

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-4
January 14, 2020
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
Assistant Economic Development Director, Belkys Perez

Public Speaker(s)

Patrick O'Connell

Agenda Item I-4 [0:00:00 p.m.]

A Resolution authorizing funding in the amount of \$100,000 to Illuminate Coral Gables, the light based, fine art installation planned for Downtown Coral Gables in January 2021.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I-4.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Attorney Ramos: Resolution authorizing funding...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Illuminate Coral Gables.

City Attorney Ramos: In the amount of \$100,000 to Illuminate Coral Gables, the light-based, fine art installation planned for Downtown Coral Gables in January 2021.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anybody?

Vice Mayor Lago: Morning.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Morning.

Assistant Economic Development Director Perez: Belkys Perez, Assistant Director with the Economic Development Department. Illuminate Coral Gables is a fine art light event being planned for the weekend of January 15, 2021. It's going to happen in downtown Coral Gables, very important for us. It has the potential to have a strong impact on our downtown. And the BID has pledged already \$100,000 toward the installation of the project. And with this item, the City commits 100,000 to Illuminate Coral Gables, as well. And we have got the board chair here for Illuminate Coral Gables if we have any questions as well.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Would the chair wish to address the Commission? Good morning.

Patrick O'Connell: Thank you. Good morning. I'm actually serving as the secretary. Venny Torre is our chair. But on behalf of the board of directors, I just want to thank you all for your support of this very important fine art focused economic development initiative that we've been really planning now for the last year. And we look forward over the course of this coming year to share with you our progress. I can tell you that daily there are a lot of manhours that are going into this initiative amongst our board. We've made great progress. And we are certain that a year

from now, pretty much to the day, we will be doing something in downtown that is going to bring just an amazing -- it'll produce an amazing response. And I think something that -- I think Illuminate Coral Gables will become a signature event for this city into the future. That is our goal.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautiful. And that's wonderful that you have come up with this idea -- you, the committee, everybody. And I look forward to it. It'd be -- it really would put us on the map for a very, very good festival and it'll attract even more people to our downtown. That's wonderful.

Commissioner Mena: What is the amount that you all are seeking to raise for the entire event?

Mr. O'Connell: So, the current working budget for Illuminate Coral Gables is a million dollars between the BID and the City, which we hope we'll have 20 percent of that. We have been working over the last month putting together our sponsorship presentation, which is in a draft form but very nearly complete at this point. And we have a long list of local companies that we -- and we have a number of appointments already set to meet with them and talk about their support, perhaps funding individual pieces that would be on or about their buildings here downtown or just general support of Illuminate Coral Gables for all of the other expenses involved.

Commissioner Mena: Is the initial amount that you're raising between the hundred thousand from the BID, and obviously, from the city that we're discussing now, is that meant to go towards operational interim costs?

Mr. O'Connell: Mostly, yes.

Commissioner Mena: Or is that towards the event?

Mr. O'Connell: It is. The 200,000 between the City and the BID, at this point, will cover the expense of our curator production team, the Fung Collaboratives. We've also retained a PR firm out of New York, Dan Schwartz PR, who specializes specifically in fine art public relations. And he has press conferences already planned for both New York City in March, and then back here in Coral Gables in May. He'll be helping with some of the social media that we're going to need to be wrapping up this year. And so, back to your question, yes, the 200,000 comfortably covers those soft costs, and then hopefully, there'll be some -- a little more leftover that can go into an actual installation.

Commissioner Mena: So, I have a comment really more towards City administration and staff, not towards this event in particular. From what I've seen of the presentations -- and I've been to a few of them already that you all have given -- I think it looks like it's going to be a spectacular event and I think it's very exciting. And I think, you know -- in conversations you all have had, you know, we're pretty much committed to supporting it with this resolution. Stepping aside from this event for a moment, I think we need to be sort of careful in terms of when we pass resolutions to grant money for these types of events that maybe they're conditioned on subsequent fundraising of some sort. My concern is this is sort of like seed capital for this event, which I appreciate is important for any new event or undertaking, but it sort of puts us out on a little bit of a limb if, god forbid, an organization putting on such an event were not to raise the money it needs to put on the successful event that we all hope it will be. You know, it puts us in a bit of a tricky situation. So, again, not for this particular resolution, but for future resolutions, I think we should consider making -- either holding back a portion of what we're committing to until there's subsequent fundraising or something to that effect but have controls in place that sort of secure our support and investment in a given event. So, I discussed that yesterday with our City Attorney and City Manager. I just wanted to bring it up to my colleagues. Again, I'm not looking to change anything here at this point and I feel very confident in this particular event given everybody that's involved and what I've seen and all the effort that's going into it and the track record of some of the people involved to be able to raise funds for these types of events. However, I think it's something we should consider when we have future requests for City funding. That really is, in effect, seed

capital to put on an event that's conditional on raising additional funds. We got to be careful how we manage that.

Vice Mayor Lago: I would support that.

Commissioner Keon: Is there any -- are there any conditions related to this funding if it doesn't go forward or if there's, for some reason -- I don't know, there's some disaster, for whatever reason, that the money is returned to the City?

Vice Mayor Lago: The money's going to be spent on soft costs, so the money wouldn't be returned.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, you have actual soft costs and you have hard costs. On this case, you're talking about planning, so moving forward, you'd be spending on hiring entities or hiring professionals in a given field or starting to invest in artists, I imagine. I haven't -- I don't have any real clear understanding of exactly what the soft costs would fully entail. But when people say soft costs, you've got to spend money upfront to deliver something, to deliver a product, to deliver a building, to deliver a structure, whatever that may be.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And with the people...

Vice Mayor Lago: So...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Involved in this, I'm sure...

Vice Mayor Lago: I know I wouldn't count a dollar...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It will be a success.

Vice Mayor Lago: I wouldn't...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, I'm not sure...

Vice Mayor Lago: Count a dollar (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Keon: I think it is, but I just...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They're not going to return soft costs.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, in light of what you've said, that...

Vice Mayor Lago: I think we should...

Commissioner Keon: There are some parameters or there is something...

Vice Mayor Lago: I think we should just -- we should focus on like what...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Commissioner Mena said.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear a motion on this?

Commissioner Keon: I agree with you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Approving, but we should have a...

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Lago: We should have a -- I mean, I'm willing to put it on this reso, if you want...

Commissioner Keon: No.

Vice Mayor Lago: Ensuring that there's a matching portion of it, that there has to be a matching portion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's not do it on this.

Commissioner Keon: Let's not.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, on this -- I don't...

Commissioner Keon: They're not ready for that.

Vice Mayor Lago: Again, I want to...

Commissioner Keon: Plus, we already made a commitment.

Vice Mayor Lago: Pay respect to Commissioner Mena.

Commissioner Mena: No, no. Again, I'm comfortable...

Vice Mayor Lago: If that's what you...

Commissioner Mena: With this event and I know the people involved and they have a really strong track record of delivering on these types of events and on the fundraising objectives that they set out. So -- but I do think, again, going forward with these types of requests, I'm just asking staff to really make that a priority.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Staff knows to really make sure that...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: That we're protected.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You know, it's a worthwhile project.

Commissioner Mena: Absolutely.

City Manager Iglesias: And Commissioner Mena, I completely agree with what you're saying. In this case, this is a very ambitious project. It can have national connotations as far as Coral Gables is concerned, and there is a very good track record of those involved. So, that's our consideration for that. But if it wasn't that way, we would not -- we wouldn't consider it this way. So -- but you're absolutely correct and we've -- and we are looking at that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Commissioner Mena: I'll make the motion.

Commissioner Keon: Second it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second. Will you call the roll, please?

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Assistant Economic Development Director Perez: Thank you.

Mr. O'Connell: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you.