

# City of Coral Gables

405 Biltmore Way  
Coral Gables, FL 33134  
www.coralgables.com

## Meeting Minutes

### Parking Advisory Board

*Chairperson Javier Betancourt*

*Vice Chair Gordon Sokoloff*

*Board Member Ada Holian*

*Board Member Vicky Rua*

*Board Member Carlos Xiques*

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Wednesday, July 28, 2021

5:30 PM

The Board meets the fourth Wednesday  
of the month.

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#### Special Meeting with Public Participation via Zoom

#### CALL TO ORDER

The PAB began at 05:32 P.M.

#### ROLL CALL

**Present:** 5 - Vice Chairperson Sokoloff, Board Member Holian, Board Member Rua, Board Member Xiques and Chairperson Betancourt

#### GUEST

Stefan Batic - Night-time Parking Supervisor

David Zell - LAZ Director of Business Development

Manuel Gonzalez-Quintana - LAZ Facility Manager

#### 1 PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Chair Betancourt welcomed all public speakers and reminded them of a three-minute time limit per comment.

Ms. Sue Kawalerski (in person [02:00-11:06]) - City of Coral Gables

Transportation Advisory Board acting Chair

- Comment: Ms. Kawalerski introduced herself and commented on the Parking Advisory Board, draft resolution to change its name to Parking and Transit Services Advisory Board and to amend the bylaws of the board. She explained an overview of the Transportation Advisory Board and its mission including a 2005 Resolution which gives authority to the transportation board to oversee the Coral Gables Trolley.
- Parking Director Kinney explained the Parking Department was assigned the management of Trolley and Freebee ridesharing. The Parking Department has overseen Trolley for more than a decade but acknowledged that both boards oversaw transportation issues.
- Chair Betancourt clarified the PAB's position and made it clear there is no intent to interfere with the TAB review of transportation issues.
- Vice Chair Sokoloff agreed with Ms. Kawalerski's position.

Mr. Bernie Navarro (in person [11:15-11:40])

- Comment: Mr. Navarro introduced himself as owner of Benworth Capital - new business leasing space at 700 Biltmore Way and requestor of twelve (12) on street parking permits (under pilot program) for his employees to park during regular business hours. Mr. Navarro attended the meeting to answer any questions or concerns anyone should have related to Item 8: 600 - 700 Biltmore Way Six-Month Pilot Parking Permit Program.

Mr. Sheryl Gold (via Zoom [12:10- 13:00])

- Comment: Mrs. Gold resides at 721 Biltmore Way. Commented on Agenda Item 8: 600 - 700 Biltmore Way Six-Month Pilot Parking Permit Program and asked to speak again when the Item is presented to the PAB.

Ms. Maria del Pilar Abadia (via Zoom [13:20- 16:18])

- Comment: Ms. Abadia resides at 600 Biltmore Way. She is concerned and in total disagreement to renting spaces that could be used by residents (600-700 Biltmore pilot program) to Benworth Capital.

Mr. Dario Restrepo (via Zoom [16:20])

- Comment: Mr. Restrepo was unable to unmute himself.

Ms. Rachel Lauzurique (via Zoom [17:14-18:30])

- Comment: Ms. Lauzurique resides at 600 Biltmore Way and has been a Coral Gables resident and local business owner since 1984. She found out about the 600-700 Biltmore pilot program and is concerned that these spaces which could be used by residents and service personnel are given up for commercial use. She is prepared to seek legal action or help from Commissioner Anderson to stop Benworth Capital from using these public parking spaces.

Mr. Dario Restrepo (via Zoom [18:45-19:05])

- Comment: Mr. Restrepo resides at 3136 Coconut Grove Drive. Commented on Agenda Item 7: Grand Entrance on Coconut Grove Dr & Douglas Road and asked to speak again when the Item 7 is presented to the PAB.

Mr. James Berlin (via Zoom [19:20-19:32])

- Comment: Mr. Berlin resides at 737 Tibidabo St. requested PAB members to introduce themselves at the start of meetings to let the audience know who they are addressing before discussing any items.

Mrs. Cristina San Luca (in person [20:11-20:45])

- Comment: Ms. San Luca resides at 600 Biltmore Way and has been a

resident of Coral Gables since 1974. She is concerned about renting parking spaces (600-700 Biltmore pilot program) to Benworth Capital which could be used by residents in the area.

Ms. Ava Bonares (in person [20:51-21:05])

- Comment: Ms. Bonares resides at 700 Biltmore Way. She attended meeting to better understand Agenda Item 8: 600 - 700 Biltmore Way Six-Month Pilot Parking Permit Program.

