

# Cutler Bay

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SERVING SOUTH DADE

## Chamber South hosts 'Meet the Candidates'

BY GARY ALAN RUSE

Chamber South hosted the first of three "Meet the Candidates" programs on Wednesday, July 7, with political aspirants from the three municipalities of Cutler Bay, Palmetto Bay and Pinecrest who will be in the Nov. 2 election.

Conducted at its southern office at 900 Perrine Ave. in Palmetto Bay, the early evening meeting was moderated by Jeff Flanagan, chair of Chamber South's Government Affairs Committee, and overseen by Chamber South president Mary Scott Russell, Government Affairs Committee member Kent Crook and staffers Alexandra Van Ginkel and Sandy Gallaher.

Each of the candidates had approximately two minutes to introduce themselves and briefly mention their goals to the standing-room-only crowd.

Candidates from Cutler Bay were Vice Mayor Ed MacDougall, who is running for mayor; Councilmember Tim Meerbott, who also is running for mayor, Councilmember Peggy Bell of District 3, who is running for re-election, and Steve Zarzecki, a new candidate running for the District 1 council seat. Also present was Mayor Paul Vrooman, who is not running for re-election, and Councilman Ernie Sochin, whose seat is not up for election this year.

Candidates from Palmetto Bay were District 3 Councilmember Shelley Stanczyk who is running for mayor; new candidate Peter England, also running for mayor; new candidate David Zisman, running for mayor; new candidate Patrick Fiore, running for District 1 councilmember; Bev Gerald, a new candidate also running for the District 1 seat; new candidate John Dubois, running for the District 3 seat;



Pictured (l-r) are Sandy Gallaher, Jeff Flanagan, Mary Scott Russell, Kent Crook and Alexandra Van Ginkel of Chamber South.

new candidate Joan Lindsay, also running for the District 3 seat.

Jim Araiza, who is running for mayor, and Benjamin Oppenheim, who is running for the District 3 seat, had prior commitments and were unable to attend.

Eugene Flinn, the current mayor who is termed out and now running for the County Commission District 8 seat, and recently elected Councilmember Howard Tendrich and Vice Mayor Brian Pariser also were present.

From Pinecrest, current Seat 2 Councilmember Jeff Cutler, who is running for re-election, participated, and Mayor Cindy Lerner, although not up for re-election this year, attended.

Albert Harum-Alvarez, also a candi-

date for the County Commission District 8 seat, attended.

Russell explained why her organization chose to host the gathering.

"We felt it was important to give everyone an opportunity to meet the candidates," Russell said. "An educated electorate is an electorate that is not wasting its votes.

"So many times people go to the polls and haven't had a chance to meet or hear personally from the candidates, and we feel it is important to give everyone the opportunity to hear them and the candidates an opportunity to be heard. We're happy to provide that role in a complimentary event for the community."