

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT
THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 2025, COMMENCING AT 9:05 A.M.

Board Members Present:

Donald D. Slesnick, II, Chairman
Annie Betancourt
Jane Moscovitz
Felix Pardo
Thomas Wells

City Staff:

Cristina Suarez, City Attorney
Stephanie Throckmorton, Deputy City Attorney
Yolande A. Davis, Deputy City Clerk
Desiree Liguori, Assistant City Clerk
Amos Rojas, Jr., City Manager

1 THEREUPON:

2 (The following proceedings were held.)

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. Good morning,
4 everybody and welcome to the meeting of January
5 16th -- Thursday, January 16th meeting of the
6 City of Coral Gables Charter Review Committee.

7 Madam Clerk, will you call the roll,
8 please?

9 THE CLERK: Board Member Betancourt?

10 MS. BETANCOURT: Here.

11 THE CLERK: Board Member Moscovitz?

12 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Here.

13 THE CLERK: Board Member Pardo?

14 MR. PARDO: Here.

15 THE CLERK: Vice Chair Wells?

16 MR. WELLS: Here.

17 THE CLERK: And Chairman Slesnick?

18 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Here. Thank you.

19 I'd like to welcome everybody, and I'd like
20 to thank the City and the City Manager, who's
21 here, for our 100th Birthday pin. Thank you,
22 Madam City Attorney.

23 MS. SUAREZ: Well, it's the Manager's
24 Office for that.

25 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Where is your office

1 now?

2 MS. SUAREZ: My office is at City Hall.

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. You're still
4 there?

5 MS. SUAREZ: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And where's The
7 Manager's office?

8 Here in this building? Okay.

9 THE CITY MANAGER: In this building. Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And the Clerk's Office?

11 THE CLERK: City Hall.

12 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: City Hall. Okay.
13 Good. You've got to know where the players
14 are.

15 MS. MOSCOWITZ: So people are still in City
16 Hall?

17 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: The Clerk and the City
18 Attorney.

19 MS. SUAREZ: And the Mayor's Office is
20 still there. At least several of the
21 Commissioners still have their offices there.
22 I know, some of them, sometimes they're meeting
23 at different places, but their offices are
24 still there.

25 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Have we taken out extra

1 insurance? Good luck.

2 Anyways, so Mr. Manager, we would like to
3 welcome you, visiting us today. If there's
4 anything you'd like to offer, any observations?

5 MR. CITY MANAGER: No, sir. I won't take
6 up the time of this important Committee.

7 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Well, no, but we
8 obviously are informed -- I think we're
9 informed citizens, so we know that you have
10 offered your resignation and you've done your
11 year of service that you pledged, and that
12 you're departing later this month, and so I'd
13 like to, on behalf of our Committee, thank you
14 for your support and your interaction with us
15 during this last year, as we got our Committee
16 started. So thank you. Thank you to you and
17 your office.

18 THE CITY MANAGER: Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And we wish you the
20 best. Are you off to somewhere special
21 after --

22 THE CITY MANAGER: The mountains of North
23 Carolina.

24 MR. PARDO: No WiFi.

25 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: The mountains that are

1 left, right.

2 THE CITY MANAGER: Sir?

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: The mountains that are
4 left. We hope that your area was --

5 THE CITY MANAGER: Yes, my area was fine.
6 The lake's there. The dam didn't break.

7 Unfortunately, Asheville --

8 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Didn't fare as well.

9 THE CITY MANAGER: -- didn't fare well.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Well, we wish you the
11 best.

12 THE CITY MANAGER: Thank you, sir.

13 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And hope that -- we
14 won't be meeting again before your departure,
15 but we hope we see you again, and hope we will
16 see you between now and then.

17 THE CITY MANAGER: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. We have Old
19 Business, and we have Vice Chair Wells'
20 proposed amendment to Section 2, Term
21 Limitations to the City Charter.

22 Mr. Vice Chair, do you want to make a
23 presentation? And I think we have what is in
24 front of us.

25 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Chair, for the

1 record, I provided you all with physical --
2 Stephanie Throckmorton, Deputy City Attorney.
3 I provided you all with physical copies of the
4 information that was on the agenda, which
5 included the proposal that's before you today.
6 And, then, alongside there's some of the
7 information that you had requested at a
8 previous meeting, term limits, manner of
9 appointment of City Manager from other
10 municipalities, along with the Civility Code
11 provisions that was requested. So that's all
12 in front of you and was provided
13 electronically.

14 And, then, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to
15 summarize Mr. Wells' proposal and kick the
16 discussion off. As I understand the proposal,
17 it's to allow for a maximum of twelve
18 consecutive years of service, whether they be
19 as Mayor or Commissioner, and before any such
20 service is resumed, either appointed or
21 elected, a four-year cooling off period in
22 between positions.

23 So that would be three Commission terms or
24 two Commission terms and two Mayoral terms to
25 get to twelve years, and after that, you would

1 need to take a four-year cooling off period,
2 before being elected or appointed.

3 There may be a few -- should the Charter
4 Review Committee approve this to the
5 Commission, there may be a few tweaks that we
6 make, especially concerning the calculation of
7 terms, if you're appointed, whether or not
8 those calculate as full terms, but that's the
9 proposal before you today. And we provided
10 background information about term limits in
11 other municipalities in Miami-Dade, as well.

12 And I'll turn it over to the Vice Chair,
13 whose proposal it is.

14 MR. WELLS: So we didn't really go on
15 terms. We went on years. So we went on the
16 preceding twelve years. So that would handle
17 an appointment or for an election. The two
18 issues you have to consider here is, the term
19 limit, how long that is, and the cooling off
20 period. Those are separate decisions.

21 Right now, we have it that the Mayor has a
22 term limit of eight years and that the
23 Commissioners have a term limit of twelve
24 years. My issue was that the Mayor could then,
25 after eight years, become a Commissioner, and

1 then become a Mayor two years later, because
2 there's no -- Key Biscayne has a lifetime
3 limit. And so in order to write this, we
4 looked at the different -- the
5 different provisions of other jurisdictions in
6 our community. And what is similar is, Key
7 Biscayne has an eight-year limitation. We
8 chose twelve, randomly, and that's up to the
9 Committee to decide what it wants to do. Miami
10 Gardens has a sixteen-year cap. Palmetto Bay
11 has a twelve-year combined cap. And so if you
12 want to accept term limits and a cooling
13 period, you need to make those two decisions.

14 The last thing is that this was a
15 recommendation from the Town Hall Meeting, and
16 the reason why this was recommended was to make
17 sure that we turn over our leaders in Coral
18 Gables, so that nobody becomes that entrenched
19 and that powerful, and we also encourage other
20 citizens to take leadership roles, so we have a
21 more inclusive community.

22 That's all I have to say, Chair.

23 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Thank you.

24 MS. BETANCOURT: Mr. Chair --

25 MS. THROCKMORTON: Just bringing it up on

1 the screen, in case it's easier for any of the
2 public watching.

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Ms. Bentancourt.

4 I'm sorry, what?

5 MS. THROCKMORTON: Just bringing it up on
6 the screen.

7 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Oh.

8 Ms. Betancourt.

9 MS. BETANCOURT: I want to commend you with
10 this idea, because I am familiar with
11 individuals in the Legislature that keep coming
12 back, from the Senate to the House, from the
13 House to the Senate. And, then, service on the
14 School Board, it seems to be for life, and I
15 have a problem with that, because I think the
16 opportunity is to have new blood and people
17 with fresh ideas, and it seems reasonable to
18 me.

19 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: You know, Tom, I'm not
20 in favor of the proposal as it's written.
21 Number One, you know, I know we've adopted term
22 limits, so we've had term limits, and I'm not
23 familiar with any Mayors that have come back
24 and run for the Commission, so we're addressing
25 an issue that doesn't exist, Number One.

1 And Number Two, if we have a Commissioner
2 that has served well and long and wants to rise
3 to Mayor, I think that's a good thing.

4 You know, Annie, I have to say, and I think
5 you'll agree with this, the terms limits in the
6 Legislature have caused the people that run the
7 Legislature not to be our elected officials,
8 but the staffs. The staffs are now the people
9 who are continuously there in continuous
10 service, and for those who go to the
11 Legislature and work with Legislators, we know
12 the power of the staffs, and it has increased
13 since term limits have set in, because they are
14 the one consistency there, instead of the
15 Legislators themselves.

16 We have term limits. I've always been
17 troubled, since we adopted term limits, that
18 the poor Mayor is limited to eight years, while
19 the Commissioners can stay twelve years. It
20 seems to me, Tom, that if we wanted to do
21 anything, we might limit the Commissioners to
22 two four-year terms, to equalize out what we
23 have. It never made much sense to me to have
24 two different term limits for the two different
25 positions.

1 But, anyways, I am troubled with the
2 concept of restricting people artificially from
3 being able to run for offices they seek, and
4 the elections are always open to people to jump
5 in, and in this City, entrenchment is not
6 really an issue. In the last ten years,
7 entrenchment is, in fact, less of an issue than
8 anything else.

9 Anyways, I'm bothered by the proposal.

10 MR. WELLS: Chair, may I reply to a couple
11 of your comments?

12 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Sure. You can take me
13 to task and you can excoriate me and --

14 MR. WELLS: We don't do that, and so I'm
15 not doing that.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I'm just teasing.

17 MR. WELLS: However, to say that the issue
18 does not exist, I believe is incorrect, based
19 on what our Charter provision provides right
20 now. It does allow a Mayor to become a
21 Commissioner and a Commissioner to become a
22 Mayor, back and forth. So there's a
23 possibility it could happen.

24 The second thing is that, if it's not an
25 issue, if you never see a Mayor becoming a

1 Commissioner, because that would be, perhaps, a
2 step down, because they're not chairing the
3 meeting, then I take it this term limit is not
4 a problem, because if you don't think a Mayor
5 is really going to become a Commissioner, and
6 only going to be a Mayor for eight consecutive
7 years, sit out two years, and then run again,
8 this would never apply. So if this doesn't
9 apply, I don't see a problem in adopting it
10 into the Charter.

11 Lastly is, understand, we don't make
12 Charter Amendments, as you know. We only
13 propose Charter Amendments to the Commission,
14 and it's up to the Commission to decide what
15 they want. So we work for the Commission's
16 direction. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Well, and thank you,
18 and I appreciate that. I mean, and even though
19 I understand your purpose and I read it, I
20 don't really quite understand it, to be honest
21 with you, when we get down to at least -- if
22 they've held the office for at least four
23 consecutive years, prior to such appointment or
24 election, and that differs from the words in
25 the first sentence about the preceding twelve

1 consecutive years.

2 I mean, to be honest, I get -- I understand
3 your purpose, but I get confused over the
4 actual wording of how it's worded and how it
5 will be applied.

6 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Chair, my
7 understanding -- and Mr. Wells, correct me if
8 I'm wrong -- is that additional languages says
9 that you cannot be appointed, elected or serve
10 as Mayor, Commissioner, if you have held either
11 of those positions in the preceding twelve
12 consecutive years. So you're no longer
13 eligible, if you've served in any of those
14 roles for each of the preceding twelve
15 consecutive years.

16 And, then, if you have served those two
17 twelve years, you cannot be appointed, elected.
18 That prohibition expires after there have been
19 four consecutive years without an appointment
20 or election.

21 MR. WELLS: Correct.

22 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. And so if you've
23 held office for four years and then you decide
24 to come back a couple of years later and run
25 for office, that's within the twelve-year. I

1 don't understand --

2 MS. SUAREZ: You could --

3 MR. WELLS: No, consecutive --

4 MS. THROCKMORTON: It would reset the
5 twelve-year maximum.

6 MR. WELLS: Right.

7 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Well, thank you, but
8 that doesn't say that, and I don't see how that
9 applies.

10 MS. SUAREZ: So if I can --

11 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And now we've got this
12 thing that Tom doesn't want, that the person
13 runs for four years, then sits, comes back, it
14 resets twelve years, and so you end up with the
15 same issues.

16 And besides that, the Mayor, who has now
17 been serving two-year terms and has to run
18 every two years, has to sit out four years?

19 MS. THROCKMORTON: That's as written.

20 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes, as written. And I
21 don't understand how --

22 MS. THROCKMORTON: If you've reached the
23 maximum, twelve.

24 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: -- four years applies
25 to the Mayor, when, in fact, his or her term

1 has only been two years. Oh, well.

2 MS. BETANCOURT: Well, Mr. Chair, would it
3 be possible to offer a friendly amendment or
4 something --

5 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Absolutely.

6 MS. BETANCOURT: -- to clarify or
7 streamline the meaning. In my opinion, the
8 term limits are set by the voters. The voters
9 have the final word.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes.

11 MS. BETANCOURT: But if this is something
12 worth debating and discussing, maybe we can
13 streamline, to clarify the language.

14 MS. THROCKMORTON: We're happy to edit the
15 language.

16 MS. SUAREZ: If I can offer a suggestion.
17 If the Board, in concept -- if this Committee,
18 in concept, feels like this is something that
19 is worthy of a recommendation to the City
20 Commission, our office can certainly work on
21 the language, to make sure it says whatever the
22 Committee would like for it to say, but I think
23 the proposal, and Mr. Wells -- I think the gist
24 of the proposal is that an individual can serve
25 for a maximum of twelve years --

1 MR. WELLS: Consecutive years.

2 MS. SUAREZ: -- consecutive years, in
3 either office. So, you know, it could be a
4 combination of Commissioner or Mayor, up to
5 twelve years, and at that point, if they want
6 to serve again, they need at least a
7 four-year --

8 MR. WELLS: Cooling off --

9 MS. SUAREZ: -- cooling off period, so to
10 speak.

11 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: So now you're saying
12 that the Mayor can run for Commission after
13 eight years.

