



MORNINGSIDE  
CIVIC  
ASSOCIATION

## MCA Goes Virtual And Addresses Community Issues

Traditionally, the MCA Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at the Park Clubhouse. Since April, however, the meetings have been hosted via Zoom. The turnout has been surprising – with as many as 40 neighbors attending these virtual meetings. The MCA Board continues to discuss timely issues impacting the neighborhood and invites the police and local officials to address concerns. During this past year among our attendees via Zoom were Commissioner Russell, then Public Works Director Alan Dodd, then Chief Resiliency Officer Jane Gilbert, and Commissioner Keon Hardeman.

A motion to dismiss that lawsuit was denied by Miami Circuit Court Judge Hanzman over the summer, so the lawsuit is moving forward.

### Supporting Funding for Morningside Park



*Neighbors and Commissioner Russell attend MCA meeting virtually in April virtually.*

Below is a recap of a few of the topics on the MCA's agenda this year:

### Opposing Gambling Nearby

In March the MCA Board voted to join a lawsuit challenging the process by which the City of Miami authorized a gambling establishment at the property at 3000 Biscayne Boulevard that would allow up to 100,000 square foot gambling facility without the need for a public hearing or heightened administrative review. Mayor Francis Suarez vetoed the Commission's resolution adopting the authorization for this facility, but the City Attorney opined that the veto was ineffective. The lawsuit challenges the City Commission's actions and also the opinion overruling the Mayor's veto. Other neighborhood associations have joined as plaintiffs. The MCA is represented by the law firm Stearns Weaver Miller, but does not contribute to the costs or fees of bringing the lawsuit, which are being paid by a private citizen.

In April the MCA voted to support the City's applications for grant funding for shoreline and water-access improvements in Morningside Park. Resolutions to permit the City of Miami manager to apply for grant money from the Florida Inland Navigation District and The Nature Conservancy were on the City Commission agenda and approved at an April meeting, where many neighbors spoke in favor of the grant funding. The majority of the MCA Board wants to see money invested in improving Morningside Park's shoreline and water access, while maintaining bay views.

Commissioner Russell attended the April MCA meeting and explained that this grant money is "found money" critical to improving drainage, shoreline resiliency, and water access, especially given the expected City of Miami budget shortfalls coming out of the Covid-19 crisis. The MCA will continue to follow the applications of this funding and plans for the park.

### Flooding Spurs Action

At the June MCA meeting, which followed heavy rains in late May, the MCA invited Alan Dodd, then Director of Public works and also then City of Miami Chief Resiliency Officer Jane Gilbert, to address flooding concerns raised by neighbors. More than 40 residents attended this meeting.

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Mr. Dodd reported that in 2019 the City cleaned out the outfall pipes and some inlets, but that provided little help. Unfortunately, the flooding on 55th street, can only be resolved through a capital construction project, involving a redesign of the drainage system for the roadways and the park. It is the hope that as part of the planned Morningside Park updates, drainage will be addressed. Mr. Dodd recommended that we work to bring flooding to the attention of Commissioner Russell to see these projects expedited.



*Neighbor walks through water on North East 55<sup>th</sup> Street in May.*

**Melissa Hege** has since taken up the cause and graciously volunteered to chair the MCA's Resiliency Committee to work on these efforts. Her work with Commissioner Russell's office have already paid off in that Public Works, the department primarily charged with maintenance of the City of Miami's storm water systems, has been in the neighborhood this fall clearing storm drains and pumping standing water. These are, however, short term solutions.

For the long term, Cynthia Seymore of Commissioner Russell's office reports that the Office of Capital Improvements is working with the civil engineers on the Morningside Park General Plan. But, it will likely be two years before the design and funding process has concluded and construction begins. In the meantime, the City will continue responding with vector trucks and pumps to alleviate flooding when it occurs. Mr.

Dodd asked that we continue to report flooding concerns and post pictures at the following site <https://www.miamigov.com/Forms/Flooding-Report-Form>.

## Opposing Increased Flight Traffic

At the July meeting, the MCA took up the topic of the FAA's proposed changes to flight paths to and from the Miami International Airport. The concern is that the proposed plan may result in hundreds of flights flying near or over our neighborhood at low altitudes, resulting in increased noise and pollution. The Board voted to work to oppose the proposed portion of the plan that concentrates certain flights into a single artery along Biscayne Bay, within close proximity of Morningside. To that end, the MCA sent letters on the neighborhood's behalf to our elected representatives, set up a page on the MCA website with information and encouraged residents to contact elected officials to voice concern over increased noise and traffic for our area. Updates on the FAA plan will continue to be circulated.

