

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-4
December 10, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Landscape Director, Brook Dannemiller

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-4 [2:52:34 p.m.]

A discussion on a tree scheduled for removal on the 1400 Block of Urbino.
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Vice Mayor Lago: G-4 – I’m going to show you a picture of a tree that was cut down on the street that I live on – put some pictures up. Staff has made me aware that this tree was notified, a sign put on the tree possibly for, I’ll say about a year, I think it was they said. I didn’t catch it, I apologize.

City Manager Iglesias: And by the way, Vice Mayor, we will be reconstructing Minorca and Salzedo as part of the Public Safety Building and that entire cross-section is going to be replaced for any additional drainage, so we will be cutting all the tree up, just to let you know.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, in this case, I didn’t catch obviously, the public notice, that’s my fault. Try to concentrate when I drive, I’m not looking at a tree. If you look at this tree, I got several phone

City Commission Meeting
December 10, 2019

calls from residents on the street who also didn't notice it and they told me why this tree was put down. I said, obviously staff probably has a good reason for it. I will get them a report. If you look at the tree, and I'm not an arborist, I don't pretend to be, but it looks pretty healthy. If you look at the actual core, if you look at the rings of the tree. One of my big concerns is that that stump had been there for over a month in that location, and somebody came back and rearranged it and since I took those photos, they rearranged it and piled it up and actually planted a tree last week. What I would like to see, if my colleagues are interested in doing is, I would like to see, it doesn't have to be so broad, 1500 feet, I'd like to see people in the neighborhood notified before a tree is cut down. Because we start fielding calls saying why is this tree being cut down. There needs to be something like a simple letter saying, this tree is being cut down in your yard, its been there for 90-plus years, 100 years, being cut down for the following reason, its sick, it was struck by lightning, whatever reason it may be, whatever the arborist report states. But I just think that it just seems vague for the residents when they start calling, and especially in my neighborhood when this happened, they came to see me for the reason, and I didn't have an answer. Except for obviously, City staff had a good reason for cutting down a tree and we protect all our trees. I toed the company line.

Landscape Director Dannemiller: Our current process, I have a couple slides...

Vice Mayor Lago: The tree was there this morning still.

Landscape Director Dannemiller: No. It was picked up on Saturday, the tree was removed about three weeks ago.

Vice Mayor Lago: Three weeks ago?

Landscape Director Dannemiller: It was when the tree was removed, and then the rest of the debris was removed, there is a new tree planted there now, and it will be sodded tomorrow, is when the area...

Vice Mayor Lago: You are telling me the tree wasn't there this weekend?

Landscape Director Dannemiller: The new tree?

Vice Mayor Lago: No, no, no, the old tree.

Landscape Director Dannemiller: Yes, the tree was removed about three weeks ago. The debris was removed on Saturday, the last of the debris was removed on Saturday.

*City Commission Meeting
December 10, 2019*

Vice Mayor Lago: What they did was, they removed the debris over, they piled it up and they planted a new tree, but that has been there for over a month. I drove down San Amaro today, I didn't drive down Urbino, but I saw it there this weekend, it was there.

Landscape Director Dannemiller: The debris was removed and there is a new tree there now.

Vice Mayor Lago: Since this weekend?

Landscape Director Dannemiller: Yes. Well, I think the tree was planted last week and the debris – the tree was planted before all the debris was removed. The new tree trimming contract that is currently under the Cone of Silence includes the removal of the stump and the tree debris much quicker, so that will be taken care of moving forward in the future, so there is less lag time between the tree removal and the debris removal, because we know that that when we have tree removals getting the debris out of there as quick as possible is important. So, our current process is, once a tree is deemed to be removed, we post it with a permanent. When the guys get the slides up real quick, I'll show what it looks like. Its printed on a pink piece of paper, put in a plastic sleeve and put on the tree, typically for at least two weeks, and we knock on the door of the adjacent resident. Its typically more like two or three months, we post it up there and it has our contact information on it. We did that same process for the whole tree succession project where we planted over 3,000 trees, we would post it first, so if someone has a concern, they can contact us. It has a reason that the trees are being removed, and then we can answer those questions before its actually removed. And occasionally, we'll have relocation, we'll put a yellow piece of paper in there, so it distinguishes the relocations from the removals. So, here's the Building Permit and it's a white piece of paper. You can see on the tree there that's from Google Street View, February of 2019. This particular one was up for about over a year before the tree was removed, you can see the bark, the central leader had snapped off and severe decline, that's why the tree was removed. Here's the new tree. This picture was taken yesterday; the new oak tree was planted, and the area will be sodded tomorrow. And on the permit, if you look down about half way, about a quarter of the way down, it says removed one black olive tree, in poor condition and severe decline. So, we put the description on there and try to use that method to notify residents. Because the average is about 125 tree removals a year, from lightening strikes. There are still a lot of trees that are stressed from Irma that are in decline and once they get to a point of rapid decline, we trim them, so they are safe, but they continue to decline at a rapid rate.

Vice Mayor Lago: You and I have gone back and forth for the last few years on issues of trees. Residents, obviously when they see something posted or they see a tree cut down, they want answers. Why not just flyer the neighborhood somebody knows that in two or three weeks there is going to be a tree cut down.

*City Commission Meeting
December 10, 2019*

Landscape Director Dannemiller: We developed a doorhanger that we had printed about a month ago and on that includes tree removal. So, we will start issuing those for tree removals to the adjacent houses. It will have tree removal and the address so that the adjacent property owners will be aware of it.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you put a little more information about why the tree is being removed?

Landscape Director Dannemiller: It will say tree removal and why and then the permit will also have more in depth.

Vice Mayor Lago: Because if you look at, for example, the photos that I took there, if you look closely at the tree, it looks pretty healthy from the rings of the tree, not like its being attacked by some sort of disease.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: He's the expert.

Vice Mayor Lago: Listen, I started my statement with that. They are the experts. But obviously, you have to answer to a resident in the neighborhood, I want to have as much information as possible at my disposal.

[End: 2:59:16 p.m.]