14 MS. SUAREZ: Correct.

15 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And then serve up to
16 twelve years, but then has to -- I mean, that
17 doesn't make any sense to me at all.

18 MS. THROCKMORTON: It may be -- you know,
19 as a suggestion, which is not a suggestion
20 personally --

21 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: But that's not what Tom
22 wants. I mean, he doesn't want a Mayor serving
23 for eight years and then running for four years
24 for Commission. I mean -- and Tom, I don't
25 mean to put words in your mouth, but, I mean, I

1 think that what you stated is, you hate to see
2 people hanging on.

3 So we've just now had an explanation.
4 Under this, we could have an eight-year Mayor
5 and then a four-year Commissioner following,
6 for twelve years. I --

7 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman --

8 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I mean, I haven't even
9 seen that happen or even anybody wanting that
10 to happen.

11 Yes, Mr. Pardo.

12 MR. PARDO: -- being the non-lawyer --

13 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: But you have a lawyer
14 mind.

15 MR. PARDO: No, there's like a lawyer joke
16 in here somewhere.

17 So, on March 21st -- I have all of my notes
18 from our meetings here with the public and
19 including the Commissioners. On March 21st, a
20 very abled lawyer brought up the comments, and
21 she said that the terms limits on holding both,
22 a Commission seat and the Mayor seat,
23 discourages people from remaining; the
24 provision 18 of the budget, and Section 23
25 about revenues, and these comments were all

1 very astute, and I think that we did have an
2 example recently, when we had a Commissioner
3 that had aspirations to run for the Dade County
4 Commission, and the person that was selected to
5 finish out his term was a past Mayor, who had
6 never been a Commissioner.

7 And when I saw who was appointed, and not
8 disparaging the person that was appointed, I
9 found it kind of deflating, and this was before
10 I sat on this Committee, and the reason I found
11 it deflating is because I agree with the
12 comments that were -- were very, very to the
13 point, which is that holding both, a Commission
14 seat and Mayor seat, discourages people from
15 running, and I think that it's important that
16 people that want to serve this community should
17 be encouraged to do it, but it's hard to run
18 against an incumbent, and it is a tremendous
19 disadvantage.

20 So when you run against an incumbent, you
21 have basically the administration backing them,
22 not as an endorsement, per se, but a perception
23 of an endorsement. I think that's an unfair
24 advantage, but it is what it is, and that's
25 what we have to live with.

1 So I understand the concept. I agree with
2 the concept. I understand your reservations
3 about making sure, and I think that -- that
4 Annie is a hundred percent right, that it
5 should be tweaked in such a way where it could
6 make more sense, and I think, you know, you
7 guys, the lawyers, are smart enough to come up
8 with that, but I will say that I think that
9 back in the day, you and I, we had people like
10 Bill Kerdyk, Sr., who served forever.

11 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Twenty years.

12 MR. PARDO: And the reason that he had the
13 longest tenure was that he was -- he
14 represented people, I think, in such a way that
15 everybody felt comfortable with his decisions,
16 and his decisions weren't always popular, but
17 he had tremendous conviction.

18 I long for the days of politicians of that
19 time, and the reason is, because I think they
20 served us well here, at the County level, at
21 the State level and the National level.

22 So I would hope that we do this in such a
23 way to encourage people to run and not to
24 encourage this kind of, you have to almost put
25 a foot into the other side here, where you

1 should be encouraging people, you know, as far
2 as the -- when the elections occur, because
3 much has been said about PACs and things like
4 that, that were completely foreign in this
5 City, and it really worries me, as a citizen,
6 and it worries many of the people that I
7 circulate around in this City.

8 I have the utmost respect for every Member
9 on this Board, but I think we have to address
10 this, because this City is changing right
11 before our eyes, and once you have certain
12 groups and certain PACs and certain forces in
13 here, we lose the City, and we've seen this
14 happen in other cities.

15 And that's all I have to say.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Thank you, Mr. Pardo.

17 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Chair, I just wanted
18 to make one note, and I think this came up as
19 part of your question. Currently, as written,
20 there's an eight-year maximum for Mayor and a
21 twelve-year maximum for Commission. Together,
22 that's twenty years, which I understand.

23 If we're going to change it to twelve, it
24 may be a little bit inconsistent to have two
25 separate term limits that add up to twenty, but

1 you can't fulfill the maximum term limit of
2 both at once. So I'm not sure -- I don't want
3 to make a suggestion of twenty years, but I do
4 see that as the more natural maximum, before a
5 cooling off period, if we remain with two
6 separate maximum term limits for each position,
7 because then you're prohibiting someone from
8 running for the maximum number of terms for a
9 particular position.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I appreciate your
11 efforts. I don't understand your comment at
12 all.

13 MS. THROCKMORTON: Right now, the max is
14 twenty years --

15 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: No, I heard you. I
16 understand the words. I just don't --

17 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah. Yeah.

18 I just see a little bit of a difference
19 between right now, an eight-year and twelve is
20 twenty.

21 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: But the maximum of the
22 twenty years doesn't apply in this amendment,
23 because the person can't run after serving the
24 maximum.

25 MS. THROCKMORTON: That's my point. If you

1 said, no more than twenty consecutive years,
2 and then a four-year cooling off, the term
3 limits add up, together, to twenty. So you do
4 the max of Mayor and the max of Commissioner,
5 and then a cooling off period. This shortens
6 the maximum of the two terms added together to
7 twelve.

8 MR. WELLS: Mr. Chair, when you have a
9 chance --

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. No, let me call
11 Ms. Moscovitz first.

12 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Yeah. I've always been
13 opposed to term limits. Mostly, I think,
14 because of how they were born. They were born
15 from groups that were not the groups that I
16 valued. But I see this, and I think I'm okay
17 with the language, because of the word
18 consecutive, but I don't mind if somebody wants
19 to refine it.

20 But a separate point is, I think we want to
21 encourage turnover, because not only is it good
22 for the City, but we're grooming people to go
23 to other offices in the State, and I think that
24 the turnover -- permitting more turnover --
25 twelve years and twenty years, is not a huge

1 turnover, but it still allows, you know,
2 younger people to get into office, and then,
3 perhaps, go on to other offices in the State,
4 because this is where they become known.

5 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. Let me just --
6 okay. Tom, first, you.

7 MR. WELLS: Thank you.

8 And so a couple of things is, the reason we
9 chose -- well, like Mr. Pardo said, I consulted
10 with the person who made those comments at the
11 Town Hall Meeting, who I know very, very well,
12 my wife, Dianne.

13 The second thing is, the reason we chose
14 twelve versus twenty is because that's the
15 maximum term limit of either the Commissioner
16 or the Mayor. So we took the maximum amount of
17 twelve years and applied it aggregately,
18 combined, because right now it's not combined,
19 it's either or. It's either eight for Mayor,
20 twelve for Commissioner, and you can go back
21 and forth.

22 The last thing is that, Chair, I am not
23 against a Mayor serving eight years and a
24 Commissioner serving four years. That's what
25 this provision provides. And so it's a

1 misstatement to say that that's against what I
2 want to do. This provision reflects what I
3 would like to do. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Let me just address a
5 couple of things that have been said.

6 Number One, Felix, in the appointment of
7 Mayor Cason to sit in a Commission seat, there
8 was not going to be an election. It was just a
9 filling in, until the next election. And I
10 think the Commission chose someone they knew
11 that wasn't going to run, so that, in fact,
12 there would be an open seat, so it would
13 encourage people to jump in and run.

14 So I think that that kind of fits in to
15 what you had desired.

16 MR. PARDO: Thank you for the explanation.

17 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And, then, also as a --
18 I can speak from personal experience, I was a
19 ten-year incumbent when I lost an election
20 here. So incumbents do get beaten and maybe
21 people get tired of people after ten years, so
22 there you go.

23 And Jane, I don't know anyone on our
24 Commission or any Mayor in the last thirty
25 years that's gone on to any other office in the

1 State.

2 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Well, I know that, but I --

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I mean, so I don't
4 think we're training. I mean --

5 MS. MOSCOWITZ: But we could.

6 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Well, we could. We
7 could and one of -- Felix referred to this, one
8 Commissioner that tried to go to the County
9 Commission, didn't make it. But, you know,
10 I -- the people that I'm around, including the
11 people sitting at this table, who I've known
12 for many years, love this City, and those who
13 want to serve this City, want to serve it
14 for -- when I finished ten years, I was asked
15 why wasn't I running for the State Legislature,
16 County Commission, and, you know, we've had
17 great Legislators and they haven't served on
18 the Commission, but I said, you know, that my
19 desire was to serve the City, not to move up
20 politically. It had nothing to do with my
21 desire to serve the City, and I'm not sure, you
22 know, moving to the County Commission is a move
23 up, to be honest. I'm not sure of that.

24 So, anyways, okay, I still have my
25 concerns, but -- so how do we want to approach

1 this? Tom, do you want to make a motion? It's
2 your proposal.

3 MR. WELLS: First, were there any
4 amendments -- well, let me first make the
5 motion. Yes, I move that this be adopted by
6 the Committee to be proposed to the Commission
7 to see if they accept it and send it to a
8 decision of our voters.

9 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: In this current form?

10 MR. WELLS: In it's current form, yes, sir.

11 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. Is there a
12 second?

13 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I'll second.

14 MS. SUAREZ: Can I just add, Mr. Wells, if
15 the Committee does approve it, that our office
16 will take another closer look and perhaps make
17 stylistic tweaks or any necessary tweaks, but
18 the substance would, of course, remain the
19 same?

20 MR. WELLS: I want the motion first, before
21 we amend the motion.

22 MS. SUAREZ: Understood. Understood.

23 MR. WELLS: So we're now going to --

24 MS. SUAREZ: Understood.

25 MS. BETANCOURT: You mean, as written now?

1 MR. WELLS: My motion was as written, but
2 now that we made a motion, we can amend that
3 motion however you'd like. So if you want to
4 make amendments -- sorry, Chair, it's your
5 meeting.

6 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: No, it's okay.

7 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Well, no. I mean, if we
8 need to move to amend to allow the City
9 Attorney to make the language clearer, then I
10 so move.

11 MR. WELLS: That's good. Yes.

12 MS. THROCKMORTON: Just in deference to
13 Mr. Wells, I think he was saying, if there was
14 any amendments to the substance of it, you want
15 to discuss those.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Ms. Moscowitz has
17 actually moved an amendment to the motion,
18 saying that the City Attorney has asked to
19 provide some guidance in the final
20 transcription of this proposal, to make it --
21 and I guess bring it back to this Committee to
22 see the final version that the --

23 MS. SUAREZ: We could do that, yeah.

24 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. That's a
25 friendly amendment. And do you accept that

1 amendment?

2 MR. WELLS: Yes.

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. The amendment's
4 been made and accepted. So we don't need to
5 vote on the amendment.

6 So does the Committee understand the
7 proposal? The proposal is to adopt the thing
8 that the Vice Chair has presented on terms
9 limits, and it's been amended to send it to the
10 City Attorney's Office for further scrivener's
11 adjustments to the language.

12 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman --

13 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes.

14 MR. PARDO: -- may I suggest something
15 that's consistent with what the City Attorney
16 does?

17 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes.

18 MR. PARDO: You know, understanding and
19 reviewing the transcripts of the discussion
20 that we've had this morning, if you have
21 another idea of how we could still do what we
22 wanted to do, that unless I'm mistaken, I think
23 everybody agrees that, as I had quoted
24 before -- and I didn't want to embarrass you,
25 Tom, I was going to say, you know, as quoted

1 from Tom's better half.

2 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Diane Wells.

3 MR. WELLS: Mr. Pardo, she's the smartest
4 one in my family. That's fine.

5 MR. PARDO: Okay. So the thing is that --
6 the point was that -- conceptually, was that in
7 order to promote -- in order to encourage
8 people to run, you know -- in other words, that
9 that -- conceptually, I think that's what I'm
10 trying to do, and the question -- and this is
11 not an amendment, this is just part of the
12 discussion of the motion that's on the floor,
13 and the whole point is, if the legal beagles
14 can figure it out, you know, and come up with a
15 suggestion, I'm all ears.

16 MS. SUAREZ: So I think what's important
17 for the Board to discuss is the substance of
18 the proposal, and so if you all -- you know, we
19 understand what this proposal currently says.
20 You know, we understand it and I think we've
21 discussed it and I think you all understand
22 what it would do, and so if there's something
23 different that you want to change, we can
24 certainly take that in.

25 And absolutely, before it's finalized and

1 sent to the Commission, we would make sure
2 it's, you know, completely legally sufficient.
3 Any clarity that needs to be added, you know,
4 any kind of shifting of words or anything, we
5 would go through that process, as we will any
6 of your, you know, proposed amendments, of
7 course.

8 But we need to understand from you all what
9 substantively you would want the proposed
10 amendment to included.

11 MS. THROCKMORTON: And I understand that to
12 be a twelve-year maximum, with a four-year
13 cooling off period, being the crux of the
14 amendment.

15 MS. SUAREZ: And so just, perhaps, to kind
16 of illustrate how that could be, so someone
17 could serve twelve years as Commissioner, and
18 then they'd have to wait four years before
19 serving either as Commissioner or Mayor again.
20 Someone can serve eight years as Mayor, and
21 four years as Commissioner, and then wait four
22 years before serving again. So someone can
23 serve eight years as Commissioner, four years
24 as Mayor, and then wait four years. So there's
25 different combinations, but it would be a

1 maximum of twelve years, in any combination of
2 office.

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Understood.

4 MS. SUAREZ: And then a required four-year
5 cooling off period.

6 MS. THROCKMORTON: And for the record, that
7 includes appointment, also. So that may
8 prohibit someone from fulfilling the full
9 twelve years, if there's a term that would put
10 them over the years.

11 MS. SUAREZ: Correct. Right. If there's
12 an appointment --

13 MS. THROCKMORTON: It's my understanding
14 that the proposal includes appointment, as
15 well. So if you're appointed one year, that
16 counts towards the twelve, so you may not be
17 able to fulfill an additional term.

18 MR. WELLS: No. The way it's written, I
19 believe, is you -- the test is when you're
20 either appointed or you go for election, it's
21 the twelve consecutive years. So we're not
22 looking at what the term is going to be.

23 So if you're appointed for -- you served
24 ten years, and you can then run for another
25 term of four years of Commissioner. You can't

1 -- after you serve twelve consecutive years,
2 you can't go -- be appointed or elected, but it
3 doesn't -- this doesn't stop somebody who
4 served ten years from being elected for a
5 four-year term. It looks at the consecutive
6 service --

7 MS. SUAREZ: Okay. Understood.

8 MS. THROCKMORTON: Okay. So that's a
9 little bit different than I understood, but I
10 understand that now.

11 So, as a threshold matter, you're not
12 qualified to run if you have served twelve
13 consecutive years. It's different than you
14 cannot serve for more than twelve consecutive
15 years. Yeah.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Now we're getting into
17 the crux of, this is kind of crazy. I mean,
18 now we can serve fourteen years.

19 MS. THROCKMORTON: That's my understanding
20 of --

21 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I mean, it doesn't --
22 okay. I've said my piece.

23 But, you know, we have an open seat now in
24 the Commission and only three people have
25 expressed interest in running for it. So I'm

1 not sure who we're trying to encourage to run
2 for office, but I think that the people who are
3 encouraged to run for office are people that we
4 can almost see in our mind's eye as being
5 active people in the City, interested in the
6 City, and opening up the gates is not going to
7 bring in a flood of people. I mean, they can
8 hardly go out to vote, much less run for
9 office.

10 And you're absolutely right, Mr. Pardo has
11 hit the nail on the head when he says, "One of
12 the greatest threats to our democracy, both,
13 nationally, statewide and the city, are these
14 PACs, these black PACs that hide their money
15 and you can't identify them, but this doesn't
16 resolve that at all. This doesn't speak to it
17 at all, and, in fact, if you think about, if
18 you encourage a whole bunch of people to get
19 into the races, there may be more PACs.

20 But I don't see who we're encouraging to
21 get in the race. I think the people who get
22 into races are people that don't surprise us at
23 all. Anyways.

24 MR. PARDO: Let me explain mathematically
25 to the Chairman, I beat 94 by the time I was

1 done.

2 MS. BETANCOURT: Only the right kind ones
3 are more --

4 MS. SUAREZ: Yeah, I just need to
5 understand.

6 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. I think we've
7 discussed it.

8 MS. THROCKMORTON: So, again, as clarified,
9 my understanding is, it's not a limit on the
10 maximum number of terms. It's a limit of the
11 qualification to run. If you have served
12 twelve years, you cannot run for a four-year
13 period. If you have served ten years, you may
14 run for a four-year period, even if that takes
15 you over twelve years. It's more a threshold
16 qualification question, is a way to think of
17 it, rather than a maximum number of years you
18 can serve.

19 MR. WELLS: Qualification or appointment,
20 correct.

21 MS. THROCKMORTON: Okay.

22 MR. PARDO: Okay. Got it.

23 MS. SUAREZ: So then --

24 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. Are we ready for
25 a vote, Madam Clerk?

1 THE CLERK: Yes, sir.

2 Committee Member Betancourt?

3 MS. BETANCOURT: No.

4 THE CLERK: Committee Member Betancourt?

5 MS. SUAREZ: I don't think she heard your
6 vote. I don't think she heard it.

7 MS. BETANCOURT: I vote no.

8 MS. CLERK: Yes?

9 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: She said, "No."

10 MS. SUAREZ: She said, "No."

11 THE CLERK: Committee Member Moscovitz?

12 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Yes.

13 THE CLERK: Committee Member Pardo?

14 MR. PARDO: Yes.

15 THE CLERK: Vice Chairman Wells?

16 MR. WELLS: One question only. Are we
17 voting on directing this to the City's Attorney
18 Office?

19 MR. PARDO: Yes.

20 MS. THROCKMORTON: The motion is to move to
21 send it, in its current form, as written, with
22 the City Attorney's Office having the
23 flexibility to amend as needed and bring it
24 back to this Board.

25 MR. WELLS: Yes.

1 THE CLERK: Okay. And Chairman Slesnick?

2 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: No.

3 The motion passes -- the amended motion
4 passes three-two.

5 Now, ready for New Business.

6 Congratulations to the Vice Chair for ramming
7 through his suggestion.

8 MS. THROCKMORTON: Thank you.

9 MR. WELLS: Wait. Wait. Wait. Wait.
10 Wait. Wait. Stop. No. No. No.

11 So I know that it's not Roberts --

12 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Tom, there's always a
13 bar fight --

14 MR. WELLS: Come on. Our Board has made a
15 collective decision.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I know that.

17 MR. WELLS: We're all part of the same
18 family.

19 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I'm admiring your
20 political agility. You can't take a
21 compliment.

22 MR. WELLS: I cannot take that compliment.
23 Thank you very much.

24 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. I withdraw my
25 compliment.

1 MR. PARDO: Is civility next?

2 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Now I'll think of an
3 insult.

4 MS. THROCKMORTON: As far as that, I did
5 not put that on Old Business, as it was not
6 directed to be brought back. I did provide you
7 with that information, and, of course, if you'd
8 like to bring that up now, we do have on the
9 schedule for our February meeting a sort of
10 catch-all of all Old Business, so we can also
11 bring it up then, if you'd like.

12 But for now, we'll go to New Business. We
13 have what looks like a large number of sections
14 of the Code, but I promise, not all of them
15 should take much time. The meatier ones are
16 here at the beginning. We have our City
17 Manager here today, so maybe you want to chime
18 in on some of these.

19 But Section 11 is Appointment, Term,
20 Removal, Absence or Disability. There have
21 been no recent changes to this provision. It's
22 part of the consolidated Charter. There were
23 suggestions made at the Town Hall requiring a
24 supermajority for the selection and/or
25 clarification of a process for the selection.

1 As requested at the last meeting, I provided
2 you all with about ten different
3 municipalities' charters, many of which address
4 the appointment of those appointed officials,
5 including the City Manager's Office -- the
6 Office of the City Manager, excuse me, and that
7 was provided to you. But we did receive some
8 suggestions, and this is the provision as
9 currently written.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: So are you waiting for
11 us to comment --

12 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah. I'm happy to take
13 any suggestions. Our office has no legal edits
14 to make to this provision, but that's as
15 written and --

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Why don't you just keep
17 on, and, then, I think, the Members of the
18 Committee will jump in, if they have a
19 suggestion.

20 MS. THROCKMORTON: Certainly.

21 If we could go to the next slide. This is
22 Section 12, which has to do with the City
23 Manager's responsibilities. At the Town
24 Hall -- sorry, Desiree -- at the Town Hall, we
25 did receive suggestions regarding making

1 specific job duties clearer. This is how it
2 exists at the moment.

3 Section 13 is the Trial Board section. It
4 has to do with the ability of the City Manager
5 -- well, that's the shortened version of it,
6 but it has to do with the City Manager's
7 ability to hire, fire, remove, suspend, lay off
8 or reduce in grade and what processes are
9 available to those employees.

10 I want to note that this process doesn't
11 apply to those employees covered by Collective
12 Bargaining Units. They have their own separate
13 processes. So this is for the general
14 employees not covered by any bargaining units.

15 This item went to the voters twice, most
16 recently in 2015, for removal, and that
17 amendment to remove this failed. So the
18 referendum failed.

19 The last amendment to this provision that
20 was adopted was in 1975. Again, this went to
21 the voters in 2015 and the voters did not
22 remove this from the Charter.

23 MS. SUAREZ: And it was to remove the Trial
24 Board, was the amendment that was put to the
25 voters then.

1 MR. PARDO: Which lost in the election?

2 MS. SUAREZ: Correct. Correct.

3 MS. THROCKMORTON: It did.

4 MR. PARDO: Right.

5 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yes.

6 Section 14 is the Lines of Authority

7 Between the Manager and the City Commission.

8 There have been no recent changes. I believe,

9 in the memo Mr. Wells provided, there was some

10 suggestions associated with this, regarding

11 Boards as liaisons between the Commission and

12 the Boards (sic). I'm not sure if that's the

13 appropriate location for those suggestions, but

14 these are the lines of authority and direction

15 between the Manager and the City Commission.

16 Section 15 are specific powers and duties

17 of the City Manager's Office. There have been

18 no recent changes to this provision, and as a

19 threshold matter, we received a couple of

20 comments that were associated with this

21 provision, although, again, I don't know if

22 that would be the appropriate place, having to

23 do with certain employee benefits and whether

24 or not those should be incorporated into the

25 Charter.

1 Section 16 is Participation in City
2 Commission Meetings, that the City Manager and
3 other officers, including the City Clerk, City
4 Attorney, may participate but not vote in the
5 City Commission. Again, no recent changes to
6 this provision.

7 Section 17 is the Authority of the
8 Commission over departments. There were some
9 suggestions regarding the creation of an Office
10 of the Inspector General. We have that on our
11 schedule to address at the next meeting, but
12 that was associated here. Generally, the City
13 Commission may establish via Ordinance creation
14 or a consolidation of the departments of the
15 City.

16 MR. PARDO: I have a quick question about
17 that.

18 MS. THROCKMORTON: Uh-huh.

19 MR. PARDO: So the description of the
20 Inspector General has really never been
21 discussed in any type of detail. It's very
22 difficult to say, well, you know, we're for
23 this, when we don't know what the job
24 description is.

25 MS. THROCKMORTON: Understood. So we have

1 -- our office prepared, at the Commission's
2 direction previously, two questions to go to
3 the voters, which provided some outline and
4 details for how that office would be set up,
5 what the duties would be, whether they'd be a
6 department or a separate office. So we have
7 some details about that.

8 We've done extensive research into how it
9 operates in other locations, and we're happy to
10 send that to you all in advance of that
11 February meeting, where we have slated to
12 discuss that, at the direction at the
13 Commission.

14 MS. SUAREZ: We've scheduled that for its
15 own discussion for the February meeting.

16 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah.

17 MS. SUAREZ: We're happy to hear from you
18 today, if you want to, so we can prepare
19 perhaps any information you would like for the
20 next meeting.

21 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah.

22 MR. PARDO: One of the things that I --

23 MS. THROCKMORTON; Could we use the
24 microphone, I'm sorry, just for the Zoom?

25 MR. PARDO: I'm sorry?

1 MS. THROCKMORTON: Just can we speak into
2 the microphone for the Zoom.

3 MR. PARDO: Sorry. I was reprimanded last
4 night the same way.

5 So one of the issues that I see is that the
6 concept of the Inspector General is always a
7 great concept, until you make it into a
8 bureaucratic mess. If you're talking about a
9 position that's, you know, kind of lean and
10 does whatever it's supposed to do, I'm all for
11 it. The problem I see, you know, with present
12 company excluded, is that, you know, I agree
13 with the Chair that what happens up in
14 Tallahassee -- in other words, that the
15 departments start to -- basically, they've
16 created their own fiefdom and they just have to
17 make the elected official smile during that
18 term, to be able to stay in that position. And
19 most of the time, those departments just grow
20 and grow and grow, and then they become this
21 bureaucratic nightmare. It could be a Building
22 Department, it could be the Finance Department,
23 and it could possibly then be the Inspector
24 General.

25 The way I've always seen or, conceptually,

1 in my mind, the way I've seen an Inspector
2 General, is more of a watch dog, a person that
3 oversees and makes sure that the Is are dotted
4 and Ts are crossed financially and that
5 everything is doing, you know, just great.

6 I found, with my own experience recently in
7 going through parts of the budget -- in other
8 words, it was specifics. I was reviewing six
9 five-year programs of a specific thing in the
10 budget. I noticed something very curious, that
11 these items that were here were all of a sudden
12 called something else, which allowed then those
13 budgetary items to be moved here. I found that
14 highly unusual. And the funny part is that,
15 today, the same as back then, no one can do
16 that, except for the City Manager, and for me,
17 I find that disturbing.

18 I hope you, in preparing this for the City
19 Commission, come up with a couple of examples,
20 you know, not just the words, of putting
21 together and assembling this type of new part
22 of the administration. In other words, there
23 should be a function specifically that the City
24 Manager should be able to do certain things,
25 but it should be, also, in the open, where the

1 Inspector General can see that. It's not
2 necessarily that the Inspector General, at
3 least in my mind, should be just looking for,
4 you know, fraud or efficiencies or things like
5 that. I don't think that's the effect.

6 Maybe I'm not explaining myself clearly,
7 but I think that when you're writing this
8 section of the Inspector General, you should
9 really be looking at it more as a watch dog,
10 and, also, as a person that would help the City
11 Manager in the implementation of the budget and
12 making sure that everything is, you know, very,
13 very clear.

14 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Pardo, we're not
15 planning to write a provision of the Inspector
16 General. What I'm happy to provide you with,
17 before the February meeting, is the way Miami
18 Beach has their Inspector General's Office set
19 up, the way the County has their Inspector
20 General's Office set up and the two proposals
21 that the Commissioners brought forward earlier
22 this year for the actual questions -- ballot
23 questions about the Inspector General, and the
24 associated Charter provisions.

25 We also have a draft Ordinance setting up

1 an office of the Inspector General. It does
2 not need to be done via Charter amendment. So
3 we have all of those different drafts we can
4 provide to you in advance of the February
5 meeting, which are what various Commissioners
6 and other cities have come up with. Our office
7 takes no position as to what that office should
8 look like, but I'm happy to provide you with
9 all of those drafts, and other municipalities,
10 in advance of February, so that you all can
11 discuss what you think the best proposal is for
12 the Commission.

13 MR. PARDO: The reason I think this is so
14 important is that, when this goes to the
15 voters -- actually, it's the Commissioners, and
16 if they approve it, to the voters, is the
17 perception that people have of this particular
18 -- you know, what I think of an Inspector
19 General could be different than what Don thinks
20 or Annie thinks or Tom or Jane.

21 MS. THROCKMORTON: Understood. And the
22 voter referendum questions that we previously
23 wrote, as you all know, are very limited in the
24 number of words that can be in them.

25 MR. PARDO: Exactly.

1 MS. THROCKMORTON: So there's only so much
2 that can be included in the actual question,
3 but we also drafted, at various Commissioners'
4 requests, Charter language, which I think
5 flushes it out perhaps a little bit more, but
6 as you know, the Charter is not the place for
7 the very detailed step-by-step. We assume
8 there would be an Ordinance associated with any
9 of these changes in the Charter, as well.

10 So I think it may be helpful and
11 instructive for us to send you all that
12 information in advance of that February
13 meeting, and if there's anything else you guys
14 would request before then, we're happy to pull
15 any other comparative.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Ms. Moscovitz.

17 MS. MOSCOWITZ: So I have some things I'd
18 like to know, which is how much it would cost
19 to establish this new position, which also
20 would require, you know, staff support, et
21 cetera. So not just, you know, the salary of
22 whoever the Inspector General is.

23 I don't picture the need myself for a
24 full-time Inspector General. I think it comes
25 out of people worried about corruption, and I

1 don't -- I think that, hopefully, there would
2 be a person sitting in an office not doing a
3 lot, until something happened.

4 So I wonder, are we able to use County
5 services? Are we also able -- you know,
6 Federally, there are Inspector Generals, but
7 there are also Special Counsels, and Special
8 Counsels are appropriate -- are appointed ad
9 hoc when something needs to be investigated,
10 and that might be more efficient, and certainly
11 have a better flavor, smell to it.

12 MS. THROCKMORTON: We looked into that, and
13 we're happy to provide you all with the
14 information we've received about that so far.
15 And that was a proposal that one of the
16 Commissioners brought forward related to
17 either/or, contract with or establish.

18 MS. SUAREZ: And so the County -- the
19 County Inspector General can -- you know, is
20 authorized to provide services to the
21 municipalities, but it must be approved by the
22 Board of County Commissioners, but there's a
23 practical challenge to that. The County, as
24 you know, is large and has many departments and
25 employees, so there's one Inspector General for

1 the County, and so I think there is a challenge
2 in resources.

3 They do currently provide services to the
4 School Board, which is also -- you know, they
5 have an intralocal agreement for that. And the
6 Manager and I -- Manager Rojas and I did meet
7 with the Inspector General from the County, and
8 he -- you know, he wants to help, but he
9 expressed the challenge, and ultimately it
10 would be up to the Board of County
11 Commissioners anyway, but that was, as
12 Stephanie mentioned, one of the kind of
13 alternative proposals and one of the
14 resolutions that one of the Commissioners
15 sponsored, that went to a meeting several
16 months ago, and it was basically to amend the
17 Charter to require either a contract with
18 Miami-Dade County for Inspector General
19 services or for the City to appoint its own.

20 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And I can -- yes,
21 Mr. Manager, please.

22 THE CITY MANAGER: I wasn't intending to
23 come in and participate like this. I think
24 there's two questions here. Number One is, is
25 there a need for an Inspector General? So to

1 answer that question, at least in my short time
2 here, I can tell you that the way we have our
3 system set up, which is that the audit
4 functions of the City report directly to the
5 City Manager, so at any given time, if I
6 suspect or any City Manager suspects some
7 nefarious activity going on within one of our
8 departments, then I can have our Budget Officer
9 contract out, or we can do it ourselves, a
10 company to come and do an audit. If criminal
11 violations are discovered, clearly we would
12 turn that over to the State Attorney's Office
13 for prosecution. The issue with -- so, in my
14 opinion, my humble opinion, I think the system
15 we have will work and will continue to work,
16 using our existing audit, as long as they
17 report to the City Manager.

18 Creation of an Inspector General for the
19 City of Coral Gables comes to a couple of
20 issues, volume of work.

21 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Yeah.

22 THE CITY MANAGER: I don't think it's
23 there. Number Two is, if it's the will of the
24 Commission to have an Inspector General's
25 Office, it's going to be very costly, because

1 it's got to be staffed. You have to do the
2 recruiting. It has to be independent. And
3 talking about independent, then it needs to, in
4 my opinion, sort of mirror what the County
5 does, that the County Inspector can only be
6 terminated, correct me if I'm wrong, Cristina,
7 by -- it's in the Charter, and by the majority
8 of the Commissioners.

9 They have to have the power to do what they
10 need to do and not have the fear of being
11 terminated by a three-two vote or a four -- you
12 know, a majority vote.

13 So I haven't seen it. I mean, there are
14 some processes that needed to be tighten up,
15 that we've tightened up, but to spend the kind
16 of money, half a million dollars, roughly, a
17 million dollars, I just don't see that
18 currently in the City, with our City employees.

19 We do have some very dedicated professional
20 folks. And, again, keeping that function of
21 audit under the City Manager's sole discretion,
22 I think it's the right way to go, but that's my
23 humble opinion.

24 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Unless it's the City
25 Manager, but -- just a random comment. But I

1 agree with you a hundred percent, which is why
2 I asked the questions I asked. It sounds
3 great, but it's usually expensive, and God
4 willing, it's not needed on a day-to-day basis.
5 If it is, in this small City, then we've got a
6 lot more problems than we think we do.

7 THE CITY MANAGER: Well, thank you for at
8 least one person agreeing with me.

9 MS. MOSCOWITZ: You earned that.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes, Annie.

11 MS. BETANCOURT: Well, but I think we
12 repeatedly heard during the public comment the
13 issue of increased transparency. Obviously,
14 that was a recurring theme of the speakers that
15 we heard, increased transparency.

16 THE CITY MANAGER: That is correct.
17 Normally what we do in the City now is, we look
18 at those high risk areas. So I sit down with
19 Paula, who's my auditor, and we look at what
20 are the high risk areas where things could go
21 sideways, and then we decide, okay, we're going
22 to audit these two departments. And we'll hire
23 a company to come out, an independent company,
24 to come out and do the audit and so on.

25 Now, I'm sure we could improve on the

1 transparency, in the sense of, once those
2 audits are done, to report to the Commission,
3 so that the public knows that we've audited
4 Finance and Accounting or Public Works, and
5 these were the findings. And the findings of
6 our auditors are public records. So maybe we
7 should do a better job of presenting that to
8 the Commission.

9 MS. MOSCOWITZ: And would that be something
10 we would deal with, Don? Do you know? Because
11 that is the issue, transparency, not
12 necessarily needing a \$500,000 Inspector
13 General.

14 Do we have a role in promoting transparency
15 in those areas?

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Well, as citizens, I
17 would guess we have a role and I'm trying to --

18 MS. MOSCOWITZ: No, I understand.

19 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: As a Committee?

20 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Yeah.

21 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I'd ask the City
22 Attorney. If during our look at the Charter,
23 if they find a place where something about
24 transparency would be appropriate, we could
25 certainly consider that.

1 MS. THROCKMORTON: I would say, as we
2 continue on with our sections this morning, we
3 have a lot about budget and revenues. So there
4 may be an appropriate area there. But we can
5 also continue this conversation in our
6 Inspector General discussion at the next
7 meeting, to see if there's another proposal
8 that you all want to make about increasing
9 transparency at some point in the Charter.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: You know, it's
11 interesting that the City Manager came up with
12 the exact figure. I was going to answer your
13 question, Jane, is that I assumed that this is
14 a half a million dollar cost.

15 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Why I raised it.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yeah, when you talk
17 about salary, support, office space, systems
18 and so forth.

19 And I Chair the Miami-Dade County Public
20 Schools Ethics Advisory Committee, which
21 doesn't count toward my twelve years, Tom,
22 and --

23 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I was on that Committee
24 when it first started.

25 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes, I know, with the

1 Chief Justice.

2 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Yes.

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes. May he rest in
4 peace.

5 And we use the Inspector General from the
6 County, as was stated by the City Attorney, and
7 the way that works is that we actually -- the
8 School Board pays for an Inspector General
9 employee at the School Board to handle School
10 Board cases, but the support -- I mean, it's a
11 limited cost, because -- it's still expensive,
12 but that one employee, and then his staff
13 support and other support and legal support,
14 comes from the Downtown Inspector General.

15 So they have someone on the ground doing
16 the investigations and so forth, but the
17 support element comes from the main office. So
18 it's under contract. And there's a cost.
19 There's still a cost, but --

20 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Yeah.

21 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman, can I ask one
22 question --

23 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Absolutely.

24 MR. PARDO: -- since we have the Manager
25 here?

1 Mr. Manager, when -- based on you looking
2 at this with fresh eyes this past year, my
3 concern, and I think most citizens' concerns,
4 have to do with, we adopt a budget, which has a
5 million line items. Then, all of a sudden, the
6 monies are used differently. You know, you
7 write in your checkbook -- the check for the
8 lawn guy, the check for the this and the that,
9 things move. I understand that.

10 But can the public ask for an up-to-date
11 balance sheet of the budget, which has all of
12 these line items, and where we are and how
13 monies have been moved from one side to the
14 other? I think that would accommodate a lot of
15 the transparency issues that Jane is talking
16 about, and that wouldn't cost anything,
17 based -- which the Chair has rightfully said,
18 that he agrees that we're talking about
19 something north of half a million dollars?

20 THE CITY MANAGER: To answer your question,
21 I'm sure that's possible. Honestly, I'm not
22 sure, though, that I've seen massive transfers
23 of money from line items that we've already
24 budgeted, that's been approved.

25 For example, road construction, that we

1 take road construction money and put it on
2 Parks and Recreations. I have not seen that.
3 And maybe that's something one of your Budget
4 folks not here, but --

5 MR. PARDO: And sometimes, in capital
6 improvement -- and I'm sorry to interrupt you,
7 in some capital improvement projects, there are
8 cost overruns.

9 THE CITY MANAGER: Correct.

10 MR. PARDO: And, then, some money, let's
11 say, for sidewalks, have to be used for these
12 capital improvement projects that are
13 buildings, let's say. You know, there's an
14 expectation that the citizens are getting
15 sidewalks, because they've gone through all of
16 these budget hearings, and all of a sudden,
17 they don't have sidewalks year after year after
18 year, because that's where the money gets
19 funded.

20 THE CITY MANAGER: Understood.

21 MR. PARDO: And I think a lot of the
22 perception of needing the Inspector General has
23 to do with that.

24 THE CITY MANAGER: Understood, but I have
25 not seen that type of transfer.

1 MR. PARDO: Okay.

2 THE CITY MANAGER: What I find -- and,
3 again, in my short time, is that the way we do
4 projects, for example, City Hall, we'll budget
5 five million dollars this year. The next year,
6 another five, maybe another seven depending on
7 where the budget is, until we have the total
8 amount of money to fix City Hall.

9 The problem with that is that, as we're
10 saving money so we can do a cash payment and
11 pay it off, the cost of the construction keeps
12 going up. So what happens is, we get to the
13 point where we are today, where we need to fix
14 it, we have -- and I'll throw this figure out.
15 I'm not sure of the exact amount -- we have
16 twenty million dollars set aside, but it's
17 going to cost us fifty million dollars.

18 So that I see as, us spending more money
19 than we have to. So what I would do would
20 be -- is, how much money do we have, that we
21 can finish a project within a year or two, that
22 we can fund it and pay it off? And, then, on
23 the other side, for big projects like the City
24 Hall restoration and some of the others, then
25 we ask for a letter of intent and we look at

1 other financing, and then use that money that
2 we've saved up, those twenty million dollars,
3 to pay the interest of the loan that's borrowed
4 to fix it.

5 But I haven't seen a transfer -- a big
6 transfer, but I do believe the City Manager
7 needs to have the authority to -- and maybe the
8 Commission can set a limit, to say, okay, I'm
9 taking this project, Phillips Park, has seven
10 million dollars, but we need it now, because we
11 have a sewer pipeline that broke or whatever,
12 and I'm sorry, we're going to have to borrow
13 it. So the City Manager needs to have that
14 authority, again, in discussion with the
15 Commission, to move that money and get the work
16 done.

17 I don't know if that answers your question.

18 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Isn't all of this amenable
19 to a public records request?

20 THE CITY MANAGER: Yes.

21 MS. SUAREZ: If there's a record that shows
22 any of that, absolutely, yes. If there's an
23 existing record, yes.

24 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Say, what? I'm sorry.

25 MS. SUAREZ: Certainly, if there are such

1 records, they would be public records.

2 THE CITY MANAGER: And any amendments to
3 the budget, correct me if I'm wrong, we'll
4 bring to the Commission for a vote.

5 MS. SUAREZ: I'd defer to you, Mr. Manager
6 on that. I know that there's certain things --

7 THE CITY MANAGER: And I'm asking you. I
8 don't know the answer.

9 MS. SUAREZ: So I think your Budget staff
10 would probably be able to kind of give you the
11 finer points on that, but there are certain --
12 I think there is some flexibility that the
13 Manager has, to a certain extent.

14 THE CITY MANAGER: Right.

15 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Thank you.

16 Thank you, Mr. Manager.

17 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'm happy to provide
18 early next week all of that information about
19 the Inspector General that we discussed here,
20 so that you all can have time to digest it
21 before our next meeting, and if there's any
22 other information you want to request, I'm
23 happy to provide that, but it is scheduled --
24 that specific request for the Commission was
25 made via Resolution for this Board to consider,

1 and that is scheduled for our next meeting, the
2 Inspector General question.

3 Mr. Chair, do you want to go back to the --

4 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Please.

5 MS. THROCKMORTON: So, again, Section 17 is
6 generally about the creation, combination and
7 discontinuance of any departments in the City.

8 Section 18 has to do with budget estimates.
9 There was a referendum in 1967 which required
10 the City Manager to prepare for the City
11 Commission a budget three months prior to the
12 fiscal year end. This had to do with the
13 change between July 1st and an October 1st
14 fiscal year. So that's why that amendment was
15 waived to this Charter provision.

16 We did have a few suggestions at the Town
17 Hall regarding publishing the proposed final
18 budgets prior to any vote. There are some
19 State law provisions regarding the publication
20 and notice periods of the budget. So there is
21 some publication, and the budget is made
22 available online. I'm not sure if that request
23 had to do with specific line items or specific
24 details, but we do have a lot of State law
25 provisions to comply with, with budget

1 estimates and notice. So that's Section 18.

2 Section 19 has to do with appropriation
3 balances and transfer between items. I don't
4 know if this is what you were discussing, Mr.
5 Pardo. There have been no updates to this
6 provision of the Charter recently.

7 Section 20 has to do with unappropriated
8 accruing revenue. Again, Section 19, 20, 21
9 and 22, if you want to go through those,
10 Desiree, all have to do with accounting
11 procedures and appropriation requests. None of
12 these have been amended in recent years.
13 They're all part of our compiled Charter.

14 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Ms. Moscovitz.

15 MS. MOSCOWITZ: So going back to Section
16 19, do we want to add something that if amounts
17 are transferred, you know, because they're
18 needed from one place to another, that they
19 should be, I don't know, published someplace,
20 done something with, so that people are aware
21 of it?

22 MS. BETANCOURT: Well, they're public
23 record.

24 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman, this is really
25 the crux of -- the most important part of what

1 the City Manager does.

2 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Pardo --

3 MS. SUAREZ: You need to speak into your
4 microphone.

5 MR. PARDO: This is the crux of the -- of
6 what the City Manager does, and the last thing
7 you want to do is have the City Manager driving
8 the car from the back seat. I think that we
9 shouldn't get into the weeds of, you know,
10 restricting, trying of figure this out. I
11 think it all has to do with the transparency of
12 the concept of the Inspector General, which
13 would be, sometimes, instead of the clumsiness
14 of a public records request -- 'cause you could
15 request records and not get what you're asking
16 for, because -- especially when it comes to the
17 budget, and then the citizens get frustrated,
18 and then the first thing they think, after the
19 second time they don't get to see what they
20 want to see, is that they're trying to hide
21 something at City Hall. That's not what we
22 should be doing.

23 Maybe, sometimes, a simple portal, you
24 know, on the website, where you could send the
25 questions directly and find out exactly what's

1 happening or almost a real time how the budget
2 is going throughout the year, and -- you know,
3 the same as what you get from your accountant
4 every month and every quarter, and I think that
5 would be very, very helpful, because then
6 everybody sees exactly what it is.

7 There's no cost. We have a great IT
8 Department, you know, and the Manager's got
9 everything at his fingertips, and making it
10 accessible in such a way where people are
11 seeing, you know, over the shoulder, instead of
12 getting in the way, you know, of the City
13 Manager, because it's a strong Manager system
14 that we have. The last thing I want to do is
15 trip the Manager.

16 MS. MOSCOWITZ: No. I think it would be
17 easy enough to have a provision that said, if
18 money that was allocated for "X" is going to be
19 used for "Y," and it's a significant sum,
20 500,000, 750,000, that there be some sort of
21 public notice about it, and people can either
22 look at it or not, but it just gets -- it's out
23 there.

24 Because he's right, if you don't phrase
25 your public records request right, you don't

1 get it.

2 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yeah, but that may be
3 more of a Commission Ordinance than a
4 Charter --

5 MS. SUAREZ: Yeah.

6 MS. THROCKMORTON: That was going to be my
7 suggestion, Mr. Slesnick. I don't think that
8 it's not within this Board's purview to make
9 suggestions like that. I understand that it
10 may not be appropriate for a Charter Review
11 provision or a Charter provision, but if you
12 all have additional suggestions like that, that
13 may be adopted via Ordinance or Resolution,
14 we've had, in recent years, the Commission
15 execute Resolutions requesting certain
16 appendices be added to the budget or certain
17 updates, et cetera.

18 I don't think that suggestion for an
19 Ordinance would be unwelcomed by the
20 Commission.

21 MS. SUAREZ: Or even a direction -- a
22 Resolution with direction to Staff.

23 THE CITY MANAGER: I wanted to ask
24 Stephanie, do we not -- and I don't remember
25 now. We publish the budget --

1 MS. SUAREZ: Yes.

2 THE CITY MANAGER: -- the final budget and
3 put it online, correct?

4 MS. THROCKMORTON: The proposed budgets and
5 the budget, as finally amended, are all
6 available online and are attached to the
7 Ordinance, each time it's discussed, as well.

8 THE CITY MANAGER: Then I would suggest --

9 MS. SUAREZ: There is a financial
10 transparency page on our City web page, that
11 has a lot of information. I don't know
12 specifically what this Committee is discussing,
13 but I think it's something that perhaps can be
14 supplemented with additional --

15 THE CITY MANAGER: Maybe what I would
16 suggest for the future City Manager and for the
17 City is -- maybe, on a quarterly basis, is
18 publish where we're at with the budget at the
19 time, and it would be up to the resident to
20 look, "Okay. This is the first quarter and now
21 here's where we're at with the second quarter."

22 I think putting that online is not really a
23 heavy lift, but I'll have to check with Staff
24 to make sure that can be done.

25 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman, the reason that I

1 brought all of this up is, because the
2 Inspector General creation would be in the
3 Charter, and that's what I was trying to get
4 away from, once we get this around.

5 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: But I think, though,
6 that now that we've heard both, you and
7 Ms. Moscovitz, we may want to make a suggestion
8 to the City Commission in our report that they
9 should consider adopting a system, and now the
10 Manager has suggested a system that might be
11 helpful.

12 MR. PARDO: Right. And Mr. Chairman,
13 that's the reason that I wanted to make sure
14 that the concept of the Inspector General
15 simply doesn't go away, that the Commission
16 understands that not only have we reviewed it,
17 we've come up with something -- a suggestion
18 for them to look at, that will create the
19 concept of the Inspector General, without
20 having to --

21 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'm happy to draft a
22 Resolution to that effect for you all to
23 consider at the next meeting or take a motion
24 from you all today, if that's something that
25 the Committee, as a whole, wishes to suggest to

1 the --

2 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I think most of us that
3 have served on Boards, that, you know, the
4 Board sits like quarterly, and the CEO presents
5 the proposed budget and the actual
6 expenditures, and -- so that you get to
7 compare, on a quarterly or monthly or
8 semi-annually, whatever basis, how the budget
9 is playing out and what's been happening, and
10 that way you can ask questions. "Well, wait a
11 minute. We were saying that we were going to
12 spend this much, but we spent this much," and
13 there's usually a column that shows percentage
14 below or above budget, and it's very helpful.

15 Okay. So we don't do that now? We don't
16 have like quarterly reviews of the budget --

17 THE CITY MANAGER: We do it internally, but
18 we don't publish it.

19 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay.

20 THE CITY MANAGER: And I sit with my Budget
21 Director. As a matter of fact, I have a budget
22 meeting after lunch today, just to go over
23 where we're at in the budget and those issues,
24 but we don't publish it.

25 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay.

1 THE CITY MANAGER: So that may be something
2 we do biannually.

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yeah.

4 MR. PARDO: Easy lift.

5 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I'm happy to defer to you
6 all's, you know, ability to write it clearly.

7 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'm happy to bring back
8 a Resolution for your consideration.

9 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Mr. Wells.

10 MR. WELLS: Yes, one comment. On Section
11 18, as the budget, 18-G says, "An itemization
12 of anticipated revenue from other sources," I'd
13 gotten a request that we should have an
14 itemization of anticipated revenue from other
15 sources and corresponding expenses related to
16 other services -- yes, other sources.

17 And the reason why was because, when we
18 went through the renovation of Burger Bob's,
19 initially it was a \$570,000 increase, that
20 became 650, and the numbers just kept moving.
21 So, as part of the transparency, it would be
22 good, if we're doing quarterly estimates, as
23 cost figures change during the year, we should
24 publish them to residents, so they know what's
25 going on. So they don't yell to the Commission

1 for stuff that's outside of the Commission's
2 control. That's one thing.

3 The other thing was, at the end of Section
4 18, it says, "The budget estimates shall also
5 be posted on the City's website." It should
6 probably say, the budget estimate and all
7 amendments thereto. Now, you're probably
8 already doing that, but the Charter doesn't
9 say, "Budget estimates and all amendments
10 thereto."

11 And Mr. City Manager, that's what you just
12 referenced, that, you know, we have amendments
13 to the budget. It's posted. I would just add,
14 as part of our Constitution, that it's not only
15 budget estimates, but it's also all amendments
16 thereto. It's just words mean things.

17 MS. THROCKMORTON: Understood. I may need
18 to clarify with Staff. I think budget estimate
19 may be a term of art, which is what we use
20 before the budget is adopted, and amendments to
21 the budget, after the budget is adopted, may
22 not be budget estimates, in the same way that
23 they're contemplated in this section, but we
24 can certainly get back to you, once we talk to
25 Staff about that.

1 I think that budget estimate is prior to
2 the adoption of the budget, amendments after
3 the budget is adopted.

4 MR. WELLS: Okay.

5 MS. THROCKMORTON: My layman's
6 understanding of those terms.

7 MR. WELLS: So this would be amendments to
8 the estimate. And I understand that once the
9 budget is adopted, that's the budget. I got
10 that.

11 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah. The budget
12 estimates are done much prior to the start of
13 each fiscal year. They're based on estimated
14 revenues. And those change, as we get new
15 information from the Property Appraiser, the
16 Tax Collector, et cetera. Those numbers change
17 and are updated to the Commission as we receive
18 those.

19 So when the budget comes for adoption, the
20 budget estimate may have changed substantially,
21 based on what the initial budget estimate was
22 months before that.

23 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: But, Tom, there's also
24 changes to the final budget during the year.
25 So, I mean, if you're talking about doing that,

1 you need to make it clear that you want to see
2 the amendments to the budget as it goes through
3 the year.

4 MR. WELLS: Yes.

5 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I mean, the budget is
6 not a stagnant document.

7 MS. THROCKMORTON: And I understand
8 Mr. Pardo's suggestion to address that concern,
9 about amendments throughout the year, with a
10 quarterly update.

11 MS. SUAREZ: So I think we can discuss it
12 with Staff and kind of figure out -- bring
13 something back next meeting, after we discuss
14 it with them, and kind of learn from them more
15 what would be helpful.

16 MR. WELLS: Do we have a budget page, as
17 far as our website?

18 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yes.

19 MS. SUAREZ: Yes.

20 MR. WELLS: So all of the amendments,
21 everything, will be right there --

22 MS. THROCKMORTON: The last, I think, five
23 to ten years, the budgets are all posted there,
24 as well as a bunch of different details.

25 MR. PARDO: Yeah, but I think the concept

1 that the Chair was discussing about, you know,
2 the quarterly reports, just like every private
3 sector corporation works, and just have it
4 accessible to -- you know, we have the website.
5 We're not creating anything. We're just
6 showing another part of the information that
7 the public needs to feel comfortable that
8 everything is working the right way.

9 If, for example, on the Burger Bob issue,
10 it would have been posted there, everybody's
11 seeing this thing is spinning out of control,
12 and, you know, you could hone in on that, and
13 then make your own inquiries, as a citizen, and
14 address the Commission, if you think it has to
15 be addressed. And I think that's what it's all
16 about. It's not a question of, you know,
17 finding people stealing money from the City
18 internally or something like that, although
19 that is another function that the Manager has
20 said, that they look at the areas where that
21 can happen, and, unfortunately, it does happen,
22 every once in a blue moon.

23 But, here, the key is that concept of, in
24 my opinion, listening to the residents that
25 came before us and listening to residents that

1 we know, is that the whole thing about the
2 Inspector General is for the transparency, to
3 make sure that monies are there, that were
4 allocated during the budget time, the final
5 budget, but during the year, so people know
6 what's going on in the City, because that's
7 their tax dollars.

8 MS. THROCKMORTON: Understood. So I take a
9 consensus from you all that we will bring back
10 a draft Resolution for you at the next meeting
11 regarding those quarterly updates or whatever
12 it may be.

13 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: You know, I presume
14 that our report, if it's like many reports,
15 would be a report saying, this section, we
16 suggest this, this section, we suggest this.
17 So it seems to me that it might be, in response
18 to what's been said here, in response to what
19 some of the citizens that have come before us,
20 that separate out transparency issues and give
21 a transparency section, where we say, these are
22 the following suggestions that we believe would
23 increase transparency, and with these
24 Resolutions and/or amendments to this thing, we
25 think that we have addressed that issue.

1 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'm happy to take any
2 direction as to the final report of this
3 Committee.

4 MS. MOSCOWITZ: That's a great idea.

5 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Thanks.

6 (Inaudible.)

7 MS. THROCKMORTON: If we could pull back up
8 the provisions.

9 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I'd like to say most of
10 us here are not architects.

11 MS. THROCKMORTON: Thank you.

12 So 20 and 21 have to do with Appropriations
13 for Withdrawals, Notice to the Manager,
14 Revision of Unencumbered Balances. Again,
15 these are old provisions. They have not been
16 amended recently. They're all part of the
17 consolidated Charter.

18 Section 22 also has to do with Accounting
19 Procedure and Financial Reports. They have to
20 be prepared each quarter and fiscal year and
21 for other periods, as the City Manager may
22 require. However, as we have discussed, there
23 may be some public facing requirements that you
24 all want to suggest, but these are just the
25 accounting procedures.

1 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Right, but here's another
2 place where they could be made available, you
3 know, where it could say -- or maybe it doesn't
4 belong in the Charter, but made available to
5 the public.

6 MS. THROCKMORTON: The City Manager shall
7 make reports of the City's financial
8 transactions and financial condition as may be
9 required by Ordinance or Resolution. An
10 Ordinance or a Resolution directing certain
11 time or procedures for those reports would
12 certainly fall in line with this Charter
13 provision.

14 Section 23 -- we're moving to Taxation here
15 -- just the disposition of revenues. There's
16 only been one recent change to this, and I
17 guess it wasn't that recent, in 1965, amending
18 this from the Tax Collector to the Finance
19 Director. It just has to do that those funds
20 shall be collected by the Finance Director.

21 Section 24 has to do with Public Works
22 improvements --

23 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: As to the tax
24 collector, does the election of these new five
25 Constitutional Officers, is there any impact on

1 our Charter in reference to whom we deal with?
2 I mean, all five areas have been the County.
3 So we have dealt all of these years with the
4 County on all five areas, and now there's five
5 different offices to deal with.

6 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah.

7 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: From Tax Collector,
8 Property Appraiser, Clerk of the Court --

9 MS. BETANCOURT: Supervisor --

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: -- Supervisor of
11 Elections.

12 MS. THROCKMORTON: I haven't come across
13 any specific provisions that alter that. We'll
14 certainly take another go through, with a
15 fine-tooth comb. There are certainly plenty of
16 alterations to our processes and who we deal
17 with. There's definitely a lot of changes that
18 we're having to incorporate into our agreements
19 and our processes, but -- I haven't found any
20 in the Charter, but I'll certainly look at
21 those again.

22 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yeah, I mean, if there
23 is any, maybe we should look for it.

24 MS. THROCKMORTON: Uh-huh. Certainly.

25 Section 24 has to do with Public Works

1 construction, as I noted. Certain processes
2 and procedures are required when constructing
3 Public Works projects or improvements, more
4 than \$25,000. This amount was changed in 2005.
5 That was the last time this section was amended
6 and it was to do with that fiscal amount.

7 That amount of \$25,000 -- I'll defer to the
8 Manager, I haven't heard any recommendations
9 from Staff. The Manager may have comments, as
10 to that amount, but that amount currently
11 coordinates with our applicable Procurement
12 Code provisions.

13 THE CITY MANAGER: I do have a comment on
14 that. And that is that, currently, I think the
15 Manager has authority for about \$25,000 for
16 construction, \$100,000 for services; is that
17 correct?

18 MS. SUAREZ: Without having to go through
19 the formal bidding processes.

20 THE CITY MANAGER: Correct.

21 In my opinion, \$25,000 for construction
22 projects is really too low. There's not much
23 you can do with 25,000. I would urge either
24 \$50,000 or I would reverse it and I would have
25 the authority for professional services stay

1 the same, but also increase the amount that the
2 Manager can authorize for construction, prior
3 to -- eventually, we would go to the
4 Commission, but prior to going to the
5 Commission, in case of an emergency or some
6 other issue.

7 Cristina, you had --

8 MS. SUAREZ: No. No. No. That's fine.

9 THE CITY MANAGER: Oh, I thought you were
10 motioning me --

11 MS. SUAREZ: No. No. No. I was just
12 listening. Sorry.

13 THE CITY MANAGER: So 25,000, it seems like
14 a low amount, from the time that I've been
15 here. Maybe 50,000.

16 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Well, you can't renovate
17 your bathroom for that.

18 THE CITY MANAGER: What's that?

19 MS. MOSCOWITZ: You can't renovate your
20 bathroom for that.

21 THE CITY MANAGER: No, ma'am.

22 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I just had my trees
23 trimmed, \$5,000.

24 MR. PARDO: Did you get a permit?

25 THE CITY MANAGER: I was just going to ask

1 that question.

2 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I don't think you have
3 to get a permit to trim --

4 MS. THROCKMORTON: Less than 25 percent and
5 a certain diameter is okay.

6 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: The answer is, no, I
7 didn't. So there, I confess.

8 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah, so, again, I
9 don't -- you heard from the Manager as to his
10 suggestion for that provision. If you could
11 bring it back up, Desiree.

12 I just wanted to note, it's very specific
13 as to Public Works and improvements, and it has
14 to do with the public notice and some of the
15 accounting -- public advertising and receipt of
16 bids.

17 So we have, via Ordinance, a Procurement
18 Code that accounts for that receipt of bids, as
19 prescribed by Ordinance, but that \$25,000
20 threshold is in the Charter.

21 MR. PARDO: So -- I'm sorry.

22 MS. MOSCOWITZ: So we should raise it?

23 MR. PARDO: Yeah. So we should raise it.

24 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'll defer to the
25 Manager on that recommendation.

1 MR. PARDO: Can the Manager provide a memo
2 with a suggestion for the amounts? That would
3 be great.

4 MS. SUAREZ: Sure. We're happy to work
5 with the Manager's Office, so that he can --
6 you know, maybe -- I think you're asking for
7 like more explanation.

8 MR. PARDO: Just a --

9 MS. SUAREZ: The Manager's Office.

10 THE CITY MANAGER: Or the new Manager.

11 MR. PARDO: Right. Well, you know --

12 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Could we have it by
13 five o'clock today?

14 MS. THROCKMORTON: And it may be a question
15 that the Public Works staff and the
16 assistant --

17 MS. SUAREZ: And Procurement.

18 MS. THROCKMORTON: -- and Procurement, the
19 Assistant Director for Procurement may have
20 some suggestions on it.

21 MR. PARDO: Right. As a memo from The
22 Manager's Office.

23 MS. THROCKMORTON: Certainly, we can get
24 that to you for the next meeting.

25 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I mean, I think Mr.

1 Pardo, maybe it's a good question, that we'd
2 like to have some backup for what we might
3 decide, showing the expertise and the
4 experience that the Manager has.

5 MS. THROCKMORTON: Certainly. We'll make
6 sure that that's available.

7 MS. MOSCOWITZ: And should there be a
8 separate emergency --

9 MS. THROCKMORTON: There is separate
10 emergency provisions already addressed in the
11 Code, yes.

12 MR. WELLS: I want to point out, Section 23
13 and 24, we got a comment during the Town Hall
14 Meeting that Section 23 deals with revenue and
15 24 deals with Public Works, but there is no
16 provision in the Charter right now that
17 addresses lease provisions.

18 MS. THROCKMORTON: I have that to be under
19 sort of existing -- or sort of catch-all
20 provisions for the next meeting, but I'm happy
21 to address it now, if you'd like.

22 MR. WELLS: Well, so I'll finish up and we
23 can address it at the next meeting, but I can
24 tell you that we worked exclusively with the
25 City Manager, when I dealt with -- when my wife

1 dealt with Birdie Bistro and when Harald Neuweg
2 dealt with Fritz and Franz, and it would have
3 been very helpful for the City Commission to
4 give input to the City Manager -- direction as
5 to what the lease should be, should it be a
6 concessionary agreement, should it be a tenant
7 lease agreement, what they're looking for, for
8 rent.

9 That would be helpful for the City Manager,
10 so the City Manager would know what he's
11 expected to return to the Commission for
12 approval.

13 MS. SUAREZ: So on that point, I will --
14 you know I'll defer to the City Manager, but
15 that is kind of part of the Manager's authority
16 to negotiate -- you know, make the business
17 decisions and the negotiation, because it is
18 still subject to Commission approval, and
19 throughout the process, of course, there is --
20 typically the Manager communicates with the
21 Elected Officials and briefs them and updates
22 them, and certainly don't make decisions
23 outside of a meeting, but that is part of the
24 process, and the Staff function is that
25 negotiation.

1 And the Commission can, of course, always
2 give direction as they're updated, right. If
3 the Manager's updating them on what's going on,
4 and they have a different view, they can bring
5 it up -- put an item on the agenda and give
6 that direction. So that could already happen,
7 is what I'm trying to suggest.

8 MR. WELLS: Right. It could, but without
9 the Commission making a determination in a
10 public meeting as to what the direction is, the
11 residents do not get a chance to have input.

12 MS. SUAREZ: Understood.

13 MR. WELLS: So these private meetings --
14 the residents aren't participating in these
15 private meetings. That was my point.

16 MS. SUAREZ: No. And I just think, from
17 the -- you know, and I don't want to speak for
18 the Manager, but I think, sometimes, when
19 you're in a negotiation, it is challenging to
20 have the negotiation in public. In other
21 words, you know, you're negotiating with a
22 potential tenant and you -- you know, to have
23 the public discussion about -- which is going
24 to still be subject to Commission approval, but
25 I think it maybe, perhaps, hinders the

1 negotiation, if it has the whole -- you know,
2 if the terms are already laid out in public,
3 and that back and forth, perhaps it becomes a
4 little more difficult.

5 But, of course, you know, we're happy to
6 take your suggestions, but -- and those
7 processes, those are -- you know, the
8 Commission ultimately approves it, and so the
9 Commission doesn't have to approve, you know,
10 terms that it doesn't agree with, and the
11 Commission gets briefed along the way.

12 MS. THROCKMORTON: I will also, before our
13 next meeting, provide all of you with -- we
14 have certain Code provisions related to the
15 process for the rent and sale of the City
16 leasing, as well as City selling land, so I'll
17 be sure to provide those, because we do have
18 some Code provisions that are applicable to
19 that, as well.

20 MS. SUAREZ: Yeah, we have procurement
21 provisions for that.

22 MR. WELLS: And to answer your comment
23 about negotiations, I strongly believe that
24 depends on if you're positional negotiating or
25 principal negotiating, and so if the City

1 Manager is coming in with a higher number,
2 looking for middle ground, versus this is the
3 number the City is going to take.

4 MS. SUAREZ: Understood.

5 MR. WELLS: And I haven't found that we've
6 done principal negotiation in the two examples
7 I talked about. But I did not participate in
8 those negotiations, so I'm just -- it's third
9 party information.

10 MS. SUAREZ: Right.

11 MR. WELLS: Thank you.

12 MS. SUAREZ: Understood. Understood.

13 MS. THROCKMORTON: If we could go to
14 Section 25. This has to do with the bonding of
15 officers. There have been no recent changes.
16 It's a short provision.

17 Section 26 has to do with Advisory Boards.
18 In 1975, there was a referendum where the
19 question was whether the City Commission could
20 appoint Advisory Board Members without having
21 the request of the City Manager. So, as you
22 all know now, with some exceptions, based on
23 Board provisions, the City Commission appoints
24 Advisory and Quasi-Judicial Board and Committee
25 Members as a whole.

1 We did receive some suggestions from the
2 public regarding qualifications for serving on
3 an Advisory or Quasi-Judicial Board, that these
4 Board Members must be U.S. citizens living in
5 Coral Gables for three years prior to
6 appointment on a Board, was the suggestion at
7 the Town Hall. There may be some issues with
8 some of those. We do have residential term
9 requirements for some Boards, but not others,
10 and those are set on a Board by Board basis,
11 via Ordinance or Resolution, by the Commission.

12 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Is there any desire --
13 I think I heard something from the public, that
14 all of our Boards have residential requirements
15 or is that something we don't care about?

16 MR. PARDO: I think it exists there now.

17 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: No, just certain.

18 MS. THROCKMORTON: So we have various
19 provisions that addresses -- some Boards
20 address them specifically. Some Board require
21 all to be residents. We do have a general
22 waiver provision, where the City Commission
23 can, by a four-fifth vote, waive the residency
24 requirement, if there is one.

