

CLERK'S SUMMARY OF MINUTES COMMUNITY RELATIONS BOARD July 16, 2025

The Miami-Dade County Community Relations Board (CRB) convened its General Board meeting on July 16, 2025 at 2:10 p.m. at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, Conference Room 18-4, 111 NW 1st Street, Miami, Florida 33128.

The following CRB members were present: Ms. Marjorie York, Mr. Joshua A. Sayles, Mr. Gabriel Paez, Ms. Jenni Person, Ms. Gizelle M. Ortiz-Velazquez, Mr. Joseph R. Salzverg, Dr. Yuleisy Mena and Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais (Chairman Rene Diaz, Ms. Marie Jean-Pharuns and Ms. Juliette Fabien were absent).

Ms. Egglis Cepero arrived at 2:17 p.m.

In addition to the CRB members, the following staff members were present: Dr. Shirley Plantin, CRB Director, and Ms. Selena Brogdon, Deputy Clerk, Miami-Dade Clerk of the Board.

Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. in the absence of Chairman Rene Diaz.

APPROVE CURRENT MEETING AGENDA

Mr. Joseph Salzverg made a motion to approve today's CRB agenda. This motion was seconded by Mr. Gabriel Paez; and upon being put to a vote, passed 8-0 (Chairman Rene Diaz, Ms. Marie Jean-Pharuns and Ms. Juliette Fabien were absent).

PUBLIC HEARING

Vice Chairman Gervais opened the reasonable opportunity for the public to speak and the following person appeared wishing to speak:

Ms. Susan Khoury announced there were two protests scheduled for the following day in Miami-Dade County. The first was at Florida International University (FIU) from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and the second was downtown Miami under the theme "Good Trouble Lives On," honoring the late Congressman and Civil Rights Leader John Lewis. She also informed attendees that an immigration town hall meeting was taking place that evening at 7:00 p.m. at a community center in the Kendall area, located in front of the Regal Theater.

Mr. Joshua Sayles inquired about the organizational structure and sponsorship of the town hall meeting that had been announced for that evening in the Kendall area.

Ms. Khoury explained that the event was organized by community members interested in legislative issues. She indicated that legislators had been invited as guest speakers to discuss both

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the budget and immigration matters, specifically mentioning Speaker Perez as one of the invited officials.

In response to Mr. Sayles' question as to which organizations were supporting the town hall meeting, Ms. Khoury clarified that it was organized by citizens in the community concerned about these legislative issues, though she offered to provide additional information if needed.

CRB COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND DATES

1. Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement, Wednesday, July 30, 2025

Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais announced the next Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Committee (CJLE) meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, July 30, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. at the North Miami Beach Police Department.

Dr. Plantin noted that the previous CJLE meeting had been held in the parks to address community fears and raise awareness about concerns residents were expressing in those spaces, particularly given that it coincided with the beginning of summer camp. She explained that while the Board of County Commissioners (Board) typically recessed in August, the CJLE usually continued meeting because that period marked the start of the school year. Dr. Plantin indicated that at the upcoming July 30th meeting, committee members would decide whether to meet in August considering recent changes, or if they would not reconvene until late September.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Update: Attended Hispanic Affairs Advisory Board meeting to address community fears throughout Dade County

Dr. Plantin reported that the Miami-Dade County Hispanic Affairs Advisory Board (HAAB) had undergone recent changes, during which Mr. Gabriel Paez served as interim acting director. She explained that CRB had previously partnered with HAAB to host immigration forums and wanted to stay informed about current issues affecting the Hispanic population, particularly given that the Honduran and Nicaraguan Temporary Protected Status (TPS) had been terminated the previous week, heightening community concerns.

Dr. Plantin committed to attending various advisory board meetings, including the Interfaith Board, to gather feedback from Hispanic communities across Miami-Dade County and identify similarities and differences in their responses to current issues. She addressed community requests to move HAAB meetings from the downtown building to other locations, emphasizing that any relocation should ensure equitable access throughout the county—not just southern areas

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like Westchester—given the significant Hispanic populations in northern communities such as Opa-Locka, North Miami Beach, and North Miami.