## Working to Clean Up the Bay

At the September meeting was the recent "fish kill" in Biscayne Bay and the health of the ecosystem there. Mr. Dodd, now Chief Resiliency Officer for the City of Miami, attended and fielded questions. The MCA is doing its part by having hosted two Bay clean-up events this year. The second Bay Cleanup event of the year is planned for October 3, organized by **Tatiana Loza, Paula DaSilva, Spring McManus, Lindsey Wolfson, and Rachel Furst.**



*On March 15, neighbors kayaked to clean up the Picnic Islands..*

## Supporting the Community from a Distance

Many volunteer opportunities had to be placed on hold this year, but the MCA found ways to support the community. In March, **Dr. Alecia Stein** and Community Service Chair **Kathryn Freedman** organized a blood drive with the One Blood organization. This was during a time when blood banks were not getting nearly enough to serve the community's needs. The "Big Red Bus" parked on 55<sup>th</sup> Terrace and eighteen

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people from Morningside donated blood, making the drive a “big red” success.



In April, President **Rachel Furst** organized a non-perishable food drive to benefit our neighbors in the Little Haiti community. Neighbors left hundreds of food items on the Furst’s front door, which were then donated to the food pantry of the First Interdenominational Church, on NE 58th Street and NE 2nd, and also Gang Alternative (<https://myga.org>), which delivered food to dozens of families in Little Haiti during the crisis period.



Neighbors left canned food to benefit food pantries in Little Haiti.

## Morningside Applauds Frontline Workers

On April 17, Morningside neighbors stood outside their homes and participated in a 2 minute round of “applause” to show support for the essential workers on the frontlines of the Covid-19 health crisis (including doctors, nurses, police officers, fire-rescue workers, healthcare professionals and those essential

workers in grocery stores, restaurant, delivery services, and sanitation).

Longtime resident **Shirley Pardon** suggested the “applause” event and Rachel Furst invited the police to attend and circulated the names of those frontline works in Morningside deserving of our gratitude. It was a memorable few moments as a dozen police vehicles paraded through the streets, with sirens blaring, and were greeted with cheers, clapping, and the clattering of pots and pans.



The Stiers boys greet passing first responders outside their home.

## Social Committee Successfully Adapts

At the beginning of 2020 the Social Committee was off to a strong start with several free events. First, a Spring Mixer was held at “Swan” in the Design District, planned by Chair **Lindsey Wolfson**. In early March, **Tatiana Loza** and **Paula DaSilva** planned a Kayak Bay Clean Up and BBQ in the park. Participants cleaned the park shoreline and also kayaked to the Picnic Islands to gather litter. The Morningside Watersports concession donated use of the kayaks and Alexandra from Ocean Vida Foundation did a conservation awareness and recycled art projects with the kids.



At the Spring Social, Neil Robertson, Elsa and Ignacio Villanueva, and Katy Lingle enjoy appetizers and drinks.



COVID-19 then required a pivot to socially distant events and, so, the Committee got creative. For Easter approximately 135

neighborhood children signed-up to participate in the annual Easter Egg Hunt, which looked a little different this year. **Stephanie Alexander**, assisted by **Hugette Conil**, **Yeleny Brody**, **Rachel Furst**, and **Tatiana Loza**, prepared and hand-delivered treats and eggs to homes so that each child awoke to an Easter basket filled with goodies. On Easter Sunday, Stephanie arranged for a visit from the Easter Bunny via a drive-by throughout the community, made possible by **Efrem Palmer** and his chauffeur, **Joe Furst**.



*The Easter Bunny takes a ride through the neighborhood in April.*

Over the summer, the Committee also hosted a Summer Art Contest with the theme "Things I Love About Morningside" and awarded prizes to eight children of various ages. You can still see their adorable entries posted on the website. Most recently, on August 29, the MCA hosted an Ice Cream "Social" where over 95 residents visited the Dolci Peccati Gelato Truck posted on 57th Street and received a free treat to help beat the heat on that warm Sunday afternoon.



*Member enjoys free ice cream in at August event*

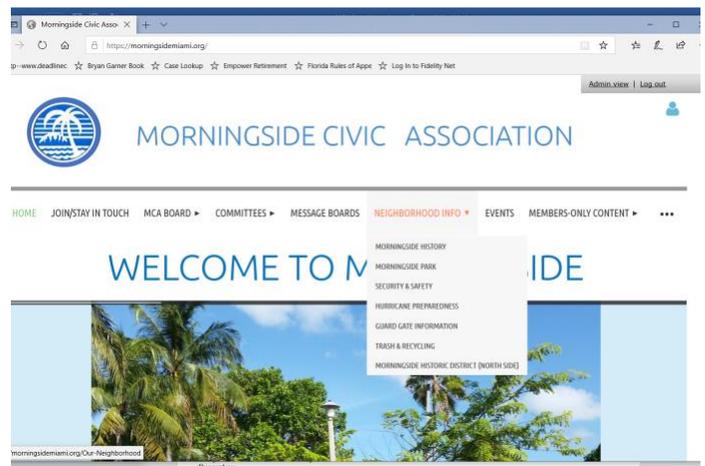
There is more fun planned through the end of the year, including a Bay and Island Cleanup on October 3rd, as well as Halloween, Thanksgiving and December Holiday celebrations. Though the nature of the fall and winter events is still uncertain, the MCA does plan to celebrate creatively.