25 Some Boards have specific provisions that

1 require you to be -- or allow you to be a
2 resident, a property owner or a business owner.
3 Some allow you to be a property owner or a
4 resident. So you may own multiple properties,
5 but not be a resident of the City of Coral
6 Gables, but may still want to serve on a -- the
7 Board of Adjustment, for example, has a broader
8 requirement like that.

9 Some Boards, like the Historic Preservation
10 Board, require you to have been a resident for
11 a certain number of years prior to serving on
12 the Historic Preservation Board. So each Board
13 has a unique makeup of those requirements. We
14 do have a general catch-all waiver provision
15 for that residency requirement which, like I
16 said, requires a four-fifth vote of the
17 Commission.

18 MR. PARDO: We have a requirement for the
19 Board of Architects where they don't
20 necessarily have to be residents, but they have
21 to at least have their offices here and also
22 practice here.

23 MS. THROCKMORTON: Uh-huh.

24 MR. PARDO: If we would change that there,
25 we would be in the deepest world of trouble --

1 MS. THROCKMORTON: Uh-huh.

2 MR. PARDO: -- of getting enough --

3 MS. THROCKMORTON: As you all well know, we
4 have thirty -- how many Boards, 38 Boards.

5 MS. SUAREZ: 37, 38, something like that.

6 MS. THROCKMORTON: Filling all of those
7 positions with only residents, there would
8 certainly be some Boards, I think, like the
9 Board of Architects, for instance, that
10 Mr. Pardo mentioned, that may suffer from a
11 lack of quorum or --

12 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: With all of these
13 people that are going to run for office, we
14 should be able to fill these Boards with
15 residents.

16 But, anyways, on the Board of Architects,
17 Felix, I'm glad you said something about that,
18 it disturbs me greatly about some of the
19 decisions coming out of the Board of
20 Architects, and when people have complained,
21 they keep getting told that nobody has any
22 control over the Board of Architects, which is
23 crazy. I mean, the Board of Architects is
24 still an appointed Board of this City, whether
25 they practice here or own property here or live

1 here.

2 And, you know, when I go through the
3 neighborhoods and see these great, big white
4 blocks, they're just horrible, and I just
5 wonder, you know, what is going on here? And
6 I'm not sure if what I'm saying has anything to
7 do with the Charter, but it bothers me greatly.

8 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Yeah.

9 MR. PARDO: May I respond to that?

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yeah.

11 MR. PARDO: Okay. You and me, both. And
12 our Chair on the Board does a great job, Judy
13 Carty. She was actually here last night. We
14 had a Planning Board meeting until, I don't
15 know, ten o'clock or something like that, and
16 we had about two-thirds of the Board of
17 Architects here. There's nine of them there
18 now.

19 Not only is it disturbing, I just -- it is
20 incomprehensible that some of these
21 single-family homes have been approved this
22 way. And so there are two different issues
23 that -- and I told them publicly last night,
24 and our City Attorney was there, and I said to
25 the Chair and the Board Members, that when --

1 it doesn't matter what it is, the Board of
2 Architects always gets blamed.

3 So, two things, the first thing, the
4 single-family homes, many of these what I call
5 shoe boxes that have been built, that look like
6 they belong somewhere else, definitely not in
7 Coral Gables, they're completely non-compatible
8 and out of place; they were apparently approved
9 during the Pandemic, where a former City
10 Architect was able to administratively approve
11 them. That is what I have been told by the
12 Board. That is bad.

13 The second thing is that, one of the things
14 that we discussed last night had to do with a
15 provision giving the Board Members the ability
16 to look more at different functions and
17 different things that they can do. In other
18 words, we kind of put a couple of more tools in
19 their tool box, as a recommendation to the
20 Commission, in order to be able to adjust to
21 compatibility with the existing neighborhoods,
22 massing of some of these large buildings, and
23 other things that are in there.

24 So I'm very much aware. I've driven that
25 very hard, to make sure that gets done, but

1 without a doubt, you know, when you see some of
2 these design elements in these homes, it is
3 unfortunate. You can't put the Genie back in
4 the bottle, but in my opinion, it's not the
5 Board of Architects' fault, but there is fault
6 and we've tried to correct it.

7 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And Felix, you'll
8 remember, if you go back thirty years, you and
9 I had led the fight on the Planning and Zoning
10 Board against McMansion, and so --

11 MR. PARDO: That's right.

12 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Against what?

13 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: McMansion.

14 MR. PARDO: McMansion.

15 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: In other words, the
16 tearing down of the 1920s single story
17 Mediterranean house --

18 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Microphone.

19 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: The tearing down of the
20 1920s single story Mediterranean house and
21 ending up with a two-and-a-half story towering
22 yard, lot line to lot line, McMansion, as we
23 called them.

24 MR. PARDO: Right. And that is right, and,
25 you know, that battle continues, and it's only

1 gotten worse, because they're coming at us in
2 all directions.

3 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Chair, would you
4 like us to go to the next --

5 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes, please.

6 MS. THROCKMORTON: Section 27 has to do
7 with compensation, which should be set by
8 Ordinance. City Manager determines the salary
9 for all under purview or his or her purview,
10 subject to approval by the City Commission.
11 This provision was ratified in 1997 via
12 Ordinance as part of a cleaning up after the
13 Municipal Home Rule Powers Act.

14 We received some suggestions regarding
15 compensation of appointed officials and/or
16 benefits to employees. I don't know that they
17 would fit in this subject, but I bring them up
18 now, as they related to compensation.

19 Section 28 is just a savings clause. So
20 we -- that needs to be there, to protect the
21 City if any provisions are found to be invalid.

22 Section 29 has to do with the name of the
23 City of Coral Gables, that no one else can take
24 our name.

25 Section 30 has to do with the repealing

1 clause. Same thing, this is just repealing all
2 of those provisions after our Municipal Home
3 Rule Powers Act and our consolidated and
4 readoptioning of the Charter. So this should
5 remain.

6 Section 31 has to meet with the metes and
7 bounds of the City. The last time this was
8 updated was in 2004, where it includes those
9 recently annexed areas, including Kings Bay and
10 various others. So that was the last metes and
11 bounds description of the City.

12 Section 32, relatedly, says that we are not
13 responsible in any illegally included lands and
14 we don't have any liability for taxes for those
15 lands that may accidentally be in our metes and
16 bounds descriptions.

17 Section 32 (sic) is just a general
18 statement that the City has available to it --
19 33, sorry, Desiree -- has available to it all
20 governmental, corporate and proprietary powers
21 that the City has under Florida Constitution
22 and the State Laws. So, again, just making it
23 clear to the public that we have all powers
24 available to us.

25 Section 34 has those additional powers, and

1 this just specifies those powers provided for
2 in the Miami-Dade County Home Rule Charter, as
3 well as the Municipal Home Rule Powers Act. So
4 these are the specific powers and authorities.
5 These are very broad, general powers.

6 We received some suggestions at the Town
7 Hall related specifically to these powers.
8 You'll see, as we go through them, most of them
9 are flushed out in Ordinance or in the Zoning
10 Code. We received a bunch of suggestions that
11 I will bring up at the next meeting, that may
12 lend themselves to the same sort of suggestion
13 that we talked about, of a Resolution or
14 Ordinance directing the City Commission to
15 consider some of those changes, rather than
16 their inclusion in the Charter, as these are
17 very broad additional power statements.

18 If we could go to the next slide, you'll
19 see the power to impose local and special
20 assessments. That's well established in State
21 Law and there's various details to those. I
22 don't think any additional ones should be in
23 there.

24 Abatement of nuisances, we have a Nuisance
25 Abatement procedure, a Nuisance Abatement

1 Board, that is set up in Code provisions.

2 The police powers, obviously, there's a lot
3 of documentation, as the Manager well knows,
4 about a City's police powers.

5 If you go to the next slide, the general
6 welfare, as you know, everything the City does
7 is to promote and maintain the general welfare
8 of the public.

9 And Section 34-e, Zoning, as you can see,
10 we have sort of a general statement about the
11 power of zoning, most of which is established
12 in very specific detail in the City Zoning
13 Code.

14 The next slide, signage, same thing.
15 That's spelled out very particularly within our
16 Zoning Code, and we have looked at that very
17 recently, given recent Supreme Court cases. So
18 we've looked very closely at our Signage Code.

19 And, then, investigative power, this is
20 also established in certain Boards, the power
21 of the Trial Board, the power of the Commission
22 to summon witnesses, subpoena documents. It's
23 also come up in discussions about the Inspector
24 General. So it may be an area that we can
25 discuss again at the next meeting, about the

1 City's investigative powers.

2 And those are all of the provisions of the
3 Charter, of our existing Charter.

4 So our plan had been, and, again, I'm happy
5 to take any other direction, that there are
6 various other suggestions we received at the
7 Town Hall that haven't fit squarely within one
8 of these provisions, or at least to my mind,
9 have not yet fits squarely within one of those
10 provisions. We will bring all of those back,
11 along with the Inspector General item and all
12 of the backup material we discussed, the memo
13 from the City Manager's Office about the Public
14 Works, and the Resolution about the quarterly
15 information, and Mr. Wells' proposal, if we
16 have any tweaks, for the next meeting, but
17 happy to take any other suggestion or
18 direction.

19 MS. BETANCOURT: Mr. Chair.

20 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes, Annie.

21 MS. BETANCOURT: Thank you, Stephanie, for
22 that report.

23 Would under Section 31 be applicable on the
24 topic of annexation?

25 MS. THROCKMORTON: So that description is

1 just a legal description of the City. If there
2 is a will, and I do have that on the list, to
3 bring back next time, about certain
4 requirements related to annexation, there are
5 County Code provisions that set forth the
6 process for annexation that the City must
7 follow, that we can discuss, but if there is a
8 direction as to that, I don't know that it
9 would be appropriate in that section, as that's
10 just the legal description of the City. It may
11 be best suited in an Ordinance.

12 MS. BETANCOURT: Right, but that was a
13 concern that was, you know, discussed from the
14 public.

15 MS. THROCKMORTON: Understood.

16 MS. SUAREZ: Is there something related to
17 annexation that you would like us to bring back
18 some --

19 MS. BETANCOURT: No. I just -- publicly,
20 it was a topic.

21 MS. THROCKMORTON: Of course, and I have it
22 on my list to bring back at the next meeting
23 that suggestion which was made, to require City
24 Commission approval and a referendum, prior to
25 proceeding with an annexation, or at some point

1 in the annexation process, which is what was
2 done the last time. So I'm happy to pull any
3 information you'd like before that, but I do
4 plan on discussing that at the next meeting.

5 MS. BETANCOURT: Well, I'm only thinking
6 that it might come up again.

7 MS. THROCKMORTON: Of course.

8 MS. BETANCOURT: Our next Charter revision
9 will be ten years down the road, so --

10 MS. THROCKMORTON: Uh-huh. Certainly.

11 MS. MOSCOWITZ: So I'm curious, there was
12 something sent out to residents, I believe,
13 just of the Little Gables, but I'm not sure,
14 that said, "Do you approve of annexation," and
15 it only had the ability to answer yes.

16 MS. THROCKMORTON: So there was a petition
17 process.

18 MS. MOSCOWITZ: Well, no. But I want to
19 know, was that -- did the City send that out?

20 MS. SUAREZ: So I don't know exactly which
21 communication you're referring to, but the
22 City, as part of the process that's required to
23 follow under the County procedures, has to
24 receive a certain number of petitions before it
25 can move forward. And so there was a petition

1 sent to the residents -- and only to the
2 residents of the area, of course, because
3 they're the ones who would -- the petitions
4 have to come from them.

5 And basically, it was to be returned -- you
6 return it if it's a yes, because what matters
7 is -- for the County, is that they need a
8 certain number of petitions in support, and so
9 that's why it only had a yes option. If you
10 were not in favor, it just simply is not
11 returned.

12 MS. THROCKMORTON: The County requires a
13 petition, not a ballot.

14 MS. SUAREZ: Right.

15 MS. MOSCOWITZ: The optics were terrible.
16 I would not want to see that again, because I
17 didn't understand, until you just said that,
18 that that's the point, but it looked like what
19 we call a push poll. You know, you could only
20 give one answer.

21 MS. THROCKMORTON: It may be instructive
22 for us to provide those procedures prior to the
23 next meeting.

24 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I would not want to see
25 that happen again.

1 Yes, I would like to discuss that, and I
2 would like to ban that.

3 MS. THROCKMORTON: So, some of that, as the
4 City Attorney said, is requirements under the
5 County Code. There's also State Law provisions
6 related to annexation. So we're happy to
7 provide those in advance. A lot of that
8 process is dictated by those other entities.

9 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I think what Jane is
10 saying is that the optics were bad.

11 MS. THROCKMORTON: Understood.

12 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And that it could have
13 been explained. I mean, first of all, I didn't
14 see it, so I don't know what the explanation
15 was, if it said clearly this is to determine
16 whether you support it -- I mean, I just don't
17 know what it said.

18 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I don't remember exactly,
19 but it was basically, do you support the
20 annexation and all you could check off was yes.

21 MR. PARDO: It was in the form of a
22 question, but you only had one answer.

23 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yeah. Right.

24 MS. THROCKMORTON: There's also -- as we've
25 discussed many times with the Commission

1 before, new limitations in State Law as to the
2 City's ability to push out information about
3 referendums and questions coming before them.
4 It is something that will affect this process,
5 insofar as if the City Commission chooses to
6 send any Charter referendums to the public.
7 The City is handcuffed in its ability, much
8 more than it has been in the past, to provide
9 information directly to residents about those
10 Charter referendum questions.