Dr. Plantin announced that HAAB was moving forward with planning an immigration forum.

Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais opened the floor for CRB members' comments.

Mr. Gabriel Paez reported that public safety concerns had been raised at the HAAB meeting regarding people's fear of participating in public forums, whether in person or via Zoom, because providing their names and addresses could expose their immigration status through public records.

Dr. Yuleisy Mena volunteered to attend the upcoming public forum to observe these participation concerns and report back to CRB.

Dr. Plantin noted that a suggestion to include Haitian women facing similar issues was not well-received at the HAAB meeting, as some members insisted the board should focus specifically on Hispanic affairs.

Mr. Paez emphasized that regardless of country of origin, all immigrants should unite.

Mr. Joseph Salzberg commented that Miami-Dade's immigrant population, while dynamic, was fragmented by differing political views shaped by when people arrived in the United States, creating tensions among and within ethnic communities.

Following extensive comments on immigrant policies, Dr. Plantin reminded members that CRB was an apolitical board and stressed that their comments should not reflect individual political views. She explained that CRB monitored immigration issues because they could easily trigger community unrest at any moment, positioning CRB as a preventive buffer.

In response to Dr. Mena's question about organizing a forum to bring different immigrant groups together, Dr. Plantin clarified that Miami-Dade County did not have an Immigration Advisory Board because immigration was a federal issue. She outlined CRB's primary function of serving communities across thirteen commission districts and explained that while its scope had expanded over the years, four core objectives remained unchanged: police-involved incidents, gun violence, hate crimes, and anti-Semitism. Dr. Plantin further explained that specialized advisory boards like the LGBTQ+ board now led on related issues while CRB served as a service partner, with each advisory board addressing immigration through its own distinct approach.

There being no further questions or comments, Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais moved to the next topic.

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2. Update: Comprehensive approach to Potential unrest

Dr. Plantin reported that at the previous CRB meeting, the board had directed her to engage in conversations with county leaders due to concerns about Miami-Dade County's fragmented structure and uncertainty about which office would take the lead if civil unrest erupted. She explained that with five constitutional offices, it was unclear whether the sheriff, mayor, or chair would respond, as the previous response protocols seemed no longer applicable given the County's new leadership structure.

Dr. Plantin provided an update on her outreach efforts following an incident approximately two weeks earlier in the commission chambers at the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) meeting. She described how community members who felt they were not being heard had to be escorted out and were arrested on the second floor, with the incident going viral on social media. Dr. Plantin and Mr. Gabriel Paez had responded to the scene where women were being arrested on the ground with numerous cameras present, demonstrating that the type of unrest typically expected in the community was occurring inside the government building.

Dr. Plantin reported having conversations with the chair's office, the mayor's office, and Chief James Reyes, Miami-Dade Chief Public Safety Officer; all of whom shared CRB's concerns. She advised that she had spoken with Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz this past Monday, with everyone acknowledging the concern. However, she noted that scheduling a meeting to determine the response protocol would take longer due to the ongoing budget season.

Dr. Plantin emphasized that with budget hearings approaching, larger crowds were anticipated because the public was upset about potential termination of organizations and services due to lack of funding. She compared expectations to 2008 when people were leaving meetings at 3:00 a.m., cautioning that significant community participation was expected at upcoming budget hearings.

Ms. Susan Khoury commented that she had observed the chamber incident and felt de-escalation protocols should have been implemented. She expressed offense that the situation occurred in the chamber belonging to residents and believed the chair handled it improperly.

Dr. Plantin clarified that historically, CRB would automatically connect with the Miami-Dade Police Department's Homeland Security Bureau for situations involving rallies and unrest. With the independence of various offices, the challenge was determining whether the sheriff's office, mayor's office, or another entity would now be the appropriate response. She indicated CRB needed to readapt to the new Miami-Dade County structure and determine how those procedures would function under the current system.

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Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais requested the item remain on the agenda for future meetings to monitor progress.

