

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
January 22, 2013
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: 10:27:40 a.m.]

Discussion regarding Andalusia Parking Garages
Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.

Mayor Cason: We’ll move on to Item F-1, that’s Commissioner Cabrera’s item.

Commissioner Cabrera: Thank you Mr. Mayor. This item is a discussion item on the Andalusia parking garages, and it’s really more of a chronological sequence of events relating to this, so in order for me to present this discussion item this morning, I first need to provide us all with a timeline so we can be reminded of whatever actions and/or directions we gave. On April 24, 2012, the City Manager had an item on the agenda requesting that the City Commission approve the hiring of a financial consultant. I believe the gentleman’s name was Mr. Abrahamson, in order to assist the City’s development of an RFP for the redevelopment of the City’s parking garages on Andalusia Avenue. At that meeting the Manager did a really good job of emphasizing the need to act quickly to replace these garages. In fact, let me use two of his quotes, one was

quote, “they need to be replaced today”, end quote; and the second one was quote, “they have exceeded their useful life”, end quote. So two strong statements about the need to move forward with these garages. At that meeting Mr. Kerdyk made a very compelling case in opposition to putting both sites up for development at the same time and I remember supporting that feeling that you had. Mr. Quesada you asked a number of very pointed questions relative to the project and actually asked for more information. The matter was then deferred until the next City Commission meeting scheduled the following month; however, the item did not come back to us the following month. Three months later on July 24, 2012, the matter was brought back to the Commission on the same day I made a presentation concerning the loss of parking spaces on Miracle Mile that would potentially result from a conversion from angle to parallel parking. Mrs. Anderson at that meeting you suggested that the Commission hold a visioning session related to the future of the downtown area and I recall vividly that the entire Commission approved your motion unanimously; and as I recall this visioning session was to be held before any further decisions about the parking garages were made. The month of September was endorsed by all of us. Then nothing happened; however, one month later on August 28, 2012, I advised the Commission that the 71 lost parking spaces cited in the Haas Report worked for a conversion to 20 foot spaces, not 25 foot spaces. This discussion lead to a call for further consultation with Haas and the Manager was then directed to pursue it. So the point of all of this is, here we are nine months after the Manager pressed this Commission to endorse his approach of the redevelopment of the garages and five months after we gave him clear direction about how we wish to proceed and today we are nowhere on this process to the best of my knowledge, at least to the level where I had been briefed. So whether this delay came by design or simple inefficiency, I believe it is under my ability to do the job we were all elected to do. So the purpose of this recount is to hopefully reenergize the process we laid out five months ago and find a way to pursue that process, and I hate to say this, but with or without cooperation from the administration and I don’t say that in a threatening manner, because I want the administration to be supportive of this, after all it came from them. Incidentally, before I leave this item or at least this presentation, I believe it is noteworthy that on December 19, 2012, the City’s Property Advisory Board voted unanimously to recommend to the Commission that the parking garages be replaced before major construction of the streetscape project is begun. So before you give the Manager the opportunity to respond to my comments, I’d like to be able to talk to the five of us about it, and I’d like to start with does everyone agree with the chronological sequence of events that took place on this matter?

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, it’s true.

Commissioner Cabrera: Essentially, I just went back to the video and reviewed what we had talked about on those Commission meetings. Any thoughts from you on it?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: The one issue that also when you brought up the parking spaces spun into the fact that, sort of spun into what I was saying before when we talked about the parking garages was that we needed to know, we needed to see the whole vision before we made a decision on these garages, so we were waiting for a parking study to be performed telling us about parking in the downtown area, more specifically in the Miracle Mile quadrant; and so that is a key component on how we pursue these two garages. If we find out we are going to be deficient by a significant amount of parking then we might look at it one way, if we find out that we are going to be not sufficiently problematic, the parking problematic then we might look at it another way. I think we are going to find out if we look at the big picture what the developments stack up with the possible streetscape on Miracle Mile that we are going to show that we lack parking and we are going to have to really take that into consideration where we make a decision on how we proceed on these two garages.

