

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-3
December 11, 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)

Carlos Ruiz de Quevedo, Chairman, Green Task Force

D-3 [Start: 9:52:24 a.m.]

Appearance by Carlos Ruiz de Quevedo, Chairman, Green Task Force

Mayor Cason: Item D-3, we have Carlos Ruiz de Quevedo who is Chairman of the Green Task Force – Carlos.

Commissioner Anderson: Carlos, before you start I just want to say I bought a hybrid car. I just wanted to start your talk on a positive note.

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: Excellent. Congratulations, you’ll see that you will do great with it. I’ve had mine now for a number of years and I can tell you it works. Before I start, first of all thank you Mayor, thank you Commissioners, Mr. Manager, I really appreciate you giving me this opportunity to come before you. By the way, I do agree with you, I meet over there at the Club every week with Rotary Club and they are doing an excellent job, and we really appreciate having them in our community. I’m here to basically to give you a little update of what the

Green Task Force has been doing for about the past year and-a-half. With me is Jenny May Arias who is a member of the Green Task Force. She is here to give me support and keep me straight if I screw up as I talk to you. So first of all I'd like to thank you, Commissioners Anderson and Cabrera on having the foresight of developing this task force, the ordinance for this task force. I think that this is a major thing for not only our community, for the country and the world, and in my case you know that I have a personal interest in this. This little pin that I'm wearing here is because I'm the parent of an Air Force pilot who is deployed and so I have a personal interest in making sure our country becomes energy independent. We've been working and making a number of recommendations for a year and-a-half, the greatest accomplishment we have done to date was last year when we had or earlier this year, time flies when you are having fun, when we had the first Gables Earth Fest. Actually, it was a great success. We only had a little hiccup there when I asked the Mayor to dedicate the event, he misunderstood me and baptized everybody (laughter), but after that everybody had a great time. Out of that little monsoon we only lost three or four vendors, but the rest of the people had great fun, and they all wanted us to have it again. This year we are talking with the Chamber to see if we make it a cooperative event and join our forces and maybe even bring some of the other entities that are doing similar events throughout the City; University of Miami, Baptist Hospital, etc., and combine all of our events so that we are not competing against each other. If we are trying to be sustainable we should all be working together instead of duplicating our services. One of the things that has been a little issue of concern was that we were making recommendations and things were not gelling right, so we – the Manager was very gracious to come and meet with us, we expressed our concerns and right now he basically has drafted a new position that will be the person that once the ideas are presented to carry them out, not only that, also to work with the various other committees and task forces that we have in the City, because the recommendations we make sometimes will impact other committees; sometimes we will make a recommendation, we had somebody that offered to install charging stations here looking forward. Well the Parking Committee was not too excited about giving up a couple of spaces, so we need to basically have a cohesive approach and I think that this person will be able to do that for us. Again, we really are grateful, the main things as we move forward is to carry out some of these recommendations. One of the things I can tell you is that you have assembled a team of experts, that if you were going to hire these people, we have architects, engineers, environmental, landscaping, planning, we have all kinds of expertise, and basically what you are getting is free consulting services that would probably cost you somewhere around \$2,500 an hour. We also have an attorney, so it probably would be \$3,000 an hour, so you have that expertise and we want for you to implement what the suggestions that are being made and the Manager is basically now taking on that part. So that pretty much completes the portion of the report that I am authorized by the committee to basically tell you about. Now there are two things that I want to tell you as a concerned citizen. I am right now building the first two spec homes, green homes in Little Gables. I am one of the first developers going through the expediting permitting process in Dade County for "Green"

buildings. While the Manager is a hundred percent correct that we need a complete sustainability plan, and that's also another one of the other things that goes as we move into 2013. I think that there are a couple of things that you can do right now, and one of them is to develop an ordinance so that Coral Gables will also have an expedited permitting process for "Green" buildings so that you encourage people to build green. It makes financial – and the reason that I'm building these two homes is to show, because I'm a realtor by trade, but I'm also an architect, I've been asking people to provide inventory and they say two things, number one it's too difficult to build here, number two – not here Coral Gables, South Florida; and number two, the fact that there is no market. I'm in the real estate business, I know there is a market, and it's not being met. So that's number one. Doing that doesn't take a lot of effort and I can tell you my experiences with the County so you don't have the same pitfalls that I've been experiencing now going through the process. So that's one thing that can be done now. The other thing is, those of us who grew up in South Florida remember when we used to go to Matheson Hammock and the only time that Matheson Hammock would flood is in rare occasions when we had full moon, easterly breeze, and high tide. Those of us that grew up in South Florida did not see Miami Beach flooding on a regular basis; we did not see Fort Lauderdale flooding. Folks, South Florida is the canary and the mine, we are the lowest ground in the United States; the issue of rising water is not a debatable issue any more, how it happened that's debatable, but it really doesn't matter. The main thing is that we as part of our region here need to start demanding from Washington that they start a coastal protection plan. This is not something that happens overnight. You are looking at a 50 to 100 year project, but you as our elected officials need to start raising your voices and start asking them to take action now. Thank you all very much, I appreciate the opportunity.