DISCUSSIONS AND DETERMINATIONS

1. Community Concerns re: Park Security after Gwen Cherry Situation

Dr. Plantin prefaced her report by clarifying that she worded the agenda item as "situation" because it remained an open case still under investigation. She explained that concerns had been brought to CRB's attention regarding several parks. The first incident she referenced occurred approximately a year and a half ago at Oak Grove Park, where a mother was shot in her car with her six children present, prompting CRB to respond to the community.

Dr. Plantin reported that earlier this week, an 11-year-old girl was sexually assaulted in the bathroom at Gwen Cherry Park, which made headline news. She explained the incident occurred after hours during what appeared to be football practice or cheerleading activities, raising questions about police presence that remained unanswered due to the ongoing investigation. Dr. Plantin described how community members witnessed the suspect asking the girl to retrieve a piece of paper from the bathroom. When a community member noticed the girl had not emerged, they investigated and the suspect fled. The community pursued and held him until law enforcement arrived, with the incident documented across local news channels.

Dr. Plantin noted that Gwen Cherry Park was particularly well-known for sports and after-school activities, making the community very angry about the incident. She emphasized that the community's quick response may have changed the outcome, highlighting that the community itself played a crucial role in apprehending the suspect. The only available information about the victim was that she had been taken to the hospital.

Dr. Plantin stated that concerns about park security had intensified amid shifts in funding and organizational independence, with communities questioning the absence of park police and park rangers. She indicated that while she had not received 100% confirmation, she understood that many park police had been returned to the parks and was awaiting clear verification. She confirmed that park police and security concerns had been formally brought to CRB's attention.

2. Alligator Alcatraz

Dr. Plantin prefaced her comments by acknowledging this was a federal issue with local implications. She reported having attended multiple community meetings with various groups including environmentalists, immigration advocates concerned about attorney access to clients,

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and healthcare professionals worried about health conditions inside the facility. Dr. Plantin stated that officials were first able to visit on Saturday, with feedback coming from both sides. She relayed disturbing comments heard in community meetings, including an attorney's claim that detainees were cleaning bathrooms with their hands due to lack of running water, though she acknowledged these were community concerns and potentially hearsay since those making the claims had not been inside the facility themselves. Dr. Plantin noted that some communities felt the lives of detainees were not being taken seriously based on online comments. She emphasized that Alligator Alcatraz had the potential to create unrest, whether inside the government building or in the community, because it was tied to immigration and was a hot button topic.

Dr. Yuleisy Mena noted that news reports showed protesting outside the facility. When she inquired about whether local elected officials had been allowed access, Mr. Joseph Salzberg clarified that only State legislators were permitted entry.

Dr. Plantin confirmed that protesting was occurring at the facility.

Mr. Salzberg stated he believed there was significant misinformation surrounding Alligator Alcatraz. He reported speaking the previous day with both a Republican and Democratic State representative from South Florida who had toured the facility on Saturday. They described conditions including cold air conditioning, indoor soccer, and the same lunch provided to visitors, with even the Democrat representative saying conditions were vastly different from what was being reported online. Mr. Salzberg took issue with people calling the facility "Auschwitz" or a "concentration camp," stating such rhetoric downplayed historical horrors and disrespected those who experienced them. He suggested comparing conditions to what was currently allowed in state prisons and the Miami-Dade County Jail, which he described as inadequate.

Mr. Salzberg explained that the facility had to meet certain thresholds to qualify for federal government reimbursement and clarified that Alligator Alcatraz functioned as an immigration hold and removal process facility where detainees were likely deported, with individuals typically held no longer than two weeks.

Mr. Salzberg further reviewed Florida law, stating that State legislators and Florida cabinet members could arrive at state-run facilities and could not be prohibited from entry. He noted the facility initially denied access while still setting up but quickly realized this was illegal. Mr. Salzberg indicated that federal officials, including Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, were extended courtesy access, but local officials had zero legal entitlement to visit the facility.

Dr. Plantin identified this access limitation as the source of community frustration. She explained that local residents expected the County administration to provide answers and responses, but the mayor could not because she had not been permitted to see the facility. Dr. Plantin described a significant disconnect between what the community believed could and should be done versus

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the reality, noting that while people rightfully wanted accountability, they did not understand the dynamics between federal, state, and local jurisdictions. She reiterated that only elected State officials were permitted entry, with federal officials allowed as a courtesy, but staff were not permitted and no County or local officials had access.