Commissioner Cabrera: Those are very good points that you've just made. My recollection of the discussion with regards to parking was because a parking study had already been performed by Haas, what I thought we were going to do is to literally go back to Haas and try to get confirmation of how they calculated the loss of parking, because I provided that to you as a correction, not as a criticism of Haas, but I strongly believe that when you look at the Haas Report their calculations of the loss of parking is based on 20 foot parallel parking spaces not 25 feet, and so that changes the entire math on this issue; and incidentally, if you want me to remind you all of the calculations between the angle or excuse me, the angle parking versus the 20 versus 25 feet, I've written a memo to myself that I can forward to you and it's just a retelling of how I came up with the mathematics to show the loss of parking, and so when that happened I remembered the Manager held up the Haas Report and reminded us all about their professionalism, their experience, their knowledge, which I don't take anything away from them, but I do believe there may have been an error in the calculations only because at the time of that report, Mr. Kerdyk, I don't think we were preparing to do 25 foot parallel parking spaces, we may have only been looking at 20 feet, which is the standard and that's what we see on Ponce, that's what we see on other parallel parking situations, the standard is 20 feet not 25 feet.

Mayor Cason: Also that study was done, if I recall 2005 or 06, and it said actually there was a 300 surplus of parking spots, but that may be wrong, because that was in the thinking of the development at that time. When we thought about it, it was to take a look at the whole parking situation not just on Aragon, Giralda, Miracle Mile, but the radius around and see where everybody was and then double check your figures to see where we've come. That's how I understood it.

Commissioner Cabrera: But let's not lose sight of my discussion today, because one point I want to be very clear on with all of us here is, the visioning process was something that we five agreed

was important and we five gave it our endorsement at Mrs. Anderson's suggestion, but yet we've not been able to accomplish that and there are some people that will say, well here we are, it's January 22nd, we are 70 some days away from the next election cycle. I know that Mr. Cason and Mr. Quesada have only been with us a year and nine months, but I can tell you, and Bill and Maria, correct me if I'm wrong, this Commission has always tackled difficult issues, challenges issues all through its term. We don't put the brakes on at the 90-day period or the 60-day period or the 77-day period, we go on and tackle difficult issues throughout. In fact we hire people appointed officials that we've hired appointed officials including Mr. Leen and Mr. Salerno at a time when we were about 6 months within or even closer to the election cycle. So I want to be clear that what I'm really referring to is, we gave direction, I believe we expected to see follow through on that direction and that just simply hasn't happened to the best of my knowledge.

City Manager Salerno: Mayor, let me....

Commissioner Cabrera: Mr. Manager I'm not done sir, I'm not done, I'm having a conversation...

City Manager Salerno: When you get through Commissioner, I'd like to respond...

Mayor Cason: Let him finish and then I want to ask you where we are.

City Manager Salerno: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: Actually, I'd like some comments before the Manager, just from us, let's discuss a little bit, and then the Manager can have an opportunity later, but I'd like to have that discussion as well. Go ahead. I was just defending your position, that's all.

Commissioner Cabrera: I wanted to – at that meeting, the first meeting, you did have lots of great questions relative to the issue and I was just wondering, and I'm not trying to embarrass anyone, I'm just wondering, did you have any follow up responses?- did you get any follow up responses, perhaps in a private setting?

Commissioner Quesada: No, not detailed responses. When I meet with staff, you know, we have conversations about different things, but the specificity I guess what addressed that meeting, no we haven't discussed it again, but at the same time I don't agree with your characterization that's anyone has been inefficient or slow or – I think that we've had a lot of issues going on throughout the City, so I don't agree with your characterization of that way, but as far as moving forward, yes this is something I want to see, this is something we all want to see, so I definitely agree with you there; and I remember one of the issues was, I remember Bill had some concerns;

he had discussed the Publix site in 2006 or 2007, there was some discussion that the Publix site was going to be developed, so I remember he had some concerns that, that was going to be developed, there was going to be some other traffic issues as well. So I don't recall in exact detail from that meeting if a portion of it was to determine what other projects were going to be coming to that area, because I remember you and Bill had discussed that, you guys drive through that corridor almost daily.

