Miami-Dade County Office of Community Advocacy

Elder Affairs Advisory Board

Monthly Public Meeting

Thursday, May 28, 2026

North Miami Beach Library

1601 NE 164th Street North Miami Beach, FL 33162

MINUTES

Members Present: Johnnie Kerr, Deborah “Debbie” Lowe, Marina Blachman, Armando Riera, Danielle Desvallons, Barbara “Barby” Morales, Brenda Lampon

Members Excused: Winnie Tang, Alejandra Cortina

I. Welcome

Chair Barbara "Barby" Morales called the meeting to order at 10:33 a.m.

A roll call was conducted and a quorum was established.

II. Introduction of New Board Member

Chair Morales welcomed Danielle Desvallons, recently appointed by Commissioner Danielle Cohen Higgins, District 8.

Ms. Desvallons introduced herself and stated that this was her first meeting. She shared that she is retired and previously worked at Jackson South Medical Center for more than 16 years. She expressed her interest in participating, helping, and contributing to the Board’s work in support of older adults.

Chair Morales and Board members welcomed Ms. Desvallons and stated that her experience would be valuable to the Board and to the older adult community.

III. Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to Be Heard (2 minutes per person)

Members of the public were invited to introduce themselves and share comments.

Dom Saintil introduced himself as a former state employee who worked with the Department of Children and Families in Elderly Protective Services for approximately three years. He shared that his experience exposed him to both difficult and inspiring situations involving older adults. He stated that he is now working as an insurance agent with Mutual of Omaha and expressed his passion for serving seniors, building connections, and giving back to the community.

Ann Albright spoke regarding concerns with Miami-Dade County public transportation. She stated that, since the implementation of the Better Bus Network in November 2023, several Northeast bus routes have been eliminated or reduced, requiring riders to take multiple buses to reach destinations that were previously more accessible. She also expressed concerns about the lack of printed schedules, inconsistent bus arrival times, long wait times, fare box issues, and maintenance concerns. The Board advised Ms. Albright that her name, telephone number, and email would be collected so that she could be connected with the appropriate transportation contact for follow-up.

Dr. Beauvais introduced herself as a Tai Chi instructor who has taught classes at the North Miami Beach Library and currently teaches in North Miami Beach, North Miami, and Miami Gardens. She shared that older adults participate in Tai Chi, yoga, meditation, and wellness activities. She expressed interest in serving as a resource and exploring opportunities to incorporate Tai Chi and communication classes for older adults throughout the community. The Board encouraged her to provide her contact information.

Eccehomo Guzmán introduced himself in Spanish as the Director of the Colombian Cultural Museum and a volunteer with various Miami-Dade County organizations. He stated that he had recently turned 65 and expressed gratitude for the services provided by the County and government. He also praised the 5th Annual Older Adult Resource Fair held on April 30, 2026, noting that older adults received resources, food, refreshments, gifts, and enjoyed a celebration. The Board thanked him for his kind comments.

Irene Pillinger introduced herself as President of the Friends of the North Miami Beach Library. She welcomed the Board to the library and shared that she also teaches Tai Chi at the library on Monday mornings on a volunteer basis. She expressed interest in learning more about the Board and helping share available resources with library members.

Louise Hartmans introduced herself as a member of the Friends of the Library Board and Vice President of the City of North Miami Beach Commission on Aging. She stated that she attended the meeting to learn about resources that could be shared with seniors. The

Board advised that the Older Adult Resource Guide is available in English, Spanish, and Creole.

Holly Swarling introduced herself as a social worker and reminded the Board that volunteers do have power and influence. She spoke about Miami Herald articles regarding older adults being discharged from hospitals into inappropriate facilities, in some cases without proper care or discharge planning. She expressed concern for older adults without family members or advocates and encouraged the Board to continue advocating, following up, and ensuring that concerns regarding elder care and discharge planning are heard and addressed.

John McIntosh introduced himself as the Media Manager at the North Miami Beach Library and liaison for senior programs and elderly affairs. He stated that he attended to learn more about the Board's work and explore how the library could assist and support the Board's efforts.

A community member shared that she lives in an area that feels isolated and stated that she is unsure whether her area falls under North Miami, Miami Gardens, or unincorporated Miami-Dade County. Staff offered to assist her after the meeting by reviewing her address and identifying the correct jurisdiction.

Another community member spoke in Spanish and shared positive comments about the programs offered at the library, including Zumba and crochet activities. She stated that participating in library programs had improved her health and quality of life and allowed her to share time with others in the community.

IV. Approval of Agenda – May 28, 2026, Meeting (Vote)

Motion by: Armando Riera
Seconded by: Marina Blachman

Vote: The agenda for the May 28, 2026, meeting was approved unanimously.

V. Approval of Minutes – March 26, 2026, Meeting (Vote)

Board members reviewed the March 26, 2026, meeting minutes.

Motion: Deborah "Debbie" Lowe
Second: Armando Riera

Vote: The minutes of March 26, 2026, meeting were approved unanimously.

