



MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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LETTER TO COMMISSION
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TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: May 25, 2010

SUBJECT: REPORT ON PLANNING EFFORTS FOR MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND 2010 (THURSDAY, MAY 27, 2010 – MONDAY, MAY 31, 2010)

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

Similar to the City's successful planning efforts for past Memorial Day Weekends, the City began a comprehensive and coordinated planning effort several months ago to prepare for the upcoming Memorial Day 2010 Holiday Weekend (Thursday, May 27, 2010 – Monday, May 31, 2010). Irrespective of any events and based upon early occupancy reports, it is anticipated that this year's holiday weekend will attract at least as many people as previous Memorial Day weekends, causing the City's resources to be strained.

Background

By all accounts, the popularity of Miami Beach for Memorial Day Weekend has been the product of internet promotion of the destination by prior visitors and web sites that promote certain locations during particular times of the year (e.g. New Years, Labor Day, Spring Break). For the past few years there has been no formal, organized event(s) in the City associated with this Major Event Period (MEP), as compared to the MEP for the Super Bowl, New Year's Eve or Art Basel Miami Beach, for example. Usually, most of the visitors enjoy the weekend at our local hotels, cafes and beach, and our clubs will have private events within their properties. Memorial Day Weekend generally attracts an estimated 200,000 people to the City over the course of Thursday to Monday, with the busiest period being Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Occupancy rates at local hotels are currently at about 85%, and we will continue to monitor. Needless to say, the influx of so many visitors to the City requires us to plan for traffic, crowd control, sanitation, code and parking. As a result, our MEP Planning process looks at prior years in developing the staffing and operational plan for the current year. The focus is to ensure the safety and welfare of our residents and visitors, while keeping our streets clean and traffic manageable.

Enhanced Staffing

Various departments enhance their staffing this weekend, including our Parking, Code Compliance, Public Works/Sanitation, Tourism and Cultural Development, Fire/Rescue and Police Department. My office also works throughout the weekend during various shifts, providing executive level support, as needed. While staffing plans are prepared in anticipation of expected crowds, these plans are adjusted, as needed, including decreasing staffing throughout the weekend if appropriate.

As part of the City of Miami Beach's MEP Plan, in 2003, the City began submitting a request for In-Kind Services assistance to Miami-Dade County to provide enhanced public safety resources, beach maintenance and the participation of members of the County's Goodwill Ambassador Team, to assist the City of Miami Beach throughout the Memorial Day holiday weekend. In 2005, the County included In-Kind support for Memorial Day weekend in their annual budget, which eliminates the need for a separate request. Annual in-kind support is based on actual costs from the previous year. As in the past year, the City's Police Department will be canceling off-duty assignments and deploying public safety staff on an alpha/bravo shift assignment. This will be supplemented by mutual aid from Miami-Dade County and additional assistance from Florida Highway Patrol, City of Miami, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Miami-Dade Corrections Department, Coral Gables, Fort Lauderdale and other jurisdictions. The County's Parks Department also enhances their beach cleanup staff and schedule.

MEP Scope

In addition to addressing enhanced staffing to ensure sufficient coverage to address any life safety and quality of life issues, the MEP addresses everything from transportation (road closures, etc.) to sanitation (placement of additional waste bins, clean up schedule) and parking. The plan also addresses operational issues, such as coordinating Goodwill Ambassadors, developing community outreach plans, placement of VMS signs, production of signage and other informational materials, etc. The plan is managed by the Tourism and Cultural Development Department's Film/Special Events Section.

Events:

As previously noted, there are no organized events in the City relating to Memorial Day Weekend. A large outdoor concert is scheduled in the City of Miami Saturday night that may result in additional visitors to the City after the concert. The City has advised event promoters that our resources will be fully extended during the Memorial Day weekend (a major holiday weekend) and unavailable to support any events on public property. Similar to Super Bowl, the City will, however, continue to work with those organizations who desire to host events on their property and require approvals for change of use. At present, only the Catalina Hotel, Carlton Hotel and Beach Plaza Hotel have each applied for a special event permit for entertainment on their property throughout the weekend. The Miami Beach Convention Center is hosting an amateur boxing tournament on Saturday, May 29 from 3:00pm – 7:00pm.

Traffic/Pedestrian Plan

The Miami Beach Police Department will implement a transportation plan between Ocean Drive, Collins and Washington avenues from 6th Street to 16th Street from 7:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. daily, beginning Friday, May 28 through Monday morning, May 31. This plan includes the closure of the 100 blocks on 8th and 10th streets throughout the weekend. Washington Avenue and Collins Avenue will remain with two-way traffic. If population expectations surpass or do not materialize, the transportation plan will be altered accordingly to ensure public safety.

