

Date: March 12, 2015

To: Honorable Chairman Jean Monestime
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor 

Subject: Status Report Regarding Negotiations with the Representatives of the Cuban Exile History Museum, Inc. for Possible Development of a Cuban Exile History Museum on Parcel B

This report has been prepared in response to Resolution R-687-14, approved by the Board of County Commissioners (Board) on July 17, 2014, which directs the Administration to negotiate with the Cuban Exile History Museum, Inc. (Cuban Exile Museum), regarding the possible development of a Cuban Exile Museum on the County-owned Parcel B property behind the American Airlines Arena (AAA).

Additionally, the Administration is evaluating the feasibility of a collaboration among the Cuban Exile Museum, Black History Museum, and HistoryMiami in an effort to encourage a comprehensive and unified approach to telling the story of our community's development. Meetings with these parties have occurred on December 15, 2014 and February 20, 2015, and each of the museums' representatives have expressed an interest in working together on a joint project. We will keep you informed regarding our progress on this collaboration as we move forward.

Leading up to the aforementioned meeting with the three (3) museums, and in accordance with Resolution R-687-14, two (2) negotiation meetings were held with the Cuban Exile Museum, as follows:

- On Friday, September 12, 2014, County staff from Cultural Affairs; Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces; Regulatory and Economic Resources; and the Internal Services departments held an initial negotiation meeting with representatives of the Cuban Exile Museum to discuss the possible development of a Lease Agreement for the proposed museum at Parcel B. During this meeting, discussions focused on the possible impacts to the Heat Group, the operator of the AAA, and the need to include the Heat Group in these discussions to address concerns previously raised by the Heat Group related to staging, parking, and obstruction of the view from the former Bongo's Cuban Café. It was agreed that the subsequent meeting would include the Heat Group for the purposes of arriving at a workable understanding as to the building size (elevation), footprint, orientation, and how the impacts to the surrounding areas of the proposed project can be minimized or otherwise mitigated.
- On Tuesday, November 25, 2014, County staff, Cuban Exile Museum representatives, and The Heat Group met to discuss the issues raised at the September 12, 2014 meeting. As a result of this second meeting, the Cuban Exile Museum representatives agreed to visit the AAA during the coming months. The intent of these visits is to see the operations of the AAA during live events, such as concerts, basketball games, and the circus, in order to have a better understanding of the concerns of The Heat Group and to provide possible solutions to mitigate those concerns in a proposed site plan and lease agreement.

After these site visits, which are anticipated to occur in the first half of 2015, the Cuban Exile Museum representatives will develop a conceptual rendering and a proposed plan for review and consideration by the County and The Heat Group. Concurrently, the Administration will continue to explore a coordinated museum collaboration with representatives of the Cuban Exile Museum, Black History Museum, and HistoryMiami.

Based on our progress on these parallel tracks, the County will draft a Lease Agreement for consideration by the Board. The Administration will continue to update the Board on the negotiations and will remain in contact with all stakeholders throughout this process to ensure progress is made in a timely manner.

Additionally, at the time the Board considered Resolution R-687-14, Commissioner Barbara J. Jordan asked whether the County had ever conveyed property of the value of the Parcel B site to a not-for-profit organization. Staff was unable to identify past conveyances of this value; however, a report issued on February 17, 2015 provided details on similar conveyances and the resulting use of such property by not-for-profit organizations.

Should you have any questions, please contact Tara Smith, Assistant Director of the Internal Services Department, at (305) 375-1135.

c: Robert A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney
Office of the Mayor Senior Staff
Lester Sola, Director, Internal Services Department
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor