

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
November 13, 2012
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Maria Anderson

Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Patrick Salerno

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

F-1 [Start: 9:51:06 a.m.]

Discussion regarding neighborhood trees
Vice Mayor William “Bill” Kerdyk, Jr.

Mayor Cason: City Commission Items, Item F-1 is the Vice Mayor’s.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Just very briefly. With regards to – the City of Coral Gables is known for many things, historic sites, our beautiful quiet residential areas, University of Miami, Fairchild Gardens, downtown area, we could have a discussion with regard to that, but one of the things that I think City of Coral Gables is best known for is its tree canopy, and I think each one of us have made votes that have affected the future; I think we all have done a good job trying to effect the future in a positive way, and one of the things that we can do as a Board here, I think, is to make sure we have that tree canopy for the future; and we’ve discussed this before with this Neighborhood Renaissance Program. What I want to make sure gets done is, we talked about a tree succession plan for the trees that are damaged or destroyed and then the tree initiation plan, which I guess will work more down south where we can come up with themes for

neighborhoods, we talked all about this. What I just want to make sure is that we do the plan, get it funded, and reach out to the neighbors because the neighbors as I walk around the City, and we've all done it, whether it's people that have a tree theme in their neighborhood or the ones that do not, sometimes the ones that have it think about wanting to change it, and we need to reach out and discuss that so that we don't make a decision up here that we haven't reached out to the residents. So I guess the instruction to the staff to make sure they bring back a plan to reach out to the neighborhoods, figure a way to get it funded for the future and to get the plan to us so we can look at it. That's basically what I'm doing.

Mayor Cason: I just wanted to know we had talked about the City arborist that was doing a survey, where does that stand?- when are we likely to know from the professional's point of view what's missing and listen to recommendations?

City Manager Salerno: Mayor, I believe that's what the Vice Mayor was referring to is the tree succession and tree initiation plan that work is being done by an outside consultant right now, and I'd say we are about 75 percent approximately the way through that task, and we'll know in the next couple of months, few months what the number of trees are, where they are, and it is planned that we would go out to the neighborhoods and the consultant will make a presentation throughout the City to present the plan and get input before it comes to you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK, that's what I want.

Commissioner Cabrera: Hey Mr. Kerdyk, this is an offshoot of what you are talking about, it's kind of funny because I'm going to use you as an example. A number of years ago one of our residents Bill Dewald complained to you about the fact that he had a dead palm tree in front of his yard, I think within a week to 10 days Mr. Dewald got a replacement palm tree. Let me bring you forward. Around spring time another neighborhood four houses down from Mr. Dewald had a dead tree, a palm tree, and that tree had been dead for probably one year, they contacted the Public Service Department not once, not twice, but three times, nothing occurred. They finally contacted me, I'm going to say four weeks ago, I have the e-mail I sent to the City, four weeks ago, five weeks ago, they still don't have a tree replaced. So, I don't know if that's because of the work being done to analyze all of this, but I remember the days when we got a complaint from one of our citizens that they had a dead tree in their front yard or the right-of-way and we did everything possible to replace it in an expedited and efficient manner, i.e. the example I use of Mr. Dewald.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I just happen – I'm looking at one right now 1459 Robbia, same thing, friend of mine, Alex Rodriguez, had a situation that occurred that he contacted me two months ago, went through the same process I did with Bill, and I think the process the answer is, since we are doing this plan that they don't want to replace any trees until this plan gets done because

maybe the character of the whole neighborhood is going to change. I think that was the answer, I've got to respond again.

City Manager Salerno: That is the answer unless there is some extenuating circumstance, any tree that becomes missing, destroyed or whatever, unless there is absolutely no question regarding the matter it is getting referred, it will be part of the study and the consultant is looking at that and again, we don't want to put – if there is a decision to make a change in the tree theme for a street, we don't want to just plant the wrong tree; secondly, the City has only had around \$20,000 or so, is my understanding, of how much it has per year to spend on replacing trees, that doesn't come and hasn't come to being but a fraction of what the needs are for this City. The cost to address the tree replacement, the tree succession initiation plan is going to be – the reason why we are in that situation where we have such an outstanding, we are going to have when you see it, such an outstanding list of trees that needs to be replaced is because over the many years in the past the City had not had the resources, did not take the resources and appropriate them for that situation, so we are addressing many years of tight funding and it will be up to the Commission as to whether or not they want to go forward with a bold initiative to address all the trees that are missing, diseased, that have been destroyed by hurricanes over the many years.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Just for my follow-up. I can't think of a better legacy that we can leave our families to have this tree canopy in the City.

Commissioner Cabrera: Hey listen, we were able to transfer \$108,000 like that just a few minutes ago for a median project on LeJeune Road, so the Manager talks about \$20,000, gosh, he could just transfer another \$100,000 and all our citizens would be happy.

City Manager Salerno: To put it into context, the NRP (Neighborhood Renaissance Program) does provide as you all know, \$1.3 million it initially provided for trees, so that was recognition then, I think the cost would be significant to address this issue.

Commissioner Cabrera: And incidentally ladies and gentlemen, I didn't vote for that item either, just in case someone wants to call me on it.

Mayor Cason: OK. Any other discussion on that? Bill?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No, I'm fine.

[End: 9:58:21 a.m.]