

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: February 3, 2025

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE AT ITS SEPTEMBER 20, 2024 MEETING, TO SPONSOR THE WOLFSONIAN-FIU AUDIOVISUAL UPGRADE TO SUPPORT LOCAL CINEMA PROGRAMMING; AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER AND CITY CLERK TO EXECUTE A SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT, SUBJECT TO BUDGET APPROPRIATION.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends approval of the resolution, authorizing the sponsorship agreement with The Wolfsonian-FIU to support local cinema programming. Should the Mayor and City Commission desire to fund the sponsorship, it is recommended that funding be considered as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget process.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

On July 24, 2024, at the request of Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez, the Mayor and City Commission approved a referral to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee to discuss a sponsorship of The Wolfsonian-Florida International University (or The Wolfsonian-FIU), audiovisual upgrade to support local cinema programming.

The Wolfsonian-FIU, located in the heart of the Art Deco District of Miami Beach, Florida, is a museum, library and research center that uses its collection to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design. The Wolfsonian-FIU has been a Miami Beach Cultural Anchor institution since 1997. For Fiscal Year 2024, the City has funded The Wolfsonian-FIU in the amount of \$31,065 through the City's Cultural Arts Council grant program.

ANALYSIS

At the September 20, 2024, Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee (FERC) meeting, the Committee recommended that the Wolfsonian-FIU present weekly film screenings throughout the year (52 film screenings) and requested City staff to discuss with the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) if they could provide any funding towards upgrading the audio-visual equipment. In addition, if the Wolfsonian-FIU were to receive funding from FIU, Committee members requested the funding from the City be reduced accordingly. The Committee further directed that the request for seating be removed from the proposal for future consideration.

On October 24, 2024, the Wolfsonian-FIU resubmitted a Cinema Upgrade Proposal (subsequently amended to remove the seating request) for an upgrade of its existing audiovisual equipment (including installation) in The Wolfsonian Auditorium with an explanation and breakdown of costs as follows:

Proposed Audio-Visual Upgrade to Support Cinema Programming

Equipment & Systems:

The proposal includes installing an updated projector with higher resolution and increased lumens, ensuring brighter, sharper, and more vivid images. Integrating an enhanced projection screen will further improve the visual clarity and quality. Compared to the current systems, the updated projector, screen, and audio equipment will improve the visitors' viewing experience.

However, The Wolfsonian-FIU's technicians noted that an acoustic review and improvements would be necessary for an optimal cinematic experience. A separate proposal and engagement with a firm specializing in acoustic assessments and recommendations would be required. The proposal does not include a request for an acoustical assessment or improvement.

The one-time budget to upgrade the audiovisual equipment (including installation) is \$86,513.86.

Proposed Cinema Programming

Based on the FERC recommendations to increase the opportunity for residents and visitors to view films, when possible, subject to film rights agreements and auditorium availability, The Wolfsonian-FIU would present encore screenings of 12 monthly free Friday evening films, 12 monthly free Saturday matinees, and 12 monthly free Sunday as matinees for up to 36 potential film showings.

The free Friday night screenings would consist of two (2) series, running on alternating months. Each series would allow audiences to see a film and appreciate it in richer contexts formed by viewings of The Wolfsonian-FIU collections and conversations led by experts.

One series would focus on foreign-language films, presented in partnership with local consulates (The Wolfsonian-FIU has already successfully piloted this concept with the German consulate in 2023 and will repeat that in 2024). Each film would be selected in collaboration with cultural officers at the consulates, focusing on films from the pre-1945 period and/or corresponding to important themes from The Wolfsonian's collection. Each screening will be preceded by a special showing of relevant rare items in The Wolfsonian-FIU's library collection, led by Library Curator Frank Luca. A brief, expert-led discussion would follow the screenings.

