

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Alina T. Hudak, City Manager 

DATE: June 30, 2023

SUBJECT: Discussion on the History and Impact of Spring Break on Miami Beach, Including Previous Commission Directives and Request for Feedback on Proposed Strategies for March 2024.

The impact of “spring break” during the month of March has evolved into a significant challenge for Miami Beach in recent years. An influx of visitors from both out-of-state and local jurisdictions during this time period presents numerous issues that affect our residents’ quality of life, businesses, and overall City operations. While there has been economic growth in terms of revenue, it does not offset the real public safety concerns and strain on City services. Over the last eight years, these challenges have progressively escalated — demanding a comprehensive evolving approach to maintain the balance between tourism and the well-being of our local community.

The City of Miami Beach has worked diligently to manage the impact by implementing various measures such as increased law enforcement, a variety of traffic management tactics, temporary regulations, public awareness campaigns, and over the past four years – city produced programming. These efforts, however, have fallen short in addressing the issues arising mostly in the evening from the volume of visitors. It is evident that a more robust strategy continues to be required to ensure the year-round health of our tourism while safeguarding the quality of life for residents.

### **RECENT SPRING BREAK HISTORY**

The following outlines the recent history of spring break in Miami Beach:

In March 2020, the City established a secured fenced perimeter on the beach between 8 to 10 streets where free programming activities were organized. Monitored entrance points equipped with handheld metal detectors were used as a security measure along with restrictions on bags and coolers. Although the programming was tailored to spring breakers, most chose to stay outside of the secured perimeter. The City experienced an extremely high number of visitors that took over segments of the beach and Ocean Drive with disruptive behavior. Programming was suspended by the second weekend in March due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the Countywide shutdown.

The City chose not to pursue programming in 2021 as a result of the ongoing pandemic, however, a State of Emergency was declared after experiencing overwhelming crowds. With most of the country shutdown in March 2021, Miami Beach became the destination

of choice. An 8 p.m. curfew was implemented in the Entertainment District with City Commission approval for three weeks.

In 2022, month-long programming branded Miami Beach Live! was created that featured a variety of free daytime activations and evening concerts both east of the dunes and in Lummus Park. Musical performers included Alanis Morissette, Jon Batiste, Juanes, and Wilson Philips. Daytime activations consisted of fitness classes as well as kid and wellness zones. The evening concerts were ticketed and took place in a fenced perimeter on the beach between 12 to 14 streets. This activation was suspended for the fourth weekend after two shooting incidents injured five people on Ocean Drive over a two-day period. As required by State law, a State of Emergency was declared for the fourth weekend in March to impose a midnight curfew.

This year, Miami Beach Live! focused on fitness and sporting competitions along with live entertainment. Popular events included international beach volleyball tournaments Vodafone Queen & King of the Court and the Association of Volleyball Professionals Miami Beach Open, HYROX Miami Beach Fitness Festival, and others. Programming that was mostly free to the public extended from daytime to nighttime hours and took place along Ocean Drive, Lummus Park, and the beachfront. In response to large, unruly crowds and two fatal shootings during the third weekend, a State of Emergency was issued with a midnight curfew between Sunday, March 19 through 6 a.m. on Monday, March 20, 2023.

#### **SPRING BREAK 2024**

Following City Commission direction this year, staff embarked to identify and recruit a large-scale family-friendly event to be held in March 2024 — occupying a substantial portion of Lummus Park and the beach. For close to a year, City leadership had already been in negotiations with the Goodwood Festival of Speed to bring their event to Miami Beach. The organizers have since decided not to proceed. Despite this setback, staff remains committed to seeking out events in partnership with the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) that align with the Commission's vision for future March programming.

At the March 27, 2023 City Commission meeting, the following was approved:

**A resolution directing the Administration to explore the viability to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to provide the City Manager with advance authority to close any of the causeways, based on capacity limits and/or other established criteria.**

- Staff has since met with FDOT leadership to explore the viability of the City entering into an MOU. As described in item R9 C, FDOT does not have the statutory authority to delegate authority to a municipality to close a road, highway, or causeway on the State Highway System. Additionally, there are challenges related to constitutional and state laws and regulations, and the authorization and circumstances required to implement a causeway closure outside of a Governor-declared state of emergency, maintenance of traffic plans for construction projects and maintenance work, and for emergency incidents in coordination with the Florida Highway Patrol. Please find item R9C attached for additional details.

