

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item D**  
**June 8, 2021**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**  
**Vice Mayor Michael Mena**  
**Commissioner Rhonda Anderson**  
**Commissioner Jorge Fors**  
**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**  
**Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria**  
**City Attorney, Miriam Ramos**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Senior Sustainability Analyst, Matt Anderson**  
**Assistant to the City Manager, Solanch Lopez**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item D [9:38 a.m.]  
Mayor's Comments

Mayor Lago: Let's move onto the Mayor's Comments. I'll make them very brief. I want to recognize Solanch from the Manager's Office, who in my opinion does a wonderful job on behalf of this community and on behalf of the city. She always has a smile on her face, she always works very diligently. She is always willing to serve, and I want to make sure that I recognize her. I don't know if she's here, but she's been working on a project for some time now with our team, which deals with the issue of Keep Florida Beautiful, and it's something that is very near and dear to this Commission, as we strive to be as sustainable as possible, and we live up to our name. And I want to recognize her because the city received an Outstanding Recycling Program award and I don't know if maybe she can run up here, so I can give her or Matt can talk about it, if he's here. I see him peeking in, maybe Matt wants to say a few words in regard to that. Matt the floor is yours.

*City Commission Meeting*  
*June 8, 2021*

Solanch showed me yesterday the nice plaque that was awarded to the city and I think it was something very nice.

Mr. Anderson: Hopefully Solanch is on her way up. Solanch and I, along with the Sustainability Advisory Board, obviously has been working on the Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Program, when we were recently recognized. We applied for an award through Keep Florida Beautiful and was able to get Outstanding Recycling Program. I'll let Solanch talk about it more. She definitely deserves a lot of the credit.

Ms. Lopez: Sorry, I ran up the stairs. So, this was for the Keep Florida Beautiful annual conference. We got the 2021 Outstanding Recycling Efforts Program. It was mainly we submitted our household hazardous waste event that's Matt's baby and he's done a great job with that event, and also the Christmas Tree Recycling Program that we had back in December.

Mayor Lago: I caught you off guard. I told you yesterday I was going to call you up. I was very impressed by the flags and you deserve all the credit, both of you do.

Mr. Anderson: So obviously, these programs are near and dear to our heart and I think it's something that our residents have really enjoyed, especially the household hazardous waste programs that we run over the last six years. We get calls, I get calls year-round about that event. I know a number of you have been able to attend those, and I think it's a program that, not only does our Sustainability Advisory Board, but our residents as well, really appreciate, and it's a service that really sets us apart from a lot of other cities in Miami-Dade County and I know a lot of cities since we started that program have really tried to emulate that program and bring it to their cities as well. And all due credit to our City Administration and the City Commission for you guys leadership on that and providing us the platform to be able to provide these services to our residents.

Ms. Lopez: We were really honored that the Keep Florida Beautiful recognized us, especially since this is our first year of affiliation, so we are starting strong on our first year. A little bit about the award itself. They actually used a local artist to paint all of the awards that they gave out at the conference, and she paints it with marine debris that they collect from beach cleanups. So that was a really cool feature of it. They even, in the back, with the award...some of the materials that the artist used to paint the actual award. So, we have some Styrofoam, string, and an old toothbrush. So, we felt that that was a cool feature of the award itself that gives it a little more meaning.

Mayor Lago: Thank you so much. I appreciate the hard work, so does everyone in the city, so we are very proud of your efforts and this is an event that continues to grow. I had the pleasure of joining you this year again. I try to go every year with my daughters and my wife, and let me tell you, it was one car after another, and we did a lot of good things on behalf of the planet. This is something that hopefully other cities will emulate, and we continue to expand the opportunities for residents to get engaged and properly dispose of their items, their hazardous waste. So, thank you for your hard work. Thank you to Al and all your team. I know you guys did a lot of work spending a long time mentioning everyone by name. We spent about two hours shredding

*City Commission Meeting  
June 8, 2021*

documents and it was incredible. Your team, always with a smile, on a Saturday, and I have to commend everyone that was involved. So, thank you.

Mr. Anderson: And our next event will be Saturday, November 6<sup>th</sup> in the City Hall parking lot and again, all due credit to the entire team, Sanitation, Coral Gables PD, the Chief was able to provide extra police officers for our event because of the popularity, to our Sanitation Department, again, for their leadership, Public Works, the City Manager's Office. I know Ed was able to attend a lot of these events and Mayor Lago and the other Commissioners that were able to attend, thank you all for your continued support.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you. Next item: As you heard, Ms. Lockhart and I had a meeting yesterday afternoon around 6:30 with the PTSA via Zoom. We talked about crosswalks on Ponce Middle School and Carver. One of the big issues, and I was hoping that the ACM was here, we can discuss it, maybe he stepped out for one moment, was the issue of the crosswalk at Carver. They showed me some plans, they went over some plans as per the proposed WAWA station. There are currently two crosswalks, they are proposing to eliminate one of them. I know that there is some sort of back and forth in regard to who is responsible for those crosswalks, either its