## MCA Membership Year Begins October 1

In January 2020, the MCA membership voted to amend the MCA Charter and Bylaws in several respects impacting membership. First, the Bylaws were amended to change the membership year to October 1 to September 30, where it had previously run with the calendar year, January 1 to December 31. This change was made to drive membership in advance of the popular Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas holiday parties and to give folks more time to join and renew their memberships before the annual January elections, thereby increasing voter turnout. Membership renewals are now due on October 1 and can be completed on the MCA website or by delivery of a check to the Treasurer, Pedro DaSilva.

Second, the Charter was amended to clarify and expand membership eligibility. Membership eligibility is now available to all property owners who reside in their homes and live within the special taxing district and pay the district assessment, including those who own condominiums on NE 60<sup>th</sup> Street and North Bayshore, but excluding those condominium units along Biscayne who do not pay the tax assessment. Also, property owners who do not live in their homes, for whatever reason, may now join as associate, non-voting members.

## MCA Website Serves as Resource



The MCA website at [www.morningsidemiami.org](http://www.morningsidemiami.org) includes helpful information for the community. There you can pay and renew your MCA membership dues, RSVP for social events, see meeting agendas and minutes, complete a form to obtain a guard gate transponder, see trash pick-up schedules, find

phone numbers for local police, guard gate attendants, and the roving patrol, and learn about Morningside history.

Many of the MCA committees have their own pages with key documents posted. Also, if you log-in to the website using your email address and password, you can view documents under the "Members Only" content tab, including the MCA member directory and photos from MCA events. Use this website as a resource to find important contact information and updates.

## Security remains MCA priority

The MCA Security Committee this year is chaired by **Juan Ruiz** and **Jacqueline Ledon**.

Thanks to the efforts of Juan Ruiz this year, the guard-gates will soon be outfitted with an internet connection and the cameras upgraded so that footage of incoming and outgoing traffic can be viewed remotely by law enforcement and security staff.

Additionally, the MCA voted to initiate the process of amending our special taxing district ordinance to allow for more flexibility in contracting for roving patrol. Presently, our ordinance permits six hours of roving patrol per day, six days a week, to be provided by City of Miami off-duty police officers. Under this current scheme, Morningside does not have the ability to decrease or increase the amount of these hours or to hire a less expensive private security company. The cost of the police patrol is approximately \$46.50 per hour, which will increase to \$51.50 later this year.

To explore options to enhance efficiency and security, the MCA intends to send a letter to Miami Dade County requesting further information and an estimate of change services under an amended ordinance. The amendment process is only in the exploratory, preliminary stage. Any change to the special taxing district ordinance would ultimately have to be voted upon and approved by a majority of all Morningside homeowners. The topic of amending our special taxing district ordinance will continue to be a topic of discussion at the MCA meetings going forward

Our local police officers continue to encourage residents to report any crime as soon as it occurs to the non-emergency number and directly to our neighborhood resource officers, so that accurate statistics can be gathered, and repeat offenders identified quickly.

## Home Tour 2020 Postponed

Traditionally, the Tour of Historic Morningside Homes is biannually in the spring. The event, which showcases Morningside's historic homes, is planned and staffed entirely by Morningside volunteers. Leading up the event, dozens of hours are put into planning by volunteers and there are also

a festive kick-off reception and volunteer brunch. The Tour is one of Morningside's proudest days, showcasing our strong sense of community and the related events are a lot of fun.

This year, The Home Tour Committee, chaired by **Dan Vazquez**, had convened and was beginning preparations when Covid-19 threw a wrench in their plans. Concerns over spreading the virus made hosting the event impossible and the MCA Board voted in March to postpone the event indefinitely. We hope to reschedule the event soon, when it is safe to do so.



In the meantime, members can browse the tour guides featuring homes on the tour in past years posted on the MCA website under the Home Tour tab. Enjoy revisiting these memories!

## Welcoming New Neighbors

The MCA's Welcome Wagon Committee, chaired now by **Tatiana Loza**, is working to welcome the more than 20 new homeowners in Morningside this year. New residents receive a tote bag, sponsored by the MCA, and a bottle of wine, sponsored by our neighbor, realtor **Dan Blakeman**, along with flyers with key information about the neighborhood. If you have a new neighbor nearby reach out to Tatiana to be sure they get a warm Morningside welcome and encourage them to join the MCA.