The City will once again implement a plan similar to last year to address pedestrian overflow along Collins Avenue, especially on certain blocks where pedestrian flow often exceeds sidewalk capacity. The plan was first implemented in 2007 with much success. Sidewalks along Collins Avenue will be expanded into the parking lane using French barricades to accommodate the large pedestrian crowds from 7th Street to Espanola Way. French barricades will also be utilized along the curb on the east side parking lanes of the 600, 1200 and 1400 blocks of Washington Avenue to increase pedestrian capacity on the sidewalks in front of these busy venues and prevent overflow into the street. For the first time this year, the City will expand the western sidewalk to the centerline of Ocean Drive from 7th Street to 12th Street. Vehicular traffic will be restricted north bound for this area of Ocean Drive. Valet ramps will be relocated to the 100 blocks of 9, 11 and 12 street, and passenger loading zones will be created on the east side of Ocean Drive to accommodate hotel guests. The partial Ocean Drive closure was reviewed with NODARA and the Ocean Drive Merchants Association.

The Miami-Dade Transit Agency will operate the Local shuttle bus service and offer free transportation throughout the weekend.

The Traffic management plan provides for officers at key intersections to ensure traffic flow and restrict access as may be determined. As always, our Police Department closely monitors traffic and the "Management of Transportation" Plan also includes provisions to temporarily close any of our causeways leading into the City, if needed.

Community Outreach

The City has also been working with the Miami-Dade County Office of Community Relations to expand our Goodwill Ambassador Program. As you know, the City's Goodwill Ambassadors provide assistance, providing information to our visitors, and helping our visitors remain informed on pertinent laws and dispel any confusion our guests may have. This year we have a record number of volunteers, who will be further augmented by God Squad members (volunteers from faith-based organizations).

In addition to an expanded Goodwill Ambassador program, we have expanded our information efforts

before and during this weekend. These efforts include informational signage, flyers, and radio outreach providing information in current City, State and Federal codes. Consistent with our other efforts to provide and facilitate information to our visitors and residents during the MEP, the City will activate an "Answer Center" during the weekend, and weekday after hours. Answer Center staff will be able to assist with directing questions and will also forward any police complaints to the on-duty Internal Affairs sergeant for their review and handling. We will be working with our Communications Staff to promote (via signage, brochures, etc.) the availability of the Answer Center number to our visitors and residents, including the issues that the Answer Center can assist with.

Given the current economy hotel occupancy booking trends are very short term. That being said, we have no reason to think hotel occupancy in the region's hotels will be different than in previous years. The City is continuing to conduct a broad and concerted outreach effort throughout the community, as delineated above. This outreach has been coordinated with the assistance of the Nightlife Advisory Task Force, the Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association, GMCVB, South Beach Restaurant and Hotel Association, and Miami-Dade County.

Additionally, as has been done in prior years, staff attended various community meetings and organization meetings to provide information on our Memorial Day Weekend MEP Plan.

Other Initiatives/MEP components

In accordance with the MEP, several other initiatives continue and are ongoing, including:

- Internal staff meetings have been conducted and expanded to include County beach maintenance, public safety, code compliance and transportation system staff and community stakeholders.
- Department staffing plans, including enhanced levels of service and fiscal impact, have been developed.
- In addition to typical issues monitored by Code, such as noise, Code compliance's enhanced staff will assist in monitoring for particular issues that have been a concern in the past during these high-impact weekends, such as flyers/handbills, illegal vendors, promoter licenses, sampling, illegal advertising and any special events without a permit, among other things.
- Pre-planned coordination with City, County and State law enforcement agencies to develop an effective resource deployment allocation, including provision of off-duty police for area hotels has been ongoing.
- The City's current beach litter efforts will continue to be implemented this weekend.

Other related events

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) selected Memorial Day Weekend to observe the City's ability to execute Goal 1 of the National Emergency Communications Plan. Goal 1 states, "By 2010, 90 percent of all high-risk urban areas designated within the UASI are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies." The cities of Miami and Fort Lauderdale will also be participating in this demonstration, as well as providing Miami Beach with assistance throughout the weekend. This demonstration will take place on Friday, May 28, 2010 from 7:00pm – 12:00am.

Conclusion

The City has been effectively communicating all action plans both internally and externally prior to the weekend's events. While we cannot assure any major impact weekend will go without incident, the City is effectively planning and preparing its resources to assure a safe, clean, and successful weekend. I will keep you all personally apprised of any issues that may arise.

As always, please feel free to call me should you have any questions or require additional information.

C: Management Team

JMG/HMF/MAS

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