Mayor Cason: Thank you Carlos.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Quesada: I just want to say thank you very much for your insight. I know you are essentially my green consultant, whenever I hear any issues that other cities are pursuing, I know you are always the first one that I call. So I want to say thank you for your service, thank you for being here today, and for the rest of the Board members, we really appreciate what you guys do, so thank you so much.

Commissioner Anderson: Carlos, thank you.

Commissioner Cabrera: Mr. Chairman, sorry ma'am, since you are up here I'd like to make a couple of comments; number one, thank you, thank the rest of the Commission (sic: Board members), I'm very grateful for your hard work and I always read your minutes with great

interest. I did see the long list of recommendations that you all had made in the last 18 months. I'm happy to see that we are finally taking the right interest on it. I'd like to make a couple of comments though. When the task force makes a recommendation, I would really like it for me if you could ask the secretary to be sure that that recommendation comes as part of our agenda, so we can actually see it on the agenda that you are making a contribution, a recommendation, a suggestion to the Commission to take some sort of action, I think that's really critically important. So I ask you and Ms. Arias to take that back to the committee and to the task force and encourage them to do it in that fashion. Secondly, I'd like the committee if you will, to consider, and maybe you've already done this, so I apologize, I had the long list of your recommendations that I reviewed last night and it's not in my package this morning, so I must have left it at home, but have you looked at recycling appliances program?- you have?- OK, is that something that you all felt that it was an important effort to undertake?

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: Yes – and we had one of the recommendations that was also dealing with computers and electronics and all those systems, so yes.

Commissioner Cabrera: OK. That was one of your recommendations then?

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: Correct.

Commissioner Cabrera: OK. Good – because I think that's a vital service that we should be looking at providing to our citizenry, and when I say appliances it also goes back to electronics.

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: Right – and there are some – the thing is that the reason that recycling did not really work for many years is pretty much like why our transit system did not work for so many years. We start going rah, rah, rah, let's go in this direction, go in that direction, and we really don't see if there is a real demand for what we want to do, but now there is a demand for recycling, so there are companies that actually are coming and offering to the City to do for free. It never made sense to me that I would be giving something to someone that was going to use it to make money and then I got to pay them to actually – it didn't add up, but now we are getting people that are coming and say, hey, we'll pick up your computers, your electronics, and all this stuff, we don't charge you anything, we just make the money on the third market as we sell these things.

Commissioner Cabrera: Yes, that's something that we should be looking at as a community to implement, which is an appliance recycling program and electronics.

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: One thing I have to say is that even though I wish that some of these things would have been implemented earlier, I think after we met with the Manager and he

presented the complexity of implementing some of these things and he said, OK look, I am on board, but I want to do it in an orderly fashion so we actually know which way we are going, so we need a sustainability master plan for the City, so we are just not going and doing this here, doing that there, and doing a little bit and just putting out fires instead of really addressing the issue. So I think as we move forward one of the greatest – we are extremely happy that this position is going forward. We are also extremely happy that we are now going to be looking to possibly have a consultant that may help us through all of that. So all these things are now moving in the right direction.

Commissioner Cabrera: I strongly encourage you to continue to work strongly with the consultant if that does come to pass. Last comment that I'd like to make, it's a personal one – You are coming up for reappointment...

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: Correct.

Commissioner Cabrera:...and it gives me an opportunity to tell you that I fully support your efforts, I want you to know that, but I do have a personal policy, so if you don't get my vote it's not because I don't believe in you and I don't support you, I very much do, and I'm very happy and feel very fortunate to have someone of your caliber as part, along with Ms. Arias, as part of the committee, so don't take it personally...

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: I don't.

Commissioner Cabrera:...but if somebody else were to not to vote for you then I would literally change my vote to make sure you stayed on, OK. I would find some loop hole through the City Attorney's office to make that happen.

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: I appreciate that. Thank you Commissioner.

Mayor Cason: Thank you Carlos.

Commissioner Anderson: Actually Carlos, I want you to make sure to stay on top of that master plan, the overall sustainability master plan, stay on it and ask and make sure because government sometimes is pretty slow, so use our citizens are our voices to make sure that, that happens to push us and push government to make that happen, so we can begin to implement the initiatives that need to be done.

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: Well, I understand and I am 62 years old, I only have so many good years left and I have a son who I want to have home.

Commissioner Anderson: Absolutely – and for that I wish all the best, get home safely.

Mr. Ruiz de Quevedo: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much – appreciate it.

[End: 10:05:46 a.m.]