

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-1
March 28, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner James Cason

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Marketing Manager, Solanch Lopez

Assistant Director for Mobility, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

Elizabeth Castro DeWitt

Agenda Item I-1 - [11:00 a.m.]

Florida Beverage Association Grant Presentation & Reverse Vending Machine Program Update

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, can we hear item I-1, please.

Ms. Lopez: Thank you Mayor. Good morning, Solanch Lopez, Marketing Manager for Economic Development. Matt and I are here to talk about the Florida Beverage Association Community Grant that we received which led us create and start our Reverse Vending Machine Program. I want to ask Elizabeth Castro DeWitt, President and CEO of the Florida Beverage Association, to come up and present the grant to us.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you for being with us.

Ms. Castro DeWitt: Thank you Mayor. Thank you, Commissioners. As Solanch said, I'm Elizabeth Castro DeWitt and I'm the President and CEO of the Florida Beverage Association, and

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we represent non-alcoholic beverages in the Sunshine State, provide over 19,000 job with a direct economic impact of \$12.3 billion. Today, I have some of my members here. I'm just going to point them out in the back row, from Coke, Florida and PepsiCo. We also have other members from across the state. We are so proud to have these members with us here today. 2023 marks the 8th year of the Florida Beverage Association's Community Grant Program. The program supports organizations across the Sunshine State focused on environmental sustainability, health and wellness. FBA and its members have been impressed by the caliber of programs and individuals supporting communities across Florida; and we are excited to support the Reverse Vending Machine Recycling Incentive Program. We know that education and best practices paired with innovation encourages increased participation in recycling and helps to keep communities spaces clean and safe through the reduction of litter. It is my honor on behalf of the Florida Beverage Association and its members to present the FBA Community Grant Award in the amount of \$25,000 to the City of Coral Gables and Keep Coral Gables Beautiful. We are committed to working with those who share our goal of environmental sustainability in order to protect and enhance the communities where we live, work and play. The Reverse Vending Incentive Program will increase collections of valuable commodities, lower contamination rates and improve business participation in recycling initiatives, ensuring that valuable recyclable materials like plastic bottles do not end up in places where they shouldn't belong. We're excited to collaborate with Coral Gables to create a more sustainable future for generations to come. And now, I'd also be remiss if I didn't say how fortunate I think you are to have Solanch Lopez and Matt Anderson on your staff. I really think – I work with communities across the state and they set the benchmarks for recycling initiatives. So pleased to work with them and look forward to working with you in the city.

Ms. Lopez: We have a very brief presentation just going over the Reverse Vending Machine Program, how its grown in just its four months since launch. I'm going to ask Conner and Anwar from Cycle Technology, who we partner with in this initiative to come up and they'll be talking a little bit about the machine as well. I'm just going to quickly share that PowerPoint. And I'll leave it to Matt to kick us off.

Mr. Anderson: So this has been a very exciting program for us to be a part of and we really want to thank the Florida Beverage Association and Cycle Technology, Anwar and Conner, who are UM students and this idea kind of started. So this is an entire local program that we've partnered on and I think it has been an incredible partner. Also to our business partners, the Chamber, obviously Mark, and all the support they provide, and also we mentioned it before, the Coral Gables Cinema, and Mankind Grooming, who partnered with us for our first prizes that we give out as part of the incentive program for the reverse vending machine. So, if we can go to the next slide. So we launched the program on November 16th, the day after America Recycles Day, at the War Memorial Youth Center. We thought it would be the perfect location for us to put this machine; and we had a bunch of kids come out that day and the excitement in their faces when they were able to participate and put the aluminum cans and the plastic bottles in the machine and

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hearing that crunch, they get so excited about it. I'll let Conner and Anwar talk a little bit of how the machine works, but just to say that in talking to the Youth Center staff, they are finding no more aluminum cans and plastic bottles anywhere in the facility, because people are finding them and putting them right into the machine. Its been a great, great program and we'll talk about it a little bit more about the statistics in a little while, but I'll turn it over to Anwar and Conner to talk a little bit about how the machine works.

Conner: First of all, I want to thank the Florida Beverage Association and Keep Coral Gables Beautiful and obviously, the City of Coral Gables for helping us to institute this program. As former University of Miami students it obviously means a lot to be active in the Coral Gables community. So how the program works is, you visit the reverse vending machine, as you can kind of see, its all skinned up and looks pretty at the War Memorial Youth Center. You insert your beverage container, bottle or can, and as soon as you do that, as many as you want, you click done and then a QR code pops up, and that's what allows us to tie you to your recycling habits and then over the course of a month, the top ten people that recycle the most win prizes from local businesses. So really happy to be partnering with the Chamber of Commerce as well.

Ms. Lopez: And I wanted to say just from a personal standpoint, I say that the biggest impact this program has had has been on my own family, because I finally have my dad and my grandmother recycling correctly, because they're collecting their bottles and cans throughout the week and when I visit them on the weekend, they pack my car with bags of plastic bottles to recycle, so moving forward a little bit at a time.

Mr. Anderson: Solanch, if I could just add. I just want to say too, this has been a perfect synergy between we talk about what the city is doing on innovation and technology, sustainability, this has been a perfect synergy between all of that, and bringing it together. So, I did want to mention that, because it just ties into all the great work that the city is doing on all those different fronts.

Ms. Lopez: And if any businesses out there want to become retail partners, they can just reach out to Matt or myself through kcgb@coralgables.com e-mail and we can talk a little bit more about the program. We want to quickly go over. So like Matt said, we launched this program on November 16th for America Recycles Day and from November to March in the four months that the program has been launched, we have collected 5,048 containers; 39 percent have been aluminum cans; 60 percent have been plastic bottles. We've had over about 350 participants and maintained a retention rate each month of 80 percent, which means people are coming back and using the machine multiple times continuously. We have a goal that we're shooting for of collecting 25,000 containers in the one-year pilot program and we are already 20 percent of that goal underway. So, we're really, really happy about these numbers. I'll flip through these really quicky, but we get monthly reports from Cycle, breaking down the collected containers, the transactions, the user emails collected, which lets us know the number of participants, the retention

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rate and the demographics. We provide these to our businesses that partner with us, so that they know the type of exposure they're getting, because their logo and initiative show up on screen during the months that they are partnering with us. So, its great numbers to have and a great way to see the numbers continue to increase and stay steady throughout the months.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you. Great work. Congratulations.

Ms. Lopez: Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: I appreciate you being here and all your support.

Ms. Lopez: Thank you.

[Applause]