3. Meeting with Organizers and 'Good Trouble Rallies'

Dr. Plantin reported that Good Trouble rallies were scheduled around the country, with the two locally at Florida International University (FIU) and another location. She explained that rallies occurring during weekdays tended to be in the evening, typically scheduled between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to accommodate people after work. Dr. Plantin noted she had received information about the rallies from Homeland Security and organizers and emphasized her responsibility to keep CRB members fully informed because, similar to rallies following George Floyd's death that started as simple gatherings, board members including Vice Chairman Reverend Gervais had been called out to help calm people and keep the peace. Dr. Plantin stated she wanted to ensure members were in the loop so that if anything unexpected occurred, they would be aware that the rallies had been planned.

4. Budget Hearings

Dr. Plantin announced that Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava had released her proposed budget the previous day, disclosing a \$402 million county deficit. Dr. Plantin explained this item was included on CRB's agenda due to anticipated significant community participation at budget hearings, particularly regarding potential elimination of nonprofit funding and reductions to county services including programs such as Meals on Wheels, arts initiatives, and park services. She indicated that advocates and social service organizations historically attended such hearings in substantial numbers during fiscal shortfalls.

Dr. Plantin identified the budget hearings as scheduled for September 4th and September 18th and noted discussions regarding potential rallies outside the government center. She emphasized the value of board member attendance, referencing the previous chamber disturbance where conditions outside in the lobby were significantly more severe than those observed inside the chambers, including a physical altercation during an arrest.

Dr. Plantin explained that a portion of the County's budget deficit resulted from constitutional offices establishing independent operational budgets, including the sheriff's office, supervisor of elections, clerk, and property appraiser.

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Mr. Salzberg explained that federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and Treasury guidance carried expiration dates extending to 2027, contributing to the fiscal crisis. He noted that Mayor Levine Cava had provided warnings about this situation for approximately two years.

Discussion ensued among various board members regarding the recent BCC meeting disturbance. Dr. Plantin explained that confusion originated when an attorney sought clarification from Chairman Rodriguez regarding whether public comment on the agenda item that day would preclude future testimony should the item return. She clarified that the agenda item's presentation differed substantially from public understanding, community members believed they were addressing Miami-Dade County's consideration of signing a 287G agreement, similar to recent action by the City of Miami, when the County had already executed such an agreement in March. The actual agenda item addressed the County's process for receiving federal reimbursement for detaining individuals in county facilities, not whether to enter the agreement.

Dr. Plantin indicated that the item's technical language contributed to public confusion and noted that clarity emerged only after Commissioners Gilbert III and Gonzalez provided detailed explanations regarding the County's reimbursement process for federally mandated detentions. However, by that point, two individuals had been arrested and the incident had received widespread media attention.

Regarding questions about potential organizational coordination of the disturbance, Dr. Plantin stated she could not confirm information dissemination methods among organizing groups. She identified the primary source of confusion as the chairman's statement that testimony provided that day would preclude future public comment on the item if it returned to the agenda, which generated uncertainty among both the public and commissioners.

Mr. Salzberg referenced a Florida Immigrant Coalition Instagram post that urged public attendance at the hearing and suggested such communications contributed to public misunderstanding.

Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais indicated the social media post may have contributed to disruptions at the BCC meeting and emphasized the importance of ensuring community comprehension of agenda item terminology and content prior to public hearings.

Multiple CRB members concurred that clearer explanatory language and advance communication could have prevented the escalation that occurred during the meeting.

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5. Local community concerns regarding immigration raids

Dr. Plantin reported that widespread community fear regarding immigration enforcement actions had significantly affected public behavior, with residents expressing reluctance to visit grocery stores, attend public gatherings, participate in church functions, or engage in public meetings. She indicated that concerns had been raised primarily by American churches but had expanded across multiple ethnic communities, including Latin and Haitian populations. Dr. Plantin stated she had intervened by coordinating meetings between the City of Miami Police and affected communities to address cross-cultural concerns.

