

# MIAMI BEACH

City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Philip Levine and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: July 26, 2017

SUBJECT: **Miami Beach Log Cabin**



### **BACKGROUND**

Over the past several weeks there have been several discussions about the future of the Miami Beach Log cabin. Both the Miami-Dade County and Miami Beach Historic Preservation Boards have expressed support to restore and retain the structure. The Planning and Property Management departments have researched and provided the following information about the Miami Beach Log Cabin at 8128 Collins Avenue. Our Building Official has also visited the site. By way of background our records indicate the following:

- Construction date: 1934
- Architect: E.A. Ehmann
- General Contractor: Owner by foreman (F.F. Roderic)
- Original owner: A.T. Drew / Charles Crawford
- Type of construction: Log cabin
- Cost: \$4,000
- Foundation: reinforced concrete
- Original use: residence
- The permit history of alterations and repairs include:
  - 1940: general repairs and paint
  - 1951: roof repair
  - 1955: addition of screened pagoda
  - 1969: enclosure of carport
  - 1970: 4-foot CBS block wall

The property is not located within any local historic district and is not individually designated as a local historic structure. The property was vacated in 2013. Staff cannot find any additional historical information about the Miami Beach Log cabin.

### Current Facility Condition

In May 2017, per the direction of Administration, the Property Management Division of the City's Public Works Department commissioned a conditions assessment report of the Log Cabin structure from BEA Architects, Inc. The consultant was asked to assess the building's conditions and provide cost estimates associated with conducting a major upgrade of the structure, relocating the structure to elsewhere on the site and maintaining the structure as a sort of gateway building for the site. The consultant determined that relocation was not viable (as further damage and/or collapse is possible) and, given the extent of the deterioration, making the structure code compliant would be "synonymous with construction of a new replacement structure". The cost estimate totaled \$487,500. This report was presented at the June 16, 2017 Finance and Citywide Committee meeting where the committee moved to fund the demolition and removal of the structure in the amount of \$15,000.

Based on feedback from residents and the Mayor's North Beach Committee request for second and third consultant evaluations and opinions, Property Management staff continued to meet with several North Beach residents, reached out to the Building Official and contacted additional consultants for evaluation. The City's Building Official visited the site and advised that the structure was not suitable for public use or occupancy. In particular, he noted that it is a fire trap, has no fire protection, and does not comply with ADA or Florida Building Code accessibility requirements. He suggested perhaps conserving interior logs in sound condition and the coral rock chimney in the center of the building as well. This opinion is in line with the initial assessment obtained from BEA Architects and suggests that a feasible restoration scope may be limited to salvaging key components of the structure that remain in fair condition today.

Upon learning of the successful restoration of the log cabin structure at Village of Biscayne Park, Property Management staff contacted McKenzie Construction- the contractor responsible for the restoration- for a second opinion (attached). The estimate provided for our cabin totals \$595,866 and does not include contingency. McKenzie also concludes that restoration is essentially synonymous with rebuilding the structure while retaining certain historic elements.

The City has no budgeted funds for restoration of the Log Cabin.

### Biscayne Park Log Cabin

In 2016, the Village of Biscayne Park completed the restoration of an existing log-cabin structure. This project returned the Log Cabin to its original intended use, the City Commission chambers and public meeting space. For comparison purposes, the City contacted the Village of Biscayne Park for additional information. The Village Manager has provided the City with the following information. The total cost of project was \$542,830.63.

A portion of the funding for the project was provided by a \$1 million State of Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Grant to building a new Village Hall annex, and a \$25,000 grant from the Villagers, Inc.) The remainder was funded by the Village. The contractor was McKenzie Construction and architect was RJ Heisenebottle.

The original use of the Biscayne Park log cabin was the city commission chambers and

public gatherings. Over the years, the porches were enclosed to make room for staff and it ultimately became administrative offices and police department. Since the cabin was made entirely of Dade County Pine, there was little deterioration of the actual logs. A new roof was installed as well as updated plumbing, electrical and impact rated custom windows and doors were built and installed. The original hardwood floor had been covered with a new wood floor at some point years ago. There were really no significant structural issues encountered, as the Dade Pine remained in excellent shape overall.

There is more history found on this Biscayne Park cabin, as detailed in the Village of Biscayne Park website. "The Works Progress Administration built the log cabin, a clear and distinct reference to the Depression era as well as to the simplicity of the American frontier days. On February 1, 1933, at the height of the Depression, the Federal Emergency Relief Program provided the labor for the Dade County pine construction. William Green, a resident of the Park, as well as a Councilperson, was a regional administrator for the federal program and was certainly instrumental in the creation of the Park's singular and distinctive building. The actual expenses incurred were a grand total of \$247, met by individual donations of \$5 to \$20 and gifts from the Card Club that ranged from \$10 to \$22. In light of today's multiple million dollar projects, these modest sums seem very quaint, but when held in light of the circumstances in which they occurred during the national depression, they reflect generous and caring residents and a community that was conscientious of their town. At a special ceremony on January 24th, 1935, the finished Log Cabin was officially turned over to the Village, and to this day has been the center for the daily operations of the Park. Since its creation in the thirties, it has been the prized symbol of the Village of Biscayne Park."

## **CONCLUSION**

Staff is seeking direction from the Mayor and City Commission with respect to requests to restore or retain the building.

JLM/SMT

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