

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item J-2
September 26, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
Deputy City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item J-2 [0:00:00 p.m.]

Status report regarding invocation of Chapter 164 dispute resolution process between the City of Coral Gables and Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. The last item, I think, is J-2, status report regarding Chapter 164 dispute resolution process between the City of Coral Gables and Miami-Dade Public Schools. I had an appointment with the Superintendent of Schools, which was cancelled because of the hurricane, and the appointment has been rescheduled for some time soon. I don't remember when. Mr. City Attorney.

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Agenda Item J-2 - Status report regarding invocation of Chapter 164 dispute resolution process between the City of Coral Gables and Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

City Attorney Leen: Yes. So, Chapter 164 -- as you know, we initiated the dispute resolution process prior to Hurricane Irma. And the -- we were going to have a meeting, as you mentioned. Obviously, the hurricane got in the way, and justifiably so. And we received a message from the School District that although we did want to -- the City wanted to expedite it, but once Hurricane Irma occurred, we fully understood that we needed to wait. We also needed to focus on disaster relief, and so did they. So, that's over now -- or it's not completely over, obviously. We're still doing work. But we figured that we'd reach out to them again to see if they want to go forward because we don't -- we want to be clear. We're not trying to delay their work at West Lab. We just want to make sure that they're following our Zoning Code and at least showing us the comity to come here and to go through our process and reach some sort of way forward. So, we sent out a message to the Deputy School Board Attorney, and he's going to be getting back to us. And we're -- my understanding is we're having another meeting that's been set up. And the City Manager and the Mayor will be going and meeting with the Superintendent. I plan to attend, as well. We'll see if we're going to have attorneys in the room or not. For these sort of things, often it's better not to, but I'll be there in case they need me to come in regarding the cease and desist letter or any -- or if their attorneys are there, I'll be there. And then the idea is still to go forward and put together a list of all the different issues we're having -- similar to FPL, in many ways -- different issues that we're having with the School District. I know Vice Mayor Keon has a number of items that she wants to have addressed. And I think each of you do have some items yourselves. They relate to things like Coral Gables High School infrastructure. They relate to the...

Vice Mayor Keon: And programming.

City Attorney Leen: Programming. They relate to boundaries, school boundaries, things like that. Tucker Elementary is an example of one that we're seeking information on.

Commissioner Mena: But let's not allow all those other issues to...

City Attorney Leen: Stop the...

Commissioner Mena: Delay the specific West Lab issue. A lot of -- I'm sure many of you, but a lot of parents reached out very concerned, that they understand the position in some respects, but they don't want it to be delayed because their kids are -- you know, there's no space for the kids as part of the expansion as it is.

City Attorney Leen: I understand.

Commissioner Mena: So, you know, I assured them that we're trying to move it forward expeditiously. You know, I want to just make sure you keep a level of urgency on that part of it.

City Attorney Leen: I want you to know -- Commissioner...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's (INAUDIBLE) issue.

City Attorney Leen: Commissioner Lago can't participate in that part of it, but I want you to know that that's really -- you've already -- the Commission's already given me direction there. We're not going to delay that.

Vice Mayor Keon: (INAUDIBLE)

City Attorney Leen: The idea is just to get them to reach an agreement with us and then we'll -- I'll be talking to the Mayor, and at some point, we'll release the cease and desist, once they agree to really participate in this process, to recognize that we may need to get seats at Coral Gables -- pardon me, at West Lab, and that we may want to be able to purchase them. In addition, you're not participating in this...

Commissioner Lago: I can't talk about that.

City Attorney Leen: No, you can't.

Commissioner Lago: I can talk about 164, but I can't get involved in this.

City Attorney Leen: And you know, all these things are things that I will be addressing with them administratively, so it's not going to be -- I'm not going to bring that back to the Commission because of Commissioner Lago's situation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But don't release the...

City Attorney Leen: But I will keep you informed individually, other than Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Nor release the cease and desist yet.

City Attorney Leen: I won't, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

City Attorney Leen: We're not going to release it until you meet with the Superintendent. The Mayor's going to be meeting with the Superintendent and we will try to find a way forward. But for everything else, that's the Commission and we're going to put together this list, have this meeting, and continue to proceed with our Chapter 164 meeting. When we actually meet with the School Board, which is what happens -- the School Board meets with the Commission in a joint session, I'm telling you, I hope -- and it shouldn't be. That issue should be resolved. There should -- we should -- we'll be discussing all the other issues at that point.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think there is consensus on most of the issues that have -- that we would go forward to the school system with. I know I feel very strongly about the windows at Coral Gables Elementary. I understand -- I don't know that there is consensus on that. I've heard that somebody -- some people don't think it's the -- it's not important. I want to know that before we go forward.

Commissioner Lago: I think every...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think it is important.

Commissioner Lago: I think everybody thinks it's important.

Commissioner Mena: I think there's some (INAUDIBLE)...

Vice Mayor Keon: (INAUDIBLE) Coral Gables Elementary?

Commissioner Mena: I think there's -- I don't recall exactly when we last spoke about it...

Vice Mayor Keon: They...

Commissioner Mena: But I think -- I thought that we were still getting some...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: Numbers as far as...

Vice Mayor Keon: We have.

Commissioner Lago: Did you want to...

Vice Mayor Keon: Dona has already gone.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Commissioner Lago: You want...

Vice Mayor Keon: That's all. I just want to make sure that we are -- that there is consensus on the issues that have come up.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very good, so...

Commissioner Lago: I think maybe what you're -- I think maybe...

Vice Mayor Keon: I may be wrong. Go ahead.

Commissioner Lago: In my -- if I may speak out of turn...

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: I made a comment to Dona maybe, I think, like two months ago in reference -- when we voted in favor of replacing the new windows here in City Hall. Maybe that was the issue, but I don't know. No, I think everybody's been in favor of it.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: I support you on that.

City Attorney Leen: Commissioner Mena...

Commissioner Lago: I always have.

City Attorney Leen: At the last meeting, when you were questioning the Deputy School Board Attorney, what you said was very telling. Could you build anything you want in our City? And that's ultimately -- we need a check, a limiting principle.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

City Attorney Leen: They need to acknowledge that we have a right to be at the table with them and that they're going to have to come to you and get your agreement to certain things, that they can't just do it. That undermines our entire Zoning Code. That's the idea. That's the principle that I'm following that meeting.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.