Commissioner Cabrera: We all do, we all do.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes, and the traffic issues and I think another part of it, and correct me if I'm wrong since you recently saw the video, was a discussion of whether the other projects coming in that area were going to affect it as well, isn't that a part of it as well we were going to try to find out what else is going on?

Commissioner Cabrera: Yes, yes. I appreciate your candor and I appreciate your position on how I characterized it, but let me be very clear with you as to why I characterized it that way. I've been sitting in this chair for nearly 12 years, I've never seen a directive given by five members of a City Commission to a professional administrator that didn't get their immediate attention, OK, so that's the reason I characterized it that way, not to be confrontational, not to be dismissive, but because I have sat in this chair for 12 years and I've worked now with three now four administrators and when this Commission unanimously gives a directive it gets followed, so if it came across as that then you know I stand corrected by you, but I'll tell you this never seen it, so if that's the will of this group and that's your call, but it's never happened before, just like we never had a Board of Architects appeal, never had something go this long without getting the attention that it truly deserves.

Mayor Cason: I think at this point let's ask the Manager...

Commissioner Anderson: No, no, please let me as a colleague...

Mayor Cason: I'm running the meeting and I think it's time....

Commissioner Anderson:...please let me as a colleague let me just...

Mayor Cason:...OK, have your speak, but I think you all have not asked the Manager to explain...

Commissioner Anderson: I'm a colleague Jim...

Mayor Cason: I understand.

Commissioner Anderson:...I'm a colleague and I'm not going to say anything that's going to embarrass or offend, I just want to have an institutional memory Jim, that's all, that's all.

Mayor Cason: Alright, what is it that....

Commissioner Anderson: I just want to say just for the benefit, for the future. You know, I don't expect that this visioning session is going to happen for a variety of reasons and I'm not going to go into that because it doesn't matter, but I will give you counsel when you do have that visioning session is to just stay open to any new ideas, get folks that come here that are experts in fields of planning and things like that, I would pull them out on our own, I would certainly include staff, but I would actually ask people from University of Miami, things like that to have some type of expertise. In 2002, I spearheaded along with the support of my colleagues on the Commission the Coral Gables Charrette, and that was a significant process and we had the benefit of the expertise of the University of Miami and it was a great event and actually it spurred on the rewrite of the Zoning Code. So that's all; and Jim I'm a colleague, I try to be civil, but I do have a right to speak and I would love for you to recognize that.

Mayor Cason: But of course, you are.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you very much, that's all.

Mayor Cason: Now I think we want to find out where the Haas study is, there were allegations that it's been not doing anything – I think it's important now to hear from the Manager, where does it stand?- and what are we doing?

City Manager Salerno: Thank you Mayor. Let me provide some facts instead of – it's important for me to have that opportunity to fill you in on the things that were left out and the revision is history was presented here. First of all, when on April 24th the Commissioner was quick to highlight that there was a three month period between then and it being brought forth back. The reason why it was being brought back was because Commissioner Quesada said he wanted more time and information, that's what he said at the meeting. I had a conversation with the Commissioner, I said would he mind me staff needed more time to bring that matter back to do a thorough analysis of it. He said yes, and it came back on July 24th, that's the reason why there was a three month separation there. The Commission did discuss having a downtown visioning discussion. What was left out of that chronology was something very important and that is at the August 28th Commission meeting, Commissioner Quesada said, before we move on with the subject of the garages we should do an update factoring in the issue of whether it should be one

or two garages. He asked that on August 28th, prior to the time that the downtown visioning workshop would have been held. In my view, when the Commission and I think it was supported across the board that we should do an update of the 2006 Haas Report that obviously, you would want to have the information about downtown parking if you are holding a downtown visioning discussion, because it would be hard to make any decisions or have an in depth discussion of the subject matter without that information, particularly when you had asked for that to be done and I think the discussion was, before any further discussion on this matter before you are comfortable, and I think Commissioner Quesada was right on board with that, Commissioner Cabrera you said, we are nowhere on this process, that is not correct. The Tim Haas update is ongoing as we sit here. In fact they were in town I was told on Friday, and they were in town last week doing some of their survey data gathering for this report. So that study is ongoing and as soon as it is complete it will be presented to the Commission, we'll have a presentation from the consultant, Tim Haas, and they will provide their findings, which includes a five year projection from 2013, because we are in 2013, five years out to 2018 of our projected downtown parking needs. So it's only prudent, reasonable to have that information before you try to make decisions on your vision for downtown without having that which is going to take in all current planned development, what's changed in the last six years?- and the opportunities for these two parking garages for them to give them an idea.

