



AD HOC NEIGHBORHOOD RESILIENCE PROJECTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

City of Miami Beach
Elizabeth Wheaton, Chair
Amy Knowles, Liaison

TO: Members of The Ad Hoc Neighborhood Resilience Projects Committee

- Elizabeth Wheaton, Chair
- Clare McCord, Vice-Chair
- Spencer Hennings
- Barbara Herskowitz
- Calvin Kohli
- Jason Koslowe
- Galen Treuer
- Amy Knowles, City liaison

DATE: April 4, 2022

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Ad Hoc Neighborhood Resilience Projects Committee on April 4, 2022 – In-Person Meeting

Present: Elizabeth Wheaton, Clare McCord, Amy Knowles, Spencer Hennings, Jason Koslowe, Galen Treuer, Barbara Herskowitz

City staff: Ricardo Dopico, Joe Gomez, David Martinez, Kevin Pulido, Lauren Firtel, Melissa Berthier, Lester Sola, Juanita Ballesteros

Commission: Commissioner Alex Fernandez, Yale Herskowitz

Public: Tim Carr, Stephan Ginez

Absent: Calvin Kohli

1. WELCOME AND ATTENDANCE

The Committee meeting was opened with a round of introductions from all participants.

2. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Minutes Approval

The minutes from the previous February 22, 2022 meeting were provided to Committee members prior to the meeting. C. McCord made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by J. Koslowe.

Finalize meeting dates

E. Wheaton put forth the next two meeting dates for Committee approval: Tuesday, May 24, and Tuesday, July 12. C. McCord questioned why the meetings do not occur more frequently, A. Knowles responded

that there is not enough staff capacity to support more frequent meetings. E. Wheaton directed to set the meeting dates and to see if any scheduling issues arise from Committee members.

March 9, 2022: C4 A Referral to the Ad Hoc Resilience Committee to discuss how to improve information and engagements with residents as it relates to all projects that require harmonization agreements

- i. What have been the major barriers to securing these agreements?
- ii. What additional information would help this process?
- iii. What other opportunities exist to improve the process and reduce project delays?

3. COMMUNICATIONS OVERVIEW

K. Pulido led a presentation on the City's communications and harmonization process. The presentation included an overview of harmonization, harmonization packages, concerns over harmonization, identified barriers, the work harmonization entails on private property, and communication tools. Following the presentation, the Committee held a discussion on the process of harmonization.

Open Committee Discussion Topics Included:

- **Concerns over budget for harmonization projects.**
 - K. Pulido explained that harmonization is included as part of the overall project budget. Because each project and budget are different, there is no standardized budget number for harmonization.
- **Community agreement over harmonization projects.**
 - Discussion ensued about the project impact if a property refuses to harmonize. Namely, D. Martinez described, it would involve a change in elevation. The best-case scenario is when harmonization can occur, as it is aesthetically cleaner than proceeding without harmonization and implementing a retaining wall. Later in the discussion, it was suggested that harmonization contracts should be finished before construction begins. Addressing community concerns before undergoing construction was considered to be of great importance.
- **Question raised over the composition of a project team.**
 - C. McCord asked about the composition of the project team and who is designated as the Public Information Officer (PIO). Discussion ensued on the responsiveness of the PIO and the larger project team. Residents can be frustrated when questions are not answered and there are no consistent updates, which could lead to a loss in trust. Later in the conversation, it was suggested that the communications strategy provide regular updates to resident questions, explaining whether there is an answer or if the question is still being worked on. E. Wheaton suggested interim communication to alleviate large lapses in communication between project staff and residents.

- **Other topics of discussion included** streamlining the process of communication on projects; encouraging community testimonials through an ambassador program where residents who have already gone through harmonization processes can share their experience; providing more transparency into the decision-making process behind harmonization; allowing more resident input; and identifying city goals over harmonization deadlines.

The Committee identified the following barriers to securing these agreements:

Difficulty in communicating and understanding the timeline; fear of the unknown combined with project complexity; complexity of the regulatory environment; legal complexity of the agreements; and “NIMBY-ism” for when owners have to contend with construction impacts on their street and their properties.

The Committee identified additional information that would help the harmonization process:

Building trust and credibility by providing more consistent, frequent and clear updates; outlining expectations of the harmonization process and providing a date of finality; having more visual, simplified and personal information; and providing information about lessons the City has learned and how harmonization has improved.

The Committee identified other opportunities to improve the process and reduce project delays:

The PIO contract can build in guidelines for regular, clear and consistent communications and establish metrics; the City should be clear about the harmonization process steps, milestones and timelines; and the communication process can be simplified by focusing on the top-three decision-points to prevent information overload.

A MOTION APPROVING THE CONCEPTS OF THE SUGGESTIONS DISCUSSED, READ, AND RECORDED WITH THE EXPECTATION OF ADJUSTMENTS, IN ORDER TO BE PRESENTED TO THE COMMISSION VIA LTC introduced by J. Koslowe

- Seconded by G. Treuer and passed unanimously

4. CLOSING REMARKS AND MOTION TO ADJOURN

The next meeting was discussed. It is expected to be on May 24 and will include a presentation from Public Works on flooding. A motion to adjourn was brought to the committee which was unanimously approved. Committee adjourned.