**A resolution directing the Administration to explore attracting an entity to plan and produce a private event on Ocean Drive and surrounding areas within a secured perimeter with ticketed admissions and appropriate security.**

- A Request for Letters of Interest (RFLI) was issued to explore viable options for programming in an established and managed secured perimeter for spring break 2024. The RFLI requested entities with expertise in event management, crowd control, security, and logistics to provide their perspectives, proposed strategies, and capabilities in addressing the unique challenges of spring break in Miami Beach. Five responses were received, and they will assist us in selecting potential partners for further discussion and evaluation if that is the will of the Commission. Unfortunately, at this time there appears to be conflicting direction regarding any availability of funding for programming partnerships. This issue needs to be resolved to pursue any of these options.
- The event organizers of nearly all our large, daytime activations that took place in March 2023 — including King and Queen of the Court, AVP Miami Beach Open, and HYROX Fitness Festival — have expressed strong interest in returning next year. We recommend giving consideration to bringing back these sporting and fitness activations. The estimated cost to the City is approximately \$2 million.
- Establishing a secured perimeter with access points staffed by security personnel and supported by magnetometers and/or handheld metal detectors to ensure effective screening and monitoring. Preliminary perimeter options and costs are the following:
  - Between Ocean Court to the western edge of the dunes, 5 Street to 14 Place —\$2.8 Million
  - Between Ocean Court and the serpentine in Lummus Park, 5 Street to 14 Place — \$2.9 Million
  - Between Ocean Court and the shoreline, 5 Street to 14 Place — \$3 Million

Please note that we would expect any event producer to provide this service. Estimates were obtained for planning purposes and your benefit.

**A motion to prepare a rollback of liquor sales for some period of time to sunset at the end of March. Seeking Administration's guidance on the geographic area.**

- Staff in coordination with the City Attorney's Office developed two separate ordinances for your consideration, which would prohibit the sale and on-premise consumption of alcoholic beverages at alcoholic beverage establishments between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and 8 a.m. Please find item R9B attached for additional details.

**A motion to endorse a State of Emergency in advance of spring break 2024 for the area south of Dade Boulevard and 23 Street during the two busiest weeks (including weekends) in March.**

In addition to the above directives, and in preparation for March 2024, staff and I continue to meet, prepare and review options to include the following:

- **Enhanced law enforcement.** A bolstered law enforcement presence south of Dade Boulevard will continue to be essential in maintaining order, enforcing regulations, and swiftly responding to any incidents or emergencies. During the second and third weekends in March, the Police Department will again maximize its staffing by having all available personnel deployed Thursday through Sunday. I have specifically asked that Alpha/Bravo scheduling be instituted in the same fashion we do during Memorial Day Weekend. Enhanced personnel will be assigned to specific areas along Ocean Drive and will include fixed posts, ATVs, and bicycle patrols. Officers will be assigned to License Plate Reader (LPR) details and DUI checkpoints. Assistance from outside agencies will again be deployed citywide for increased visibility and emergency calls for service. As we approach March 2024 and gather additional intelligence, the Police Department will refine plans for the deployment of resources.
  
- **Declaration of a preemptive State of Emergency and curfew.** I am prepared to declare a State of Emergency and establish a curfew, pursuant to State law. Close coordination with local businesses, associations, and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) – including the Ocean Drive Association, Washington Avenue BID, Lincoln Road BID, hospitality industry stakeholders, and community organizations will be crucial to implementing this action. Our partnership with the GMCVB will play a critical role in developing our messaging before, during, and after March 2024.
  
- **High Impact Ordinance.** My staff and I are in the process of reviewing and updating the High Impact Ordinance. Depending on feedback received at the July 6, 2023 Special City Commission meeting, a revised ordinance will be brought for First Reading at the July 26, 2023 meeting. Amendments for your consideration include:
  - Redefining the boundaries of the high impact zone
  - Modifying the duration of the high impact period to mirror City code Section 6-3 (a) (9) “Disclosure requirements for alcoholic beverage establishments”
  - Closing of segments of the beach at 6 p.m.
  - Imposing a high impact parking rate
  
- **Closure of all city-owned parking garages south of Dade Boulevard** except access for service industry personnel, cardholders, and residents. While it is premature to establish a specific closure time, we are considering a closure between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.
  
- **Robust marketing and communications** to promote the anticipated State of Emergency and curfew.

I remain committed to identifying and implementing all viable strategies at my disposal to enhance public safety during March 2024 for our residents, businesses, and visitors. My staff and I continue to meet with production companies and neighboring jurisdictions to

explore any other new possibilities. We can only be successful through open and ongoing dialogue. I look forward to receiving your feedback and direction.