

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Commission Chambers
Agenda Item G-4
October 13, 2020
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

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

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-4

A discussion regarding landscape improvements along Red Road/57th Avenue
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Vice Mayor Lago: G-4, Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes sir. Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just didn't want to overstep. This is basically just a simple discussion regarding landscaping. Again, I wanted to bring our ACM up and I want to compliment him and his staff. After years of talking about this, we finally have the trees planted. We didn't get everything we wanted, but we got something, and something is better than nothing, right. I also want to put on the record, please if you can, the issue of Publix. I've gotten three residents that have called me saying, how did Publix get some sort of shade tree and we didn't. I want you to explain a little bit about that briefly just so that it can be on the record. Thank you.

ACM Santamaria: Good afternoon once again, Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager in charge of operations and infrastructure. Happy to be here in front of the Mayor and the Commission. In
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reference to landscape along 57th Avenue, Red Road, have Brook Dannemiller is available virtually, he had to stay home with childcare issues today, but he's available virtually to provide a brief presentation on the subject. We are happy to report, as the Vice Mayor indicated earlier, that the Solitaire Palms are going up and it was a great benefit that we just heard that it seems to be discouraging some trash piles along the roadway and its enhancing the aesthetics of the roadway. As to the situation on Publix. Funny enough, yesterday I drove by the area and that portion of the swale is being excavated for apparent utility work. I don't know whether the trees will return or not, but that is the case right now; and there are certain considerations as to that area and we are trying to work with FDOT to see how it was that Publix came to be able to plant those there, if Publix was the entity that planted it. So, Brook, are you available?

Vice Mayor Lago: Also, since we are talking about that, one of the last points that I want to mention was, now we planted the palm trees, are we going to be able to plant some sort of ground cover at the bottom in certain areas, maybe give it some accents or is it just going to be the palm trees.

ACM Santamaria: I'll defer to Brook. I think that's in the plans.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay. Thank you.

Landscape Director Dannemiller: There are a few locations along where we had traffic driving on the swale or where there was parking by the Publix, on the other side of the street that was getting shaded out, we are planning either Vicus shrubs or... There is also an island just north of Bird Road that we are going to be planting some palms and some Fichus...as well, and that's about two to three weeks out that the shrubs will be completed. So, there is a PowerPoint, I can do a quick overview. Next slide. So, this was the history, I'm not going to read the whole thing, but basically this is what we presented at the public meeting, planted over 4,000 trees and these are all the requirements for the public meeting. Next slide. We went through wide palms and not larger trees, since the FDOT defined the criteria allowed for the new trees to be planted in the grass swale. Doesn't allow for new trees to be planted in the grass swale areas along Red Road. The city submitted and received approval for design variation for lateral offset...triangles and stopping sight distances in order to allow for the Solitary Palms to be planted. Solitary Palms meet the FDOT frangible or breakaway requirements for a maximum 4-inch trunk diameter, as well as eight and-a-half foot height clearance so the bottom of the palm can...visibility. They have a lot of various specific requirements. These proposed plantings are subject to FDOT approval of the submitted landscape program which was received and the final Solitary locations...proposed plans as they are installing them, but so far, they've all been able to go exactly where they are proposed. Next slide. This is the proposal...27 Solitary Palms and we actually expanded it, its more than three planting beds of shrubs. Next slide. And so, as of Monday, 160 palms have been planted to date from U.S.-1 to Catalonia Avenue. We planted a bunch more yesterday and are planning again today, so that number is higher, will be higher at the end of the day today. The seven remaining palms will be planted this week, which includes 16 palms that are being planted in the Ponce median to replace missing palms that have been hit by cars or died or other issues. And like I said before, shrub planting will be completed in about two to three weeks. Next slide. This shows in
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red the areas that were completed as of yesterday and the areas in orange that will be planted throughout this week. Next slide. And this is the staging area on Country Club Prado and Coral Way by Red Road, where we isolate the palms from the nursery. Next slide. Then delivery it on truck to be planted along Red Road. So, here's some palms here that are replanting and there is one more slide that has some more photos of the planted palm trees. Next slide. So that's what it is looking like as we go along. We can see the palms in a much narrower swale than is in front of Publix. And then the last slide just has the project contact information. If anybody has questions or comments, e-mails us at trees@coralgables.com and then the project web page is below.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Brook. I just have a comment. Instead of Solitary Palms they should be called invisible palms, so anyway that's my problem.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's a point of contention.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Anything else Commissioner?

Vice Mayor Lago: No. My only question was, and you don't need to answer it now, we can discuss it later, you can give it to me. Where are we planning on some low-lying shrubbery to compliment, like the Mayor said, the non-existent palm trees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Mena you want to withdraw your...

Commissioner Mena: My what?

Vice Mayor Lago: You'll have Brook get it to me.

ACM Santamaria: Yes. I'll have Brook forward the plans.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you Mr. ACM. I appreciate it.