Dr. Plantin referenced a major church that had conducted a three-day fast for Haiti with over 2,000 international pastors and was concluding a 40-day fast with a conference at the Kaseya Center. She noted that people expressed fear about attending church services and questioned what might occur upon departure. Dr. Plantin indicated that American churches, specifically African American congregations, had increasingly contacted CRB with concerns, with one pastor stating uncertainty about pulpit messaging while personally carrying both identification and a passport despite being native-born. She suggested that discussions regarding denaturalization had intensified these concerns, expanding beyond Hispanic and Haitian communities to include the African American community.

Vice Chairman Gervais confirmed knowledge of the church Dr. Plantin referenced and announced a Thursday meeting regarding immigration concerns. He stated he had received confirmation from reliable sources that enforcement actions were occurring.

Mr. Joseph Salzberg added that such activities were affecting the private sector as well.

Vice Chairman Gervais clarified, based on information from customs personnel that enforcement actions were taking place, though not at churches.

Mr. Gabriel Paez reported witnessing enforcement activity on Saturday at the airport Uber station where Uber drivers were detained.

Dr. Plantin acknowledged the City of Miami (City) for addressing community concerns, noting the City anticipated approximately 13,000 attendees at the Kaseya Center event. She announced that the City was conducting a roll call the following day, described as a law enforcement operational briefing at 2:00 p.m. led by the police major with church leaders invited to attend. Dr. Plantin explained she had facilitated the connection between law enforcement and the community and indicated that law enforcement would maintain presence nightly from 5:00 p.m. to midnight. Dr. Plantin noted that American citizens expressed fear about meeting with law enforcement independently and raised concerns about safely reaching their vehicles at midnight.

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and whether children should attend church services, describing these as difficult questions facing faith communities.

1. Board Members Safety Concerns

Dr. Plantin informed members that this agenda item was placed at the request of Ms. Gizelle M. Ortiz-Velazquez, who submitted written concerns regarding CRB member safety when members of the public became irate during meetings and exhibited patterns of concerning behavior toward board members. Dr. Plantin acknowledged that while CRB's mission included ensuring community voices were heard, the organization maintained decorum policies and needed to address situations where advisory board members felt unsafe during or after meetings. She stated the BCC's Office had been contacted and made aware of safety concerns for CRB volunteers.

Ms. Ortiz-Velazquez explained that while public disruption occurred periodically, certain individuals consistently disrupted meetings on a regular basis, potentially posing threats to board members, staff, and the public during or after meetings. She expressed particular concern about off-site meetings lacking the security measures present at the Stephen P. Clark Government Center, including concerns about individuals leaving meetings and returning with unknown intent. Ms. Ortiz-Velazquez referenced previous discussions regarding implementation of a sergeant-at-arms at advisory board meetings to manage disruptive individuals and ensure compliance with behavioral standards.

Mr. Joseph Salzberg inquired about protocols for removing disruptive members of the public from meetings and referenced inappropriate remarks directed at him by a specific individual and stated this person had established behavioral patterns warranting removal from meetings. Mr. Salzberg noted the individual had publicly livestreamed information about him, including his professional background, raising additional safety concerns.

Dr. Plantin explained that within the Stephen P. Clark building, sergeant-at-arms personnel were accessible on the second floor. For off-site meetings, she indicated that historically, advance arrangements were made with partnered municipalities to provide on-duty law enforcement officers for assigned meetings, with the provision that the responding officer should differ from officers who regularly attended monthly meetings. Dr. Plantin noted that budget considerations presented challenges regarding officer availability and compensation.

Dr. Plantin requested a motion authorizing her to engage in discussions with the Sheriff's Office and forward member concerns to the Office of the Chair for consideration by the BCC to identify solutions for maintaining safety at public meetings. She stated the chair's office had expressed willingness to explore available options despite current budget constraints.