VI. Presentation
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Presenter:
Ivonne Perez-Suarez
Consumer Outreach Coordinator
Division of Consumer Services
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Ms. Perez-Suarez thanked the Board for the invitation and provided an overview of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. She explained that the department is not limited to agriculture and farming but also oversees many consumer-related areas that affect daily life. She noted that the Division of Consumer Services serves as the state clearinghouse for consumer complaints, business and charitable organization information, educational materials, and consumer protection presentations.

Ms. Perez-Suarez stated that she is based in Miami and covers South Florida, including the Florida Keys, the Fort Myers area, Martin County, and surrounding areas. She explained that her presentations are free of charge and available in English, Spanish, and Spanglish.

The presentation focused on frauds and scams affecting older adults, particularly in Miami-Dade County. Topics included:

• Government imposter scams, including callers pretending to be from the IRS, Social Security, banks, credit card companies, or other official entities.
• The increased use of artificial intelligence in scams, including voice imitation and fake communications.
• Identity theft and fraud trends, including Miami-Dade County being a hotspot for identity theft and credit card fraud in high-traffic areas and at gas pumps.
• Investment and cryptocurrency scams, including fraudulent investment opportunities shared by text, email, payment apps, wire transfers, and artificial intelligence-generated scripts.
• Real estate, condominium, HOA, and deed fraud scams, including cases in which homeowners may not know that their property information has been fraudulently changed.
• The importance of using the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser website to locate the property folio number and the Clerk of the Court's property protection tools to help monitor and protect property records.
• Healthcare and Medicare fraud, including Miami's history as a hub for organized healthcare fraud.
• Child identity theft and the importance of awareness among parents and grandparents.

• Romance and companion scams targeting older adults, particularly those who may be isolated, lonely, widowed, or financially vulnerable.
• Elder financial exploitation involving caregivers or individuals who build trust with older adults.
• Hurricane season scams, including unlicensed contractors, door-to-door solicitations, fake law enforcement, and urgent repair offers.
• The importance of verifying licenses, asking questions, obtaining written estimates, and checking businesses before hiring contractors, movers, repair shops, or other service providers.
• The regulation of certain businesses by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, including gyms, Pilates studios, travel sellers, motor vehicle repair shops, telemarketing companies, pawn shops, moving companies, charitable organizations, and pest control-related services.
• The "Check a Charity" tool for verifying whether charitable organizations are registered in the State of Florida.
• The importance of not calling back phone numbers provided in suspicious messages, letters, or voicemails, and instead contacting the company or agency through an official customer service number.
• The importance of verifying information from official government websites, including checking agency press releases when claims are made regarding Social Security or other benefits.
• Florida's Do Not Call Registry, which allows residents to register cell phones and landlines free of charge.
• Mail fraud prevention and the U.S. Postal Service Informed Delivery program, which allows residents to receive daily email images of incoming mail.
• The role of Agricultural Law Enforcement and coordination with local law enforcement when investigating fraud cases involving regulated industries.

During the discussion, attendees asked questions regarding deed fraud, locking property information, whether protection tools require payment, fake logos and business communications, healthcare fraud, child identity theft, romance scams, fraudulent contractors, voter registration concerns, artificial intelligence, phone access for older adults, the Florida Do Not Call list, and enforcement actions against scammers.

Ms. Perez-Suarez also proposed the idea of a future "Pass It On Pop-Up" event at the library or in partnership with the Board, where older adults could receive assistance registering for the Florida Do Not Call list and navigating consumer protection resources.

The Board thanked Ms. Perez-Suarez for her informative presentation and expressed interest in inviting her back for future presentations, including a possible hurricane preparedness and scams presentation.

VII. Community Outreach Committee Updates

A. 5th Annual Older Adult Resource Fair 2026

Staff provided a recap of the 5th Annual Older Adult Resource Fair held on April 30, 2026, as part of the celebration of Older Americans Month.

Staff explained that the purpose of the annual fair is to bring together organizations that provide services to older adults and caregivers, allowing the community to learn about available resources, access information, and participate in a community celebration. The event included service providers, educational resources, live music, food, raffles, and entertainment.

The Board discussed the importance of reviewing lessons learned from the 2026 fair and identifying improvements for the 2027 fair. Members suggested that this discussion could take place during a future Community Outreach Committee meeting.

Staff also noted that community partners and performers who supported the fair may be recognized with certificates of appreciation. The Board discussed recognizing the performers who participated and provided entertainment during the event.

B. Older Adult Resource Guide 2026

Staff reported that work had begun on the next edition of the Older Adult Resource Guide. Staff explained that, instead of having three separate versions in English, Spanish, and Creole, the goal is to combine all three languages into one publication to make distribution easier.

Staff also reported that distribution of the current guide is ongoing and that the English version is nearly depleted due to high demand.

During the discussion, a question was raised regarding whether detailed information from the FDACS consumer protection presentation could be included in the Resource Guide. Staff explained that the guide includes organization names, telephone numbers, and websites, but does not include full presentations due to space limitations. A digital version or additional online resources were discussed as possible options.