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## MCA Shirts for Sale

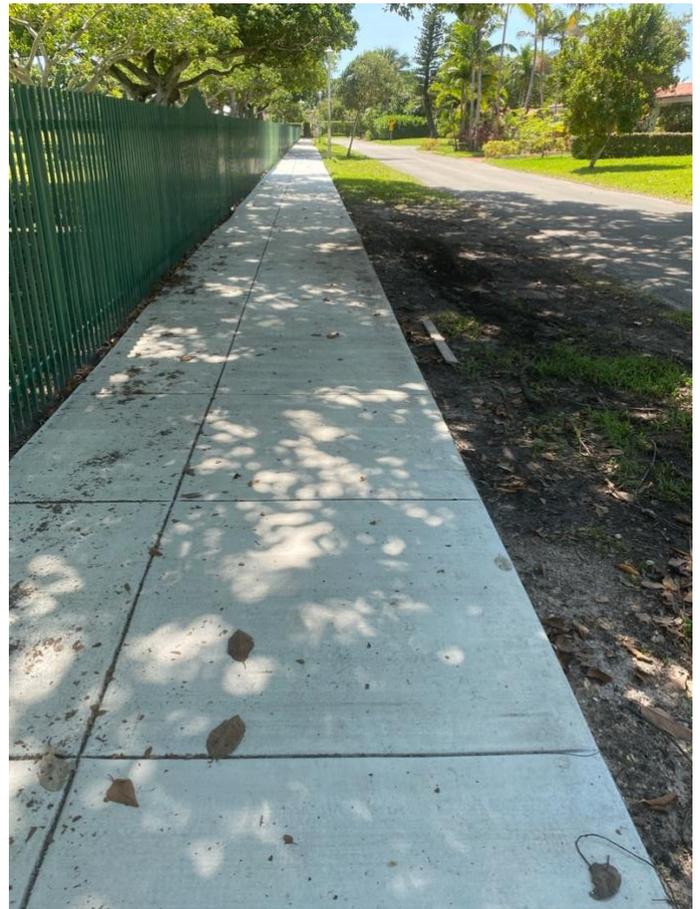
As a fundraiser, MCA t-shirts are for sale on the website, under the tab Members' Only, MCA Store for \$15. Thank you to **Mochee Social**, owned by neighbor **Amy Dang Stojanovic**, for donating the time and talent to design the t-shirts, which incorporate the MCA logo, originally created by **James Mastin**. Neighbor **Andrea Dreyfuss** printed the shirts at cost.



*MCA t-shirts for sale for \$15 on the website.*

## Sidewalks Repaired

In late September The City of Miami installed nearly \$250,000 worth of new sidewalks. These repairs were made as a result of a canvass by Commissioner Russell's staff, in which **Rachel Furst** participated, and at the urging of the MCA. The repairs also addressed issues that were input by City staff and by neighbors into the 311 smartphone application, which is available for download in the "AppStore". Please continue to report matters for repair, including potholes, dead trees, and broken sidewalks through the 311 system. You may also phone 311 directly.



*Before and after pictures of the sidewalks along NE 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.*

## Committee Reports

The MCA has various committees, all chaired by volunteers. A full listing can be viewed on the website and in this newsletter you've read about the work of many of them, but additionally other committee chairs report:

**Architectural Review Committee**, Chair, **Naomi Burt** reports that the ARC is still meeting with neighbors to help them through their design and permitting process. Due to quarantine we had very little projects to review this year but we continue with our volunteer work. Our meeting is very quiet but very diligent! Members include: **Ligia Labrada, Elvis Cruz, David Holtzman**, and **Robert Graboski**.

**Biscayne Boulevard Development Committee**, Chair **Damian Pardo** has been following several projects and reports: (1) Eastside Ridge Project Development : Delayed several times. We drafted a letter a few months back. We are in touch with the development's counsel and will be noticed if any community input meetings. Currently, no immediate construction, but likely will begin in 18 months. (2) Magic City Innovation - current building space at 60%, with no immediate new high rise development planned. Damian has ensured that we will be made aware and are in the loop as to any community input opportunities. (3) Tuttle Street in the Design District – expected to add density and traffic, so Damian will work to be involved in any community efforts.

### 2020 MCA BOARD

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*\*A listing of all current MCA committee chairs, along with the contact information for these board members, is posted on the MCA website.*

**Please renew your MCA membership at [www.morningsidemiami.org](http://www.morningsidemiami.org). Your \$40 annual dues support all the good work the MCA volunteers are doing to build community and improve our wonderful neighborhood Morningside.**