

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-7
July 9, 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

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Development Services Director, Suramy Cabrera
Deputy Development Services Director, Devin Cejas

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-7 [12:23:42 p.m.]
Update on plans to improve Code Enforcement.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Mena)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we'll go on to the next item. Update on improvement to Code Enforcement. Thank you, everybody.

Vice Mayor Lago: Take it away, Mike.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Mena.

Commissioner Mena: I had asked the City Manager Iglesias and his staff to provide an update on sort of his efforts since he became our City Manager to try to sort of restructure some things in Code Enforcement and improving that area. I think from the outset of Peter becoming our City Manager, we spoke about the need to do better in this area. I think there's a lot of areas -- and we've talked about it in different contexts, whether it's trash pits or something else, but we've talked about it in a variety of contexts. But where, you know, I have -- I think we all have some concerns about, you know, really having our Code Enforcement be visible, be sort of felt, if you will, by the community and doing a good job. And so, you know, I had asked Peter to have you guys prepare a presentation for us or just give us an update on sort of where things stand and what we can do going forward.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Thank you. Suramy Cabrera, Director of Development Services. And I'm just going to really quickly hijack this and give you an update on Development Services. Code Enforcement is one of the divisions of Development Services. And what you're going to see Devin presenting here today is something that we're doing across the board. So, with Planning and Zoning and the Building Department, we're looking at all our processes. We're mapping them out to see where we could be more efficient. We're looking -- working to implement Energov, hardware needs. Right now, our hardware just isn't what they need for our field staff. It makes the work more cumbersome, specifically with Code Enforcement, but also, our building inspectors. So, there's a lot to be done. There's a lot that we're doing, but it just takes some time to implement. And with that, I'm just going to hand it over to Devin so that he can go ahead with the presentation. Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Hello, All, Mayor, Commissioners. Devin Cejas, Deputy Director for Development Services and Zoning Official. Our hope is with the presentation

we're going to show you today it's going to answer some of the concerns that you have, and hopefully, starts to build a foundation of where we want to go with Code Enforcement. Our analysis thus far in the last four or five months has brought us to three areas of deficiency, staffing, zone coverage and where we're headed as far as implementation of technologies. We're going to begin with the first, which is staffing and what we are -- what we've done with the organization of the division. I'm happy to report, as of this week, we are 100 percent fully staffed. We had just brought on board four new Code officers; two full-time, two part-time, as well as promoting one from within to supervisor. As you can see in the last two years, we've had some issues as far as retaining officers, so I think that adds to certain levels of concerns that you were referencing. But we're hoping that with addressing what you're going to see next and looking at the structure, we hope to keep this retention, if you will, of our newly staffed employees. With our departed, we see that one actually is still within our system, our previous supervisor. We had to move him over to Solid Waste to assist with some of the trash concerns. And Al Zamora is here to speak after the presentation, if you have any concerns on that end and how that move is bearing fruit. I'm happy to report I believe it is positive. But with that said, we are now fully staffed and we're ready to proceed in the subsequent direction.

Commissioner Mena: And you hired Michael Jordan I see there, so that's exciting.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Yeah, yeah. (INAUDIBLE). Our organization. The existing organization that was present when I, I believe, came on board had some redundant management control as far as when tasks are handed down. Alright, so where we're moving forward is trying to break that apart and try to somehow find balance between being reactive and proactive. So, with that leads us into where the main, I think, deficiency is, which is in route planning and how we man or sweep the zones, if you will. So, the next item here is exactly that, route planning. We've been analyzing through the GPS systems implemented in all their vehicles exactly what they do on a day-to-day basis. Again, I want to take the opportunity to say that across the board, we have really good officers. They do a really difficult job. And it's not anything with regards to the actual job at hand when implementing a ticket, handling the process. It's more of