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Ms. Gizelle Ortiz-Velazquez moved to direct Dr. Shirley Plantin to engage with the Sheriff or appropriate Miami-Dade County officials to address safety concerns for CRB members, staff, and the public regarding disruptive individuals and to establish law enforcement presence at CRB meetings. Mr. Salzberg seconded the motion, and upon being put to a vote, the motion passed 9-0 (Chairman Rene Diaz, Ms. Juliette Fabien, and Ms. Marie Jean-Pharuns absent).

Dr. Plantin emphasized the importance of proactive safety measures rather than waiting for an incident to occur before taking action, noting that existing decorum policies had proven insufficient..

Mr. Salzberg suggested that once the designated public comment period concluded, it should be strictly closed without extensions or reopening under any circumstances to maintain meeting order.

Vice Chairman Eddy Gervais announced the next CRB meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., noting the board's August recess.

Dr. Plantin observed that the September 17th date preceded the final budget hearing scheduled for September 18th.

HOTSPOTS

1. Free & Reduced Lunch, Snap, Back-to-School

Dr. Plantin reported that as the new school year approached, discussions indicated some school districts would discontinue free or reduced lunch programs. She noted this was particularly concerning given that many children received two of their daily meals at school. Dr. Plantin stated that food stamp benefits would also be reduced, with recipients beginning to lose benefits, raising concerns about child nutrition. She reported that the Department of Education (DOE) would experience cuts affecting approximately 1,400 personnel positions, causing significant concern among school districts and families about the upcoming academic year. Dr. Plantin indicated that several Miami-Dade County commissioners had already initiated distributions in their districts, with demand exceeding historical levels. She noted that Farm Share had received requests far beyond their capacity, compounded by labor shortages affecting agricultural harvest and food distribution operations.

Dr. Plantin explained that this issue constituted an important monitoring topic to assess the back-to-school environment and evaluate available services given funding reductions at both county and federal levels. She indicated that discussions were already occurring in youth-focused organizations including the Children's Trust and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), with concerns extending to juveniles in correctional facilities who were charged as adults but

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remained entitled to educational services. Dr. Plantin noted that mental health services and Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs for gun violence prevention might also face cuts. She described school-related budget impacts as an emerging hotspot topic that would require ongoing attention, with nonprofit organizations expressing concern about their ability to maintain service levels given anticipated county funding reductions and federal fund freezes.

Mr. Paez advised members to prepare for potentially long-term effects from census undercounting extending through 2032.

Dr. Plantin reported receiving a call the previous evening from a senior center indicating that seniors with Aetna insurance would lose coverage effective October 31st. She explained that according to the information provided, seniors would lose coverage including over-the-counter medications previously covered by Medicare. Dr. Plantin stated she intended to personally review the correspondence to verify the information's accuracy, noting the proximity of the October 31st deadline raised urgency. She clarified that Aetna served as a Medicare provider and expressed the need to confirm whether seniors were changing plans or facing actual coverage termination.

Mr. Joshua Sayles requested that Dr. Plantin share findings from her review with social service organizations the following day.

Dr. Plantin agreed to obtain copies of the correspondence, review the information, and share her findings with the board.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Sexual Harassment Prevention Training

Dr. Plantin announced she had emailed information to CRB members who were required to complete ethics and sexual harassment prevention training. She emphasized that the sexual harassment prevention training was currently being prioritized and was available via Zoom, requiring less than one hour to complete. Dr. Plantin reported that members who had completed the training requirements, including Ms. Jenni Person, Ms. Gizelle Ortiz-Velazquez, Dr. Yuleisy Mena, Ms. Juliette Fabien, and Ms. Marie Jean-Pharuns, had been removed from the noncompliant list and added to the updated compliance list that would be forwarded to the BCC.

Ms. Marjorie York announced that the American Disability Act (ADA) 35th anniversary celebration would be held on July 25, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. in the lobby of the Stephen P. Clark Government Center. She reported that she had attended a disability meeting in Miami Beach the previous day addressing an issue where service dogs were not permitted in the community center. Ms. York stated that an expert had been consulted regarding practices in other counties

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and that signage would be developed in collaboration with the police department to educate the public about applicable federal and state laws. Ms. York also announced that International Day of Peace would be observed on September 19, 2025, and indicated she would distribute informational flyers at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the CRB, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.