11 There's been recent updates in State Law in
12 the last few years that have really, like I
13 mentioned, handcuffed the City's ability to
14 provide information directly to the residents
15 about.

16 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Do we have any
17 provisions for seceding from the City?

18 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I know there's been a lot
19 of preemption, but I didn't realize, in terms,
20 even, of information that you all could
21 provide. I'd like to see the statutory
22 reference.

23 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'll certainly send that
24 to you. The City used to be able to send
25 factual information to residents directly, so

1 not advocating for a position, but factual
2 information, and that ability was taken away a
3 few Legislature sessions ago, but we'll
4 certainly send the provision, as well, because
5 it does affect the work of this Committee
6 insofar as what's put out, if the City
7 Commission wants to even send factual
8 information about the effect of a provision may
9 be hampered.

10 And, obviously, we'll look very closely at
11 what we are able to do when these items come
12 up, but I did want to make you all aware of
13 that, as well.

14 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman.

15 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yes, Mr. Pardo.

16 MR. PARDO: There were a lot of concerns
17 about zoning and development, and, obviously,
18 none of those would be Charter issues, unless
19 we would do something like what Miami Beach
20 does, that sometimes, when there is a change of
21 the Comprehensive Land Use Plan of a certain
22 magnitude, that it has to be vetted and
23 actually goes to a vote. This is what they do
24 in Miami Beach. I'm not necessarily suggesting
25 it here.

1 But I am expressing a huge concern that our
2 Comprehensive Land Use Plan is -- changes
3 almost willy-nilly. The threshold is so low,
4 that that Comp Plan, which is the ceiling of
5 what can be developed, changes, and the most
6 remarkable part about it is that, conceptually,
7 I remember many, many, many, many years ago, a
8 very different, of what I understand was John
9 Little, and if you needed to get anything done,
10 as far as zoning is concerned, it was John. He
11 was the expert's expert, and always gave the
12 City solid advice.

13 And when Governor Graham came up with
14 the -- what basically happened, as far as
15 development and controlling development in the
16 State of Florida, and every municipality and
17 county was scrambling to put together a Master
18 Plan, it was all based on concurrency, water,
19 sewer, traffic, all of these things.

20 I went through a hearing last night, and
21 there was a lot of concern about the width of
22 certain public right-of-ways and the zoning
23 that has been changed and the Comprehensive
24 Land Use Plan that was changed. I think it's
25 absolutely remarkable that we don't have a

1 comprehensive update of understanding that our
2 infrastructure can't take the changes of
3 development that have occurred right before our
4 eyes.

5 So what used to take me five minutes, to
6 get from my home here, took me ten minutes this
7 morning.

8 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Twenty.

9 MR. PARDO: Twenty for Don.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: From North Greenway.

11 MR. PARDO: From North Greenway. There's
12 something wrong with this picture. I know that
13 zoning is one thing, but I say that we should
14 really look at the overall Comprehensive Land
15 Use Plan, and that the voters of the City of
16 Coral Gables should have some type of
17 decision-making, when it comes to some of these
18 things that affect the entire future of this
19 City, from a development standpoint, and that
20 would be in the Charter, if we would bring it
21 up to some type of vote.

22 Right now, I feel totally uncomfortable
23 with staff putting together things, with land
24 use attorneys giving them advice or their
25 concerns. There's no citizens there doing the

1 same thing. And we end up with what we end up,
2 and that's wrong.

3 So I would like this Committee to think
4 about that, and look at what the thresholds are
5 in the City of Miami Beach, not to replicate
6 it, but just to see how they handle certain
7 things, and I think it's important for us to be
8 able to give more voice to the residents at the
9 ballot box, when it comes to what the City of
10 Coral Gables should look like in the future.

11 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Pardo, I'm happy to
12 provide that information. Pinecrest also
13 looked at something similar recently and there
14 have been some State Law preemptions, actually,
15 that have to do with land use and comprehensive
16 planning and referendums. So I'm happy to
17 provide that in advance of our next meeting,
18 because I think it would be instructive to your
19 discussions.

20 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And I just want to add,
21 and before I recognize -- I want to say
22 something about you. Representative
23 Betancourt, and I mean that with all due
24 respect, 'cause when our representative served
25 in the Legislature, the Legislature was much,

1 much more respectful of cities' rights and
2 Cities' powers and cities' ability to deal with
3 their own issues, something that has been lost
4 in the Legislature since good Legislators like
5 Ms. Betancourt left, and that has hurt us, too,
6 Felix.

7 Some of the things you talked about have
8 been taken away from cities, and it should
9 never have happened, and we want you back.

10 MS. BETANCOURT: Thank you. No.

11 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And you're still here
12 twelve years --

13 MS. BETANCOURT: I appreciate your words,
14 but going back to our laundry list that -- on
15 the topic, it's repeated again and again and
16 again, referendums regarding zoning, zoning
17 changes, development. So, again, it's a
18 recurring theme, that is very well a part of
19 what we're supposed to be doing here.

20 MS. THROCKMORTON: And I'm perfectly happy
21 to, if you all, in the meantime, have any other
22 direction of information you'd like to see in
23 advance. Those topics will be on our next
24 meeting agenda, and I do think, like Mr. Pardo
25 mentioned, the process in Miami Beach and other

1 municipalities, and like I said, applicable
2 State Law, provisions about comprehensive
3 planning and/or referendums will be helpful to
4 look at.

5 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And I think, for the
6 Committee's purposes, if they don't remember, I
7 think, if you could dig up some report on -- we
8 actually had a referendum on the ability of the
9 City to lease or sell public property --

10 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: -- that dealt with the
12 Village of Merrick Park and it was defeated.
13 The citizens voted, no, that you didn't have to
14 have a referendum.

15 So, I mean, I think, as a historical note,
16 we should see that.

17 MS. THROCKMORTON: I'm happy to provide
18 that.

19 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: I mean, before we think
20 that everybody out there agrees with -- I mean,
21 I don't know. We may all agree wholeheartedly
22 that there needs to be some brakes put on
23 changes to our Zoning Code and so forth, and if
24 that's through referendum or whatever, but I
25 guess some people don't agree with that.

1 MR. PARDO: And I just want to add one more
2 thing to that.

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Yeah.

4 MR. PARDO: Is that, years ago, the save
5 all for our City and planning was to have a
6 Charrette.

7 MS. BETANCOURT: Oh, yeah.

8 MR. PARDO: Let me tell you, being an
9 architect, it is very frustrating, because what
10 happens is that you could load a Charrette with
11 certain people, certain type, bus them in, if
12 you want, ensue things, kind of be able to
13 paint a broad brush across items, not even live
14 in this City, and tell people what they should
15 do, and then have other people justify their
16 actions based on these Charrettes, which
17 sometimes are Charades.

18 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. Well, you're
19 absolutely right, that could happen, but let
20 me, in defense, say that our -- and I think you
21 participated in our 2002 Charrette, which, in
22 fact, included many residents and even
23 children. We had an incredible -- and I think
24 the results of that Charrette would actually be
25 results that you would support. I mean, if you

1 go back and look at the suggestions that were
2 made, it was done in a manner and led by, at
3 the time, Commissioner Maria Anderson, who was
4 the one who led the fight against Merrick Park,
5 and the Charrette was to bring attention back
6 to the fact of what Coral Gables was and what
7 it was meant to be, and how we could go back to
8 a planning future that was very respective of
9 that, and it was led by the University of
10 Miami, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk did that for
11 us.

12 So, I mean, it was an incredible Charrette,
13 you know, but I think the results of the
14 Charrette were somewhat very supportive of all
15 of the things you believe in.

16 MR. PARDO: And then -- and the whole point
17 here is that, neighbor, upon neighbor, upon
18 neighbor in the City, since then forward, are
19 so unhappy with what they see just looking out
20 the windows of their kitchens, when they could
21 see lights of developments, in the City of
22 Coral Gables, from their kitchen windows, in
23 their single-family home. That's a problem.

24 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: But we haven't even had
25 a Charrette that involves citizens since then.

1 I don't think. I think that was the last time
2 we asked the citizens to opine.

3 MR. PARDO: Yeah. So the whole point, I
4 think, is that when you have changes of the
5 Comprehensive Land Use Plan and also public
6 buildings, I think, you know, an ability to go
7 to a referendum is important. So it's just
8 food for thought.

9 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: No. I loved Coral
10 Gables, and the way it was, the way it should
11 be, and --

12 MR. PARDO: I know you do.

13 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: -- the way it should be
14 in the future.

15 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I think this would be a
16 huge contribution that we could make, that
17 would be beyond tinker.

18 MS. BETANCOURT: Speak into the microphone.

19 MS. THROCKMORTON: Yeah. Could we use the
20 microphone, please? I'm sorry, Ms. Moscovitz.

21 MS. MOSCOWITZ: I think we should look into
22 this.

23 MR. WELLS: Chair, one point, also, is that
24 if something lost previously in front of the
25 residents, that's the position of the residents

1 a while ago. That's not what the position of
2 the residents --

3 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Twenty years ago.

4 MR. WELLS: Yeah, that's not the position
5 of the residents now. So, as a combination, I
6 see our job as providing thoughtful options for
7 residents through referendum. Whether we might
8 agree with it or not, we're still providing
9 thoughtful positions for the residents to take
10 one, because we don't pass anything, as you
11 know. The residents decide -- well, the
12 Commission and then the residents.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Tom, you're right.
15 Absolutely.

16 MR. WELLS: Thank you.

17 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Chair --

18 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: You're welcome.

19 MS. THROCKMORTON: Mr. Chair, I did have
20 one more matter to bring up, which is just a
21 matter of scheduling. We have one more meeting
22 scheduled at this time, which is a quick
23 turnaround from this meeting to the next. I
24 anticipate, given the amount of discussion
25 today and the things that we will be bringing

1 back, that we may need at least one more final
2 meeting to go over recommendations and to give
3 our office the chance to consolidate all of
4 your recommendations into a report, to get
5 feedback from you all about how you would like
6 that report to look and what actual language
7 you are suggesting to the Commission.

8 So I'm going to ask the Deputy City Clerk
9 if she can work with you all to find some
10 additional dates, because I do anticipate that
11 we may need another meeting beyond our one we
12 have scheduled for early February, but I'll
13 defer to you all on that scheduling and your
14 thoughts on that.

15 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And a complication on
16 that, of course, is that we have an election
17 coming up in April, and we have qualifying for
18 that election in February.

19 MS. THROCKMORTON: That's correct.

20 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: And I wanted to
21 congratulate -- showing their public spirit,
22 that there are two members of our Committee who
23 have stated their interest in public office,
24 and that is our Vice Chair Tom, who has stated
25 his interest in running for the Commission, and

1 our Member Pardo, who has stated his interest.
2 So I think that they are showing, again,
3 another level of commitment to this City, to
4 its citizens and I congratulate them on putting
5 themselves out there and doing that.

6 But I think the situation will complicate
7 the matters of having the other meeting, but we
8 can see if we can come to a date.

9 MS. THROCKMORTON: Certainly, and we can
10 see how much we get done in our February 6
11 meeting. Obviously, we're happy to -- within
12 the bounds of our possible time, do as much as
13 we can, before the February 6th meeting. I
14 just wanted to bring that up, that I do
15 anticipate us having to -- I don't anticipate
16 having a final report ready for your review and
17 approval on February 6th.

18 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Understood.

19 Is there any other business to come before
20 this Committee?

21 MS. THROCKMORTON: I think it's the 6th.
22 Yes, okay.

23 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Jane?

24 MS. MOSCOWITZ: No.

25 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Oh, okay. Any other

1 business?

2 MS. BETANCOURT: I simply want to thank
3 staff for providing all of the backup
4 information --

5 MR. WELLS: Yes.

6 MS. BETANCOURT: -- that you did regarding
7 the other municipalities. That was very
8 helpful.

9 MS. THROCKMORTON: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Well, I think,
11 actually, to thank the Clerk's Office, the City
12 Attorney's Office, the City Manager's Office,
13 for all of its support they've given us through
14 this process. And the information has been
15 extremely helpful and generous, and we thank
16 you all.

17 MS. SUAREZ: Thank you.

18 And just I do have to say, on behalf of the
19 Commission, I know that they are very
20 appreciative of the service that you are
21 providing. And, you know, so I know that they
22 would also want us to thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: They can send us
24 presents.

25 MS. BETANCOURT: Pins.

1 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: They did. These are
2 very, very charming little buttons. Thank you.

3 MS. SUAREZ: They're very nice.

4 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Any other business? If
5 not, is there a motion to adjourn?

6 MR. PARDO: So moved.

7 MS. BETANCOURT: So moved.

8 CHAIRMAN SLESNICK: Okay. It's been moved
9 by Ms. Betancourt and seconded by Mr. Pardo.
10 Any objections? Show it unanimously adopted
11 that we are adjourned.

12 (Thereupon, the meeting was adjourned at
13 11:05 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

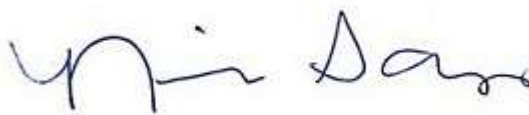
STATE OF FLORIDA:

SS.

COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE:

I, NIEVES SANCHEZ, Court Reporter, and a Notary Public for the State of Florida at Large, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

DATED this 30th day of January, 2025.



NIEVES SANCHEZ