how do we find ways to better cover the city to make certain that we're -- have eyes on the street at any -- at every single day. So, this is an example of the target proactive route that we want to achieve. On a day, an officer can sweep an entire zone. I'd love to stand here and say that this is what each of our officers are doing every day, but this is not the norm, but this is what we want to achieve. We want to make certain that we get here in the coming future, right. What tends to happen on a given day is officers start to break off on their zones because they are being sent on emergency calls, right. They're constantly being reactive. It's a reactive state. And with that occurring on a daily basis, you start to see that, you know what, the zone is being left behind, alright. So, we're not -- we might not be able to catch the trash on the curb that got out there a little bit earlier because the officer is not there, right. He's attending to other duties, other issues. So, we want to try to get away from this constant behavior of always being reactive and try to balance that approach so we're constantly reactive while also being proactive. And our hopes is that by looking at our current zone map, which encompasses eight zones with eight full-time officers. Our direction is to let's see if we can try something new and maybe go to six zones, making certain that we have six full-time officers constantly manning six zones. So, what does that do with the remaining two officers. Well, they're going to be now assigned to reactive matters, constantly addressing the immediate needs while the zones are constantly being swept. In addition to the two full-time officers, we're also going to allocate the two part-time officers that we hired also to have reactive -- to reactive duty. So, now, four days out of the week, rest assured, we have four people taking care of the emergency call while simultaneously proactively manning each zone.

Commissioner Mena: Let me make...

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: In addition...

Commissioner Mena: Let me make sure I understood you correct.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Sure.

Commissioner Mena: Of the eight full-times, you're going to have six, one to each zone. You're going to have two that are roaming or reactive.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: I'm getting to that.

Commissioner Mena: And then two part-time, as well.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Correct.

Commissioner Mena: Alright.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: So, the full-time -- we have eight full-time officers; six acting -- assigned to zones, two as floaters as reactive officers, right.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: In addition, we're also seeking to implement a rotation scheduled. So, the floating officers will eventually roll out of being a floater and into a zone. What does that do? It promotes cross-training. It's going to ensure the primary focus on the route coverage, while simultaneously addressing the immediate needs as we discussed previously. It's going to guarantee eventual familiarity with the city. One of the issues that we have, we have an officer that may be designated to a zone for five years or six years, and we're certain that he knows, or she knows the city as a whole, but how about the new officers coming in? We want to make certain that every quarter, we want to make sure that they rotate and they all work together as a team.

Commissioner Mena: Do you have any overlap with like the NSAs, for example, where -- I'm just -- I mean...

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: No...

Commissioner Mena: It may not make sense. But like, for example, if an NSA calls a zone officer and says, hey, I saw XYZ, you should check it out, obviously, it's not the NSA's job to enforce, but certainly, to be eyes and ears and maybe relay something to your zone officer.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: My understanding is that we have a great relationship with them, and as well as our police officers and all other departments. We work well with all departments. That is constantly occurring. Our NSAs are actually contacting our office. We have our staff at the office manning those phone calls, sending out the officers as needed. So, as we progress down the road -- and I think there's a third part of the presentation -- we're going to discuss strategies that we can better with regards to education. But yeah, it's a great question and it's currently taking place. But those are the calls that we receive, which is what's taking our...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Officers out of the routes.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: So, addressing the conversation of reactive and proactive. In addition to what the supervisors normally do as far as their job function is concerned, we also want to try to differentiate between what tasks they have to assign are, whether it's reactive or proactive. So, we believe with this approach, it's similar to what we just discussed, shows kind of a diagram of how duties can be assigned. And third, lastly is where we're headed as far as transparency and accountability. Specific training, education, where we're headed with Energov that you heard Suramy mention a bit earlier, and as well as the technologies that are needed as far

as hardware is concerned for officers to have to be more efficient when they're on the road. In addition to the FACE certification that all officers are required to have and most have all their certifications, those are statewide certifications. We need to focus on city ordinances, what is important for the City of Coral Gables. The officers do a great job with understanding the section of the Code that they have. But as we all know, there's other codes out there in the Building Department, as well as the Zoning Ordinance that, at times, you know, they might not be 100 percent understanding of. So, it's just education of how well versed are you in everything going on with the city when it comes to trash, what's going on with Public Works, what's going on on the waterway. Any concerns that other departments have, you know, bring it on board. So, we're looking at implementing quarterly group sessions with all departments that hopefully lead into maybe a yearly focus on maybe continued education as far as what we're doing here with the city. In addition, implement monthly staff meetings with directors and division leads so as new policies are implemented, how are they being executed. And currently, we do weekly meetings with the Code Enforcement officers that just kind of make certain that they're doing certain daily tasks that they've been assigned. But in implementing the other strategies, we want to take that from a weekly to a monthly, so that way we make certain that they're on the road...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: And not in the office. Get them out there. Let's figure out what's going on.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: With Energov, we've been working diligently -- not only in Code Enforcement, but also Planning and Zoning and Building in mapping out all of our workflows, understanding that these processes can be cumbersome to understand, you know, when you cite. And what we've done is really assist the IT Department with taking these, I guess, cumbersome processes and kind of like align them so they're easier to understand, not only for

