

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items F-1
June 10, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Carmen Olazabal

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Service Director, Brook Dannemiller

Parks and Recreation, Fred Couceyro

Public Speaker(s)

F-1 [Start: 4:13:42 p.m.]

Discussion regarding short-term and long-term strategy for the Granada Golf Course
Vice Mayor Bill Kerdyk, Jr.

Mayor Kerdyk: Alright. We are going to move to F-1, which is Vice Mayor's item.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Thank you very much Mayor. I brought this up on a couple of occasions regarding Granada Golf Course, and since this is such an important amenity in the City of Coral Gables, I asked Brook from our Public Service Division and Fred to come talk to us a little bit about the golf course, because I still continue to get complaints and actually there has been some improvement of the golf course, and I would like to find out. I think it would be good for all of us to understand exactly what is the short-term strategy and the long term plan as far where we are going to be with this golf course?- how we are going to make this golf course evolve into

something that we can all be proud of?- So if you can go ahead and just give me some ideas of where we are at?

Mr. Dannemiller: Just to give you, we'll start with long term and then we'll go to short term. Long term – we are working on a plan to replace the T's and greens, bunkers. The best time of the year to replace T's and greens is April/May timeframe. So we already missed the first window so the long term plan is to start implementing the renovations in April of 2015, and as part of that we are going to do, we are working to hire a consultant. We are in negotiations for them to do a master plan for the overall golf course, which will include renovations of the T's, greens, bunkers, repairs to the fairways, rain shelters, looking at the pedestrian path that was discussed earlier around the golf course, pedestrian connectivity, all of those things, maintenance facility, so that's the long term plan.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Are you spraying it?- or are you...?

Mr. Dannemiller: That will come out of the report and part of that is kind of the short term, but that will come out of the master plan, that's exactly what that would be.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Part of the reason I want you up here now is, I would like to expedite that, so that if there is a shortfall in the amount of money that we have reserved for it that we can make up for it during the budget process or at least discuss it during the budget process. So are your plans to engage somebody soon as far as your consultant, do you have somebody engaged already?

Mr. Dannemiller: Yes, we already have someone engaged and we are already working with them on a short term plan. I don't know if Fred wants to talk about sort of what we are doing short term to basically bring the golf course – short term we've already begun a rigorous maintenance plan to get the golf course in the best condition we can during the summer growing season, and we've brought in a consultant to help us establish that maintenance plan.

Mr. Fred Couceyro: Yes, we brought in a consultant that is working with our existing staff there, and we've started an aggressive program to try to get stimulate growth in the greens. We are doing a liquid fertilizer program, which is a little different than the granular fertilizer. We are doing that as well, but the liquid fertilizer is every week, so it's a weekly fertilization program which is stimulating growth and then what we are doing is, we are doing a process called corification. Regular airification is with solid times that go in a green core as you get little holes in it, which allows us to change some of that matter underneath the greens and top dress it, and it promotes healthier growth, and when we are doing that?- we are doing that every six weeks, so it's going to be a concerted effort to continue on that path. There are a couple of other things that

you need to do, we have to put in all the pesticides, the herbicides, to continue to fight the fungus and continue to fight the diseases and the pests that come up. So sometimes you'll see a little bit of an instance of maybe a little bit of less green when you add a herbicide or an insecticide, but that fertilizer picks it right back up. We were there Friday. I walked the course with my staff and I was very pleased that we got to talk to a few of the golfers that were on the greens and we got some pretty positive responses, so they see the change and the growth. We've still got some ways to go, we do have one green that's very troublesome, the third hole. So what we've done is we've actually installed a temporary green right in front, which allows them to play and allows us to concentrate on that three green completely without having anybody traipsing on it, so that would be good.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Have you considered doing the fairways, just doing the whole golf course when we come back and do it in April or May of next year, just shutting it down for two or three months and just really doing a job. Actually, I don't think that....but maybe that's an alternative for the Commission to make that decision at some point, because let me just add, because if you don't do the fairways you have evasive grass that gets into this green. So it maybe the thing to do is just do the whole golf course at that point, at least I think we should have the option up here to make that decision.

Mr. Dannemiller: That's going to be reviewed as part of the master plan and you mentioned that the golf course would be closed, basically starting in April, most likely it would be about a six month stand that the golf course would be closed.

Mayor Cason: One of the PGA study, if I recall, mentioned one of the holes had a building that certain times of the year that the sun didn't reach the green, is that going to move it?- going to move it?

Mr. Dannemiller: Tree trimming will be part of the maintenance program.

Mayor Cason: But I'm referring to one of the buildings on Coral Way.

Mr. Couceyro: The second hole which has those towers, the Segovia Towers there. Right now we haven't heard anything from the consultant about moving that hole. You can manage it, you have to do long term care and that's part of the consultant's plan for that, because obviously we can't move the building.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's a good point.

Commissioner Keon: Put the sand traps there.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's a good point. Is the consultant going to look at contouring the golf course?- possibly any small movements in the golf course, is that part of his scope?

Mr. Dannemiller: Everything. Right now we are looking at the complete...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I'd be interested if there is an issue there and you need to contour it over...

Mayor Cason: It's important to do that because the idea of a running or biking path around it. There is some places where you have a hole right next to where you'd have to jig or jog the running path, so it might be worth looking at that as a whole.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I don't mean redo the whole golf course, because that's our golf course, but if there are some movements in there even some undulations they need to put or whatever it is to better drain the facility. I think that's a good idea. A couple other questions – do we have a good plan to maintain the golf course after we spend the money on it?

Mr. Dannemiller: That's the number one concern is basically, we are not just buying renovations. We are buying the maintenance that goes with that renovation, so that's part of an ongoing maintenance program is part of that.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Because I think that's part of what the Commission needs to see when you get that. They need to see, OK, to maintain it into a good condition at all times is going to cost you this. You just need to know it that it's not going to be this, we need that, and I think that we have to make that decision at that time.

Commissioner Keon: And you have to do upgrades and everything else.

Commissioner Lago: Two weeks ago, was it two weeks ago when we met?

Mr. Dannemiller: I think it was last week.

Commissioner Lago: Last week I had the pleasure of meeting with the City Manager and some of your staff and also with the President of Riviera Golf Course, Granada. I apologize, not Riviera, and one the interesting things that they mentioned it goes back to what you were saying about the issue of maintenance, it has to do with irrigation and the upgrades of the irrigation, correct?

Mr. Dannemiller: That's part of it.

Commissioner Lago: That's one of the components along with several other things that they mentioned.

Mr. Couceyro: Equipment – and one of the things as we move along looking at the models to provide that maintenance, whether – because there are different ways you can go it through City employees. You can do it through a hybrid. You can do it through a turnkey operation with a contractor. There are all different delivery models that we have to look at, and what would be the most economical for the City and also give us the best maintenance, but equipment is another issue whether you go to a lease program for the equipment or whether you continue to buy and have long term.

Commissioner Lago: I think that goes into what the Vice Mayor is saying. If we are, not if, when we spend this money we want to make sure that this lasts for a long time, because this golf course is not a big money making situation for the City. So we need to make if we subsidize it so we are going to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars like we discussed in that meeting. We need to make sure that all our maintenance equipment is number one, and something that we touched on in the meeting is, we need to make sure that staff on a day-to-day basis is dealing with the golf course, if they need training let's get them the training, it all depends on – the City's here to make sure that we keep this property A-plus.

Mayor Cason: And take a look at the fee schedule on the usage to see whether is – I don't think it's being over used, but I don't know.

Mr. Dannemiller: We'll look at it.

Commissioner Keon: The usage has gone down as the golf course has deteriorated.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes, that's exactly what's happened. The only other issue I have is the golf carts. We had leased those out, we've always leased out golf carts and have we released any recently or are they still...?

Mr. Couceyro: We are working on a new lease and hopefully through a piggyback model we should have new carts shortly.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So we are in that process – the Biltmore too?

Mr. Couceyro: We are in that process. Yes, the Biltmore – this time the Biltmore split and is getting their own and doing their own lease instead of in the past the City did it all and then they kind of compensated the City for us paying a lease.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So now they are taking...

Mr. Couceyro: They are doing their separate leasing, we are doing ours.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK – good.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: This year...the beautiful trees that were on Ponce...nicely being planted on Granada Golf Course now on the second hole there, it was actually pretty good.

Mayor Cason: Those were some Bismarck's that have been moved.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: The Bismarck's – expensive Bismarck's.

Mayor Cason: One of the things that may not be exactly in your bailiwick, but we've been lighting up trees elsewhere. You know one of the best things, those enormous trees in the middle of the golf course. I've had people approach me about maybe having some lights on them in the copula at night because they are so beautiful and maybe you could have solar lights or something that would light them up and those banyan trees are just spectacular.

Interim City Manager Olazabal: We'd make sure that they in the master plan they look at lighting.

Mayor Cason: Make a recommendation whether its pros and cons.

Mr. Dannemiller: If you want to see an example of what it looks like lit, Ingraham Park has a giant banyan tree right by the...bridge.

Commissioner Lago: Looks beautiful.

Mayor Cason:...a wild factor.

Commissioner Lago: You had mentioned also one of the things that we discussed last week, Brook, what the President of Golf Course mentioned was the way that the cars are basically transported on a nightly basis. I think that he said that on a maximum we can transport I think ten hitched and he was seeing that on some occasions there were putting a little bit too many...and it was bending the tow hitch, it was bending the bumper, am I correct?

Mr. Dannemiller: Yes, that's what they were saying, yes.

Commissioner Lago: So we are going to get all these new carts, it all goes back to training the staff, whatever they need.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I think that's very good. Thank you very much. Keep us updated as the process goes on. Thank you.

[End: 4:25:06 p.m.]