

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-3
March 23, 2021
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
Parks & Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro
Fire Chief, Marcos de la Rosa

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-3 [Start: 12:51 p.m.]

A discussion regarding the reopening of the Adult Activity Center for vaccinated seniors.
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: G-3, Vice Mayor Lago, reopening the Adult Activity Center.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mayor, I think we've all gotten a lot of phone calls from members of our senior community who are eager after the vaccination to come back and join the community on many different fronts, and they yearn for the ability to gather with their friends and family. So, it's kind of tough telling them listen, its out of our control, we are trying to do everything we can to protect you. So, I just wanted to kind of our director to speak to us just briefly of what are our expectations and let's manage those expectations. I'm not holding you to them. I know you are doing the best that you can, and things are changing.

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Parks & Recreation Director Couceyro: You are correct Vice Mayor, things are changing. We are already in planning stages. Our anticipation – we’ve been in conversations with, I’ve been in conversations with my colleague at the county, the county director, and looking at what they were planning in terms of opening the adult and the senior level centers, and they were looking at a little bit more of a five percent positivity rate sustained over time. So that’s what they are waiting on. We are looking at starting to ramp up the process and hopefully by the summer, before the summer starts being able to have programming there. If we have increase in, decreases in numbers and it becomes even a more positive outlook that we could start even earlier, we will. One of the things that we are focusing on though is, instead of having a complete opening, which we might be able to do earlier, which we are working on right now is, maybe concentrate on certain types of programs. The one thing that I am not clear on and we really haven’t discussed it yet, and I’m sure there is some legal discussions that need to be had as to whether you can allow patrons and say, you must be vaccinated. I don’t think we can, but in any case, we are looking at that, but there are certain ways that we might be able to start opening and having a room at a time, similar to what I do at the fitness center where I let one group in, they leave, and then we bring the next group in. So we might be able to start doing that and that’s what we are planning on before we open it up as a complete adult center, but we’ll start programming, and we hope by the time, you know kind of our systems go for the department is June 14th the beginning of summer camp, so we are looking at a much more open slate of activities and its going to include the adult activity center as well.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Chief, you want to say a few words about the safety?

Parks & Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes, the Chief has been working with me on this.

Fire Chief de la Rosa: Just to add to what the director said. We are currently from the direction of the Manager, assessing every department to see how we can best open and bring the city back to or close to normalcy as possible with businesses and that includes the adult activity center. As the director just stated, we are looking at every department to see what process we can have in place that achieves physical distancing, what physical barriers we may have to put in place, or how close can we return to normalcy. And some of the issues that we are looking at is, as Fred just mentioned, either phasing in different programs so they are not there at the same time, adding some protective barriers, physical distancing, and then taking vaccination into consideration. So that is a process that we are looking at for the adult activity center, but also even with every other city department.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you. I appreciate it. Thank you for that update.

Fire Chief de la Rosa: The key is the 14-day positivity rate, as he stated, and the goal for opening the county was five to five and-a-half. We are close to it, but we are not there yet.

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Vice Mayor Lago: And also, what the City Attorney mentioned, and I had this conversation with her in preparation for discussion today. We cannot allow, we cannot discriminate based on vaccination. Its horrible to say that, but you just cannot say whose been vaccinated, who hasn't been vaccinated. Its not allowed, and we have to be very, very careful. But there are a lot of people who are just desperate to get out and reengage with their friends. Its tough to tell them that listen, the numbers are getting better, and we look forward to that day. It's coming soon.

Parks & Recreation Director Couceyro: We are close. The adult activity center is our last horizon. We've hit just about every other place; we've been open for quite a while in most of our places. That's our last one.

Vice Mayor Lago: And that's one of the statements, that's one of the comments that a lot of the adults who really enjoy the center say, hey, a lot of other places are opening up, why are you guys holding it off, and its tough to make them understand that.

Fire Chief de la Rosa: We are trying to get ahead of it. As you stated, the numbers are trending in the right way, we are hovering in the sixes, high sixes, depending on the 14-day rate, and we are trying to stay ahead of it, and that's why we are doing that assessment, so we are not in the last minute trying to adjust to better serve our residents. So definitely.

Commissioner Keon: Are all of the people that work there, are they able to get vaccinations, to be vaccinated, of your staff? I mean they are not of an age that falls under a lot of the guidelines right now, because a lot of them are younger.

Parks & Recreation Director Couceyro: Most of our staff is younger. You are correct. That is something I've been discussing with the Fire Chief, because that's a chief concern of mine as well.

Commissioner Keon: Its not the elderly people that are vaccinated, it's the staff and the other people coming in and out that may not be.

Parks & Recreation Director Couceyro: Something we are working on.

Commissioner Keon: I also heard you are going to, that you are working on making the door, the entry door accessible. Thank you.

Parks & Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes. We've got permits, we have a contractor, the contractor has ordered the parts that are necessary. They told me its two weeks from yesterday they'll start. So, we are hoping that next month...

Commissioner Keon: Okay, so maybe by the time we open, the door will be mechanized so that it can open for people in wheelchairs or walkers.

Parks & Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

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