Commissioner Cabrera: When will that be coming....?

City Manager Salerno: I'll be glad to answer that Commissioner if you let me finish.

Commissioner Cabrera: No.

City Manager Salerno: You won't let me finish?

Commissioner Cabrera: No, I'm just going to ask a question....

City Manager Salerno: Well if you let me finish, I'll be glad to answer it, OK. So we're nowhere in this process was the statement that is not correct. I expect the study to be done by April, perhaps in the month of April, that's how long it will take for them to complete that. It could be done a little sooner, but frankly when you are managing a consultant you want to make sure you get all your questions answered and I'd rather not rush that result. That study is going to be too important to this long term effort of the Commission to establish a vision for the downtown. So it is ongoing, as I said, they were in town Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of last week doing their field work, and it's ongoing. If we can get it done sooner we'll do that. So I think staff has done exactly what it was the intention of this Commission to do and you can't take a point in time and say that's what they asked to be done and not consider the modifications that have been

done along the way, including the request by Commissioner Quesada with the support of the Commission on August 28th that we do an update by Tim Haas. That study is going to cost us approximately \$35,000, that's the fee, and I think it's going to provide invaluable information, very valuable information as to helping the Commission make their decisions on where we go.

Mayor Cason: Have they been instructed to look at Commissioner Cabrera's questions about the calculations?

City Manager Salerno: That is part of the discussion because of – they are supposed to consider I believe, the impact on Miracle Mile, I might add on that, I appreciate Commissioner Cabrera's efforts in that regard, but I remember the first time he brought the matter up he indicated that we were going to lose 140 some odd places, then he did a revision memo after he had found out that he had made an error, and I think he had said he made an error, and then he dropped it down to a much lower number, which I was glad to see that he recognized that the number had changed.

Commissioner Cabrera: My number only changed based upon not knowing what other plans there may be for the Mile, so therefore I can't calculate bump-outs, I can't calculate crosswalks, and things of that nature.

City Manager Salerno: Your correction as I recall Commissioner, had nothing to do with those issues, you miscalculated.

Commissioner Cabrera: No, no, sir I'm not even talking to you. The calculation I based everything on was on the "as is", so what I just wanted to share with all of you is that going forward I don't know, I hope none of us know what the Mile is going to actually look like if we should move forward with the streetscape, so that could include things like bump-outs, and crosswalks and anything else, additional valet parking spaces which have been calculated to be much larger than what we have today.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I just wanted to remind staff that and the City Manager that I wanted to talk to these individuals, I think it would be helpful if each one of the Commissioners were offered the opportunity to speak to Haas when they are here and give Haas their market knowledge of what is going on in the community, because you can come here and study it all you want, but I think each of us have an inherent interest and knowledge of what's being done in the community and that we would be able to provide them further data and I think it's very, very important.

City Manager Salerno: We are planning on that Commissioner. Each Commissioner and the Mayor will have an opportunity if they so chose to sit down and provide their input to the consultant.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK, that's good.

Commissioner Anderson: That's great – and any anecdotal information we may have that might be of assistance. Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Anything else on that item?

Commissioner Cabrera: Not for me. Again, I wanted to provide us a recount it wasn't like – look, I've already said what I had to say, I'm not going to sit here and have a debate with an appointed staff member. I reviewed the video, I remember your questions, I remember your concerns that you voiced, but I also remember the sequence of events and it was very clear on how we needed to proceed. If we had gotten some sort of an update like we just got now maybe this item would not even be on the agenda today, who knows?

[End: 10:52:07 a.m.]