The other series would consist of films that complement The Wolfsonian-FIU's exhibition program. For example, in the coming year, The Wolfsonian-FIU will feature exhibitions that deal with the representation of landscapes in fine and decorative art, the work of Irish stained-glass artist Harry Clarke in the context of Ireland's independence movement, and visions of the future represented in 20th-century world fairs. Each of these themes lend themselves to pairings with films. The same is true of future planned exhibitions for 2025 and 2026, which will address (1) the evolution of guitar design and technology in the early 20th century and (2) jewelry design. A series of films about jewelry heists would be attractive, for example. As with the other series, we would offer a staff-led tour before each screening and expert-led discussions afterward.

Festival screenings

In addition to the Miami Film Festival, many other specialized film festivals occur annually in South Florida including:

- Miami Jewish Film Festival
- Iffinito Brazilian Film Festival
- OUTshine Film Festival
- Popcorn Frights
- Miami Short Film Festival
- Third Horizon Film Festival
- American Black Film Festival
- Miami International Science Fiction Film Festival

By offering a new venue for screenings, The Wolfsonian-FIU would provide support to local festivals while increasing the number and diversity of film offerings to Miami Beach residents.

The annual programming budget (inclusive of all programming and operations costs) to support the development and presentation of thirty-six (36) possible monthly film showings - 12 monthly free Friday night screenings and depending on film rights agreements and the auditorium's availability, The Wolfsonian-FIU will offer to reshow the Friday night film as 12 free monthly Saturday and 12 free monthly Sunday matinees and allow for six (6) screening dates for use by other partners is \$34,444.

Amended one-time sponsorship request amount for audio-visual equipment upgrade and programming is \$120,958.

The Wolfsonian submitted a funding request to upgrade their audio-visual equipment to Florida International University's Tech Fee fund budget cycle for \$26,511.64. On December 2, 2024, The Wolfsonian-FIU was notified by Florida International University that The Wolfsonian's funding request for the upgrade of their audio-visual equipment was not approved. Furthermore, the FY 2025 Tech Fee funding pool was the smallest ever for Florida International University at approximately \$2.7 million. Most of the funding (85%) was allocated toward annual renewals and upgrades of existing technologies, such as learning management systems, computer labs, Zoom, Microsoft Office, and similar resources. Out of 127 proposals submitted, only 25 (19.6%) were approved. The Florida International University's Tech Fee fund was introduced in 2009, and The Wolfsonian's funding request approval rate stands at 36%.

Staff discussed with the GMCVB the Wolfsonian-FIU's request for upgrading their audio-visual equipment. The GMCVB shared that the Miami Beach allocated funds are subject to approval for marketing use, and the funding of new audio-visual equipment would not qualify as a marketing expense.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The fiscal impact for upgrading the audio-visual equipment at the Wolfsonian-FIU to provide additional programming is approximately, \$120,958. Should the Mayor and City Commission desire to fund the sponsorship, it is recommended that funding be considered as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget process.

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?
(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

If applicable, the Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on:
See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

CONCLUSION

The Administration recommends that the Mayor and City Commission accept the recommendation of the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee (FERC) at its September 20, 2024, meeting in support of the sponsorship to upgrade The Wolfsonian-FIU's audiovisual equipment to support local cinema programming and further requesting an increase to their proposed number of film screenings. The Wolfsonian-FIU updated their original proposed programming with an increase in the proposed annual film screenings from eighteen (18) to thirty-six (36), based on the FERC recommendations to increase the programming to weekly screenings. The Wolfsonian-FIU's proposed budget was amended and reduced to \$120,958 after omitting the seating request as recommended by the FERC. The sponsorship will allow The Wolfsonian-FIU to support local film festivals while increasing the number and diversity of film offerings to Miami Beach residents. Miami Beach residents receive free memberships from The Wolfsonian-FIU. Should the Mayor and City Commission desire to fund the sponsorship, it is recommended that funding be considered as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget process.

Applicable Area

South Beach

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

No

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Tourism and Culture

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Kristen Rosen Gonzalez

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Execute Sponsorship Agreement, Wolfsonian-FIU Audiovisual Upgrade. (Rosen Gonzalez) TC

Previous Action (For City Clerk Use Only)