VIII. Old Business

Board Vacancies

Staff provided an update regarding Board vacancies and stated that efforts are ongoing to fill open positions, including the AARP representative position and district vacancies.

Ethics Refresher Training

Staff reported that the Ethics Refresher Training presentation by Robert Thompson of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust had been rescheduled for a future meeting. Staff will contact Mr. Thompson regarding possible dates in July, September, or October 2026. November was not recommended due to Board elections.

2026 Meeting Calendar and Locations

The Board discussed future meeting locations and the importance of holding meetings in different areas of Miami-Dade County to reach more older adults.

Chair Morales encouraged Board members to assist in identifying possible meeting venues within their respective districts. She specifically requested assistance in locating venues in southern areas of the county and asked the new District 8 Board member to contact her district office for recommendations.

IX. Announcements

Alliance for Aging 2026 Annual Conference

The Board discussed the Alliance for Aging 2026 Annual Conference held on May 7, 2026. Several Board members attended and gathered information from the Alliance for Aging and participating vendors. Appreciation was expressed to Vice Chair Deborah “Debbie” Lowe for donating tickets, which allowed Board members to participate and represent the Board at the conference.

Older Americans Month Celebration and Community Outreach

Staff reported that, in recognition of Older Americans Month, the Alliance for Aging, Miami-Dade County Community Services Department, and Brenda Lampon from the Mayor’s Office coordinated presentations at several older adult centers throughout Miami-Dade County. Staff participated on behalf of the Board and stated that the experience was very positive and allowed the Board to connect directly with older adults in the community.

Age-Friendly Initiative Event

Board members discussed their participation in the Age-Friendly Initiative event held on May 21, 2026, at Arcola Lakes Senior Center. The event focused on Miami-Dade County's age-friendly future, parks, policy, and community impact.

Brenda Lampon provided an update on the Age-Friendly Initiative, noting that Miami-Dade County has been involved in the initiative for approximately 13 to 14 years and is one of the leading entities advancing the effort. She reported that several parks were certified as age-friendly, similar to the certification held by public libraries and certain community sites.

Ms. Lampon explained that the goal is to continue making parks throughout Miami-Dade County safe, accessible, independent, and socially engaging for older adults. She noted that Arcola Lakes Senior Center was selected because of its age-friendly programming, physical activity opportunities, social activities, and accessible meeting space.

A question was raised regarding intergenerational programs that bring grandparents and younger children together. Ms. Lampon stated that Miami-Dade County Community Services Department offers programming that includes intergenerational components, grandparent programs, volunteer opportunities for older adults, and community engagement opportunities across generations. She suggested that Elvis Caines from CSD could be invited to provide a future presentation on these programs.

Older Adult Resource Fair – North Dade Regional Library

The Board reviewed the upcoming Older Adult Resource Fair hosted by the Miami-Dade Public Library System on Saturday, May 30, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the North Dade Regional Library, located at 2455 NW 183rd Street, Miami Gardens, FL 33056.

Staff stated that the Elder Affairs Advisory Board would participate and that staff had been selected as one of the speakers. Board members were encouraged to attend and support the event if available. It was also noted that several organizations, including the Alliance for Aging, would participate and provide information about services, waiting lists, and other resources.

A clarification was provided that the North Miami Beach Library is part of the municipality of North Miami Beach, while the North Dade Regional Library is part of the Miami-Dade County Public Library System.

City of Hialeah Division of Emergency Management Second Annual Disaster Preparedness Fair

The Board reviewed the upcoming City of Hialeah Division of Emergency Management Second Annual Disaster Preparedness Fair scheduled for June 13, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Milander Center for Arts and Entertainment.

Staff stated that the Board would participate in the event. Alejandra Cortina, District 13 Board member, was also expected to attend. Board members were invited to participate and assist with outreach.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Event

The Board reviewed the upcoming World Elder Abuse Awareness Day event scheduled for Monday, June 15, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Betty T. Ferguson Recreational Complex Gymnasium in Miami Gardens.

It was noted that the State Attorney's Office, police departments, Adult Protective Services, DCF, and other organizations would participate. Board members and attendees were encouraged to attend and arrive early due to expected parking and attendance.

Informational Notice – Florida Medicaid DMEPOS Enrollment Moratorium

Staff provided an informational update regarding the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration's temporary six-month statewide moratorium on the enrollment of new Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies providers in the Florida Medicaid program, effective March 20, 2026.

Staff noted that existing providers and current Medicaid beneficiaries are not affected, and access to authorized equipment and supplies will continue uninterrupted. The update impacts providers throughout the State of Florida, including Miami-Dade County.

Voting Reminder

Board members were reminded that they may not abstain from voting unless there is a conflict of interest.

Financial Disclosure Reminder

Board members were reminded that their 2025 Financial Disclosure Forms must be submitted by July 1, 2026. Members were encouraged to complete and submit the forms as soon as possible.

Next Meeting

The next EAAB Monthly Public Meeting was announced for June 25, 2026.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, Chair Barbara “Barby” Morales adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m.