Energov implementation, but also for us. This could be eventually something that we could show out to the public on how the process is handled. So, essentially, they're two processes, the NOV (phonetic) and the citation, which, essentially, is what we do as Code Enforcement when we go out there. Technology and hardware. We're looking down the road to replace their Toughbooks with iPads, again, more effective and efficient as we get into Energov; get into the app, get into the program, be able to see what's going on at any given time, make certain that it's easier for the officer themselves to input information. It's a little bit cumbersome today with the tools that they have. But we hope with new technology, we can move into a more effective and efficient path. And also, with that -- what happens on occurrence here, we fall into dead zones. They have their Toughbooks. They have to find what is a good area where they could actually tap in to get connected to the Internet to be able to get into the information, right. So, we're looking across-the-board, implanting antennas on their vehicles so as we get them the equipment that they need, at any given moment, they could actually tap into their service and provide, you know, their work online. So, this is so far what we've analyzed and where we're headed as far as, like I said, a foundation standpoint to assist in covering the city a lot better. And we hope that, with that, that will transcend the officers into becoming more effective and efficient in the roles that they already play in the City of Coral Gables. And with that, I'm open to any questions you might have.

Commissioner Mena: A quick question, and just sort of a comment. What about weekends? You talked a little bit about the zones and having zone officers instead of -- what's the picture look like on weekends?

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: In addition to this, we're going to be looking into the current state of the hours that the officers work. Currently, the weekends are generally manned by one officer per day. One officer on Saturday and one officer on Sunday, eight hours apiece.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Now, with the part-timers, we're looking at getting two individuals per day, which falls right in line with the reactive code that we're implementing here as far as...

Commissioner Mena: So, you'll have reactive...

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Rotation.

Commissioner Mena: Seven days a week, basically.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Correct. Right, and proactive during the week.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Which is essentially what's happening today. The weekend officers are not in no way acting proactively. They're going in with the list of tasks...

Commissioner Mena: Sure.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: That have been called in by anyone.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: And that's what they're targeting.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: So, they're actually spending their day on the calls that they received Friday or that morning or that week, tasks that are being rolled over from the

supervisors from two days before or other officers to handle on that week. So, we're just constantly being reactive.

Commissioner Mena: Are you guys -- do you guys sort of -- I'm sure you monitor it, but what have you seen in terms of like calls that come in or incidents or whatever, you know, weekday versus weekend? Do you see -- is it more or less consistent? Do you see an uptick more in the week, more in the weekend or...

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: It's pretty consistent. It's pretty consistent. On any given day, we have a number of calls...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Coming in. As you know, the majority is still -- the majority of the calls are related to, obviously, trash and maintenance, noise, you know. But at any given moment, we're out there handling just about anything.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me...

Commissioner Mena: And then...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ask you a question. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. I'll say one quick last thing. Look, my thing is, I'm happy to hear that you have what's viewed as a full staff now. And I'm happy to hear that you guys are evaluating the processes and you said we have good officers, and I certainly take your word for that. And I, obviously, trust your management. You know, at some point, as we try these new processes -- and

obviously, we need to give them due time to take effect and to change certain behavior and whatnot. But you know, at some point, the last question for us as a Commission to me will be, you know, your resources. Is that enough officers or not? You know, with this new approach and new training, et cetera, okay, let's assume for a moment that you're sort of operating on all cylinders and that system you just described, is that enough? You know, that's a decision I think we would have to make once we've given it an opportunity to take effect. But you know, I don't want to shortchange you guys. We need to have enough Code Enforcement officers to do what we need to do. You know, I've said this to Peter before and I may have even said it here. You know, I think, in a lot of ways, we are living a little on reputation as a city with a really tough code. And you know, I get this feeling like the word's out a little bit that, you know, we've got a tough code, but there's not as much enforcement going on. And again, we see that in different areas, but I think we need to, again, be visible really. I know you guys -- that's what you've been working on, and so I appreciate this presentation. I'm hoping that it'll be effective. And I appreciate you taking the time to put it together.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, we are working on -- in different fronts. We're working on efficiency with getting a more efficient system of routing. We have our GPS system. We have our new Energov system. Our current computer system, Eden, it doesn't work very well. It's really a financial program that we've exported to everything. We're looking at going to iPads, better technology. We're looking at implementing the proper work hours. So, it's a complete revamp of the system. Once we get everything organized, if we feel that six zones aren't sufficient, we need to go back to eight and two roaming because we should have -- that's one of the problems we had.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: We would take people out of their zones, so they could not complete their zones. We have now a GPS system -- GIS system that will track that and will provide the most efficient way of doing it. So, once we implement everything, if we feel that we need to go back

from a six to two to an eight to two, we will approach the Commission. I would like to implement this first...

Commissioner Mena: Sure.

City Manager Iglesias: To see how it works -- to see how everything we've implemented works, and then we can come back and say maybe we need to go to an 8/2 instead of a 6/2 system.

Commissioner Mena: Okay. Alright.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have a...

Vice Mayor Lago: I was going to say something.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Question, and I think I know the answer. But one of our biggest problems now is going to be a different one, which is abuses by Airbnb, illegal rentals and what. I think that that's purely reactive and that there's nothing we can do to prevent that. Is that correct?

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: At the moment, that's how we've been addressing those issues.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That makes sense.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Purely reactive.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: I know that there's instances that have occurred, I think just of late, where once something is mentioned to us, our officers actually on their time try to play a proactive role and search throughout these websites, if there is any other...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Airbnbs out there, but it's difficult. It's difficult.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, it is.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: I know it's a conversation that ourselves and the City Attorney have....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But if we can devise a means to go through the websites or repeat abusers, you know, that'd be helpful.

Commissioner Mena: I also...

City Attorney Ramos: The challenge is that Airbnb and -- not just Airbnb. I don't want to single them out. HomeAway, Vrbo, all of them have removed the addresses from the website on purpose to, I think, avoid some of these efforts by local municipalities throughout the country. So, what you get is a pin that kind of shows the general vicinity of where it's at. They used to have exterior pictures, so we could more or less, if you knew the general area, you could drive around and look for the house. Now, they're only including mostly interior pictures to avoid -- so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's keep that in mind and see what we can do.

City Attorney Ramos: Yeah. So, when they search, the ones they can target, they certainly do, but it is challenging.

Commissioner Mena: Wasn't there -- sorry, I know this was -- yeah, I think it was like two years ago now. I don't remember. Wasn't there a lawsuit and some sort of settlement that they were required to like post on the website if it was a property in the city where it's not allowed?

City Attorney Ramos: No. It wasn't a lawsuit. We issued them a subpoena, a cease and desist letter...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

City Attorney Ramos: Directly to the company.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

City Attorney Ramos: And as a result of that, they agreed to post a letter from me, at the time, as City prosecutor, explaining that it's not legal in the residential areas of the city, that, as far as I know, remains on their website.

Commissioner Mena: But this is like in some obscure place on the website, or is this...

City Attorney Ramos: It's when you...

Commissioner Mena: If you click on a property in that municipality?

City Attorney Ramos: No. It's the other way around. It's if you're going to post. If you're a homeowner that's going to post it, it tells you...

Commissioner Mena: That's right.

City Attorney Ramos: It's not legal, right.

Commissioner Mena: Got you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Keon: Can I ask you a...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very good presentation.

Commissioner Keon: Question about...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Of course.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah. When are you going to -- we did a lot of discussion about downtown and Code Enforcement. When are you going to start enforcing that?

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: The -- we are now looking forward to rolling over a -- moving forward with a program starting to educate the business owners on the Mile and downtown with -- I believe you're referencing issues...

Commissioner Keon: And Galiano.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas r: With arcades and...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Planters. And that kind of dovetails into the educational aspect that was brought into the presentation where it's getting the Code officers to better understand what is in the Zoning Ordinance, not only what's in the City Code.

Commissioner Keon: Have you started to talk to the property owners or the businesses?

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Right now, we are -- in the Planning Department, we are working on a brochure to put together specific to the zoning needs to have Code Enforcement begin to go out there. So, we're hoping to get that done in the next week or two to get moving on that.

City Manager Iglesias: We wanted to distribute that out to all the property owners and all the businesses and all the merchants. Give them a month, and then we're going to be implementing it, the -- our Code Enforcement issues on...

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: That's in tandem with all the...

City Manager Iglesias: In downtown.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Other efforts that the Manager is doing with the cleanliness with the Public Works Department. So, it's a full force...

Commissioner Keon: Clean it up.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. It is now a quarter to 9, if we had started at 5. So, we will take a break. We'll take a break. We'll be back at 2.

Vice Mayor Lago: 2?

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: Alrighty.