Vice Chair Sokoloff (in person [21:30-23:04])

- Comment: Considering the Champlain Towers Surfside Catastrophe, climate change considerations and closure of the 730 Coral Way building he proposed the PAB vote on an emergency basis to ban the construction of all underground parking garages in Coral Gables and asks that the city require structural engineering inspections by certified engineers of all commercial and high-rise residential buildings that have underground parking with those reports submitted back to the city within two weeks.
- Chair Betancourt asked Parking Director to clarify if private garages fall under the purview of the PAB.
- Parking Director stated that he does not believe we have any control over privately owned parking facilities.
- Member Rua asked if the Resolution can be amended. She also commented that if the city banned underground parking, there will be an increase of stacked parking.
- Vice Chair Sokoloff asked the PAB to vote on this emergency issue he considers life or death.
- Chair Betancourt noted that this item was not on the agenda and should be placed on the next PAB agenda for consideration but could be taken up under Open Discussion as an emergency item as desired.

## **2 APPROVAL OF JUNE 23, 2021 MINUTES**

- On a Motion by Member Rua Seconded by Vice Chair Sokoloff the PAB approved the June 23, 2021, meeting minutes with corrections.

## **3 QUARTERLY REVIEW – PARKING SERVICES**

- Stefan Batic, Night-Time Off-Street Operations Supervisor, reported off-street parking has seen an eighty-five percent (85%) increase since last year and steady recovery from the pandemic.
- Chair Betancourt asked about Valet operations. Mr. Kowalchik commented Central Valet is still operating one ramp on Miracle Mile and are having issues staffing the ramp.
- David Zell explained how the pandemic has negatively impacted this sector.

## **4 GABRIEL PAZ – STAFF AMBASSADOR OF THE MONTH**

- David Zell, LAZ Director of Business Development, spoke about Gabriel and his exceptional contribution to both LAZ and City of Coral Gables parking team.
- Manuel Gonzalez-Quintana, LAZ Facility Manager, accepted the award on behalf of Gabriel who could not attend due to a prior commitment.

## **5 700 BILTMORE WAY METER POST REMOVAL**

- All retired meter posts have been removed from Biltmore Way. With future meter removals, plastics caps will be purchased to seal meter posts to prevent water from ponding within the post.

## **6 PROPOSED REVISION TO PARKING ADVISORY BOARD MISSION**

- Chair Betancourt reiterated the PAB regularly reviews the operation of Trolley and Freebee.
- Director Kinney informed the PAB and audience that Trolley service became a Division of Parking in approximately 2009; in addition, parking established the Freebee ride sharing in 2017.
- The PAB discussed the merits of a name and mission change for the Parking Advisory Board while respecting the authority of the Transportation Advisory Board.
- Transportation Advisory Board acting Chair Sue Kawalerski suggested a joint meeting between the two boards to discuss and define the scope of each board.
- By consensus the PAB asked the Parking Director to work with the TAB liaison to set up a separate meeting with both Boards that would not interfere with either Board meeting schedules; and deferred this item until after the joint meeting.

## **7 GRAND ENTRANCE ON COCONUT GROVE DR & DOUGLAS ROAD**

- Director Kinney updated the PAB on the Grand Entrance on Coconut Grove Drive and Douglas Road item.
- The current proposal shows a loss of three (3) out of nine (9) on-street parking spaces in question.
- Dario Restrepo (in person) of 3136 Coconut Grove Drive spoke in favor of removing all nine (9) parking spaces.
- On a Motion by Member Rua Seconded by Member Xiques the PAB voted unanimously that the nine (9) parking spaces adjacent to Coral Gables Hospital on Coconut Grove Drive are not critical to the parking in this area.

## **8 600 - 700 BILTMORE WAY SIX-MONTH PILOT PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM**

- Public Comment: Ms. Sheryl Gold (via Zoom [1:09-1:17]) of 721 Biltmore Way stated her opposition to the pilot program. Ms. Gold is concerned that the Parking Department did not reach out to the residents in the area to get their feedback on the program. Vice Chair Sokoloff

provided the PAB with handouts from Ms. Gold regarding parking on the 600 - 700 blocks of Biltmore Way.

- Member Rua asked if the pilot program had been approved by the PAB and stated she was excused (not present) for the vote.
- Director Kinney confirmed the PAB had approved the pilot program at the March 25, 2021, meeting.
- Member Holian mentioned she was virtually present for March 25, 2021, meeting but left prior to any action taken on this item.
- Director Kinney [1:20-1:31] explained the section of Biltmore Way in question is a metered zone and that no “reserved” parking spaces were being sold. He indicated that city code provides that City Manager or Designee can sell permits within a meter zone. A traffic study of Biltmore way was previously completed showing low occupancy. However, Director Kinney performed several informal counts before concluding there is sufficient capacity to justify a pilot program.
- Public Comment: Mr. Bernie Navarro (in person [1:32-1:33]) owner of Benworth Capital at 700 Biltmore Way commented he is a resident of Coral Gables and would like his business to stay in Coral Gables. He requested twelve (12) parking spaces for employee use during business hours either on Biltmore Way or Valencia.
- Public Comment: Mrs. Maria Cruz (via Zoom [1:33-1:37]) of 1447 Miller Road stated that the business in question moved to this location with the knowledge that the commercial space came with only two (2) parking spaces. She stated that there was no reason why the business should be allowed to park in a residential area. She suggested that their employees should remote park and use the Freebee service to go to and from the business.
- Vice Chair Sokoloff stated that this is a residential parking zone and not a commercial metered parking zone. He further stated that there is a true deficiency of parking spaces in the area and that the process to determine the parking availability in the area was deeply flawed.
- Member Rua asked about pricing for the permits for the pilot program and the length of the Pilot Parking Program. She further asked if Parking has the right to revoke the permit program. The Director answered that the pricing would be inline with current parking permit pricing established by the Commission and that the program would be a three to six month and could be revoked by the Parking Department upon notice to the participants.
- Member Xiques asked if the parking department would be collecting data (reporting) during the pilot parking program. The Director answered in the affirmative.
- Chair Betancourt suggested the Parking Department needs to engage the community when considering such programs and asked to have a workshop on the issue of when public meetings should occur before PAB action.
- Vice Chair Sokoloff asked if the pilot program could be done with

issuing parking permits by using the available parking spaces located behind the business.

- Member Holian asked if the business in question will grow and exceed their current parking needs. Mr. Navarro stated he did not expect the number of employees to exceed the anticipated twelve (12).
- Vice Chair Sokoloff presented the PAB with an article for the Gables Insider regarding future high-rise projects in the city.
- On a Motion by Vice Chair Sokoloff Seconded by Member Holian the PAB recommended deferring the Pilot Parking Program until a public workshop could be conducted. The motion was approved unanimously.
- Member Rua suggested that all PAB members visit the area in question.

## **9 EXPLORING POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OF THE COURTHOUSE TO INCLUDE PARKING**

- Director Kinney stated that the PAB had asked him to explore this potential development with the City and County.
- Vice Chair Sokoloff stated he discussed this possibility with neighbors, and they were generally in agreement with the concept.
- On a Motion by Member Rua Seconded by Member Holian the PAB proposed that Director Kinney further explore the potential redevelopment of the County Courthouse site at 2900 Ponce de Leon Boulevard.

## **10 PAB MEETING RESCHEDULED TO, GENERALLY, THE FOURTH WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 5:30PM AND FUTURE 2021 MEETING DATES:**

- o 7/28/2021 CMR A
- o 8/25/2021 CMR B
- o 9/22/2021 CMR A
- o 10/27/2021 CMR B
- o 11/17/2021 CMR B
- o No Meeting Currently Scheduled in December

- PAB meetings rescheduled as stated above but to include a meeting in December to follow code.

## **11 PROCESS FOR ALLOWING PERMITS IN ON-STREET METER ZONES**

- PAB Chair Betancourt asked Director Kinney to schedule a work session to review of this process.

## **12 OPEN DISCUSSION**

- Vice Chair Sokoloff asked about the possibility of issuing parking decals to all City Board members and requested this item be placed on the next PAB meeting agenda.
- Vice Chair Sokoloff re-read an emergency motion he drafted and

asked the PAB to vote on:

- “Emergency Resolution by the Parking Advisory Board: in light of the Surfside Catastrophe and climate change considerations; ban the construction of all underground parking garages in Coral Gables. Further, the City of Coral Gables should require structural engineering inspections by certified engineers of all commercial and high-rise residential buildings that have underground parking with those reports submitted back to the city within two weeks’ time.”
- Chair Betancourt suggested that other Boards were in a better position to consider these concerns.
- The motion failed due to a lack of a second vote.
- Vice Chair Sokoloff shared photos and letters regarding the potential development of the Gables Village Townhouses on 37th Avenue. Vice chair Sokoloff would like the PAB to recommend against this development and requested this item be placed on the next PAB meeting agenda.
- Director Kinney informed the PAB that Gensler, the design team for the Coral Gables Mobility Hub, would like to make a presentation to the PAB, likely at the September 22, 2021 meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The PAB adjourned at 08:04 P.M.

## **NOTE**