be provided, if necessary.

Mayor Gimenez said that if the Taskforce members needed any additional information, staff would make it available to them.

Ms. Katherine Seaver asked about the type of questions included in the surveys and whether the questions were available for review by the Taskforce members.

Ms. Martinez explained that a draft of the survey questions was being developed and welcomed input from this group on these questions. She noted the company conducting the surveys would also comment on whether the survey questions were appropriate.

Ms. Maria Velez suggested that people taking the survey be informed that they paid taxes for other County services, such as schools, in addition to the taxes paid for library services.

Ms. Martinez noted the framing of survey questions was important so that the questions did not contain too much information that would cause confusion. She welcomed feedback from the Taskforce members on survey questions.

In response to Ms. Nancy Lawther's question as to whether funding questions would be included on both the user and non-user surveys, Ms. Martinez said that they would.

Ms. Seaver expressed concern about the survey roll-out in two days.

Ms. Martinez explained that staff was currently identifying a company to conduct the surveys and the deadline to provide Taskforce members with preliminary survey results was December 18, 2013.

Pursuant to Mr. J.C. Jimenez' question regarding whether surveys would target individuals living in cities within the Library District as well as non-Library District members, Ms. Martinez noted all perspectives would be included in the review.

Ms. Marla Alpizar pointed out that taxpayers in a non-Library District such as Hialeah may not understand how the Hialeah and County libraries were funded. She noted surveys needed to be clear to residents in non-Library Taxing Districts.

Ms. Martinez indicated that surveys would not be the proper means to gather information from residents living in non-Library Taxing Districts and an additional strategy other than solely conducting surveys may be necessary to achieve that objective.

Ms. Alpizar noted the Taskforce could learn for other library systems and inquired whether information related to best practices and community needs was being acquired.

Mr. Santiago commented that a series of conference calls with a variety of urban and public library associations at the local, state, and national levels had been beneficial. He also indicated that articles and reference materials relating to programs throughout the country were included in the materials in the package and would be posted to the website.

Ms. Martinez noted she would seek to obtain the information requested by Ms. Alpizar in an upcoming conference call.

Responding to Ms. Se'Adoreia Brown's question regarding whether Library employees would be included in the surveys, Ms. Martinez confirmed that all Library system employees would be surveyed.

Mr. Santiago clarified that all employees, including those who did not work with the public would participate in surveys.

Mr. Daniel Alfonso noted the City of Miami was looking forward to assisting the Taskforce to provide a first-rate library system for its residents. He expressed the desire that Taskforce recommendations and priorities be included in next year's County budget. Mr. Alfonso said he hoped that the Task Force members would have the will and courage to make difficult decisions, as needed.

6. Review of Timeline

Ms. Martinez announced that the next meeting would be held on December 18, 2013.

7. Adjournment

Mayor Gimenez expressed his appreciation to the Taskforce members for their participation.

There being no further business, the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Taskforce meeting adjourned at 11:06 a.m.



Mayor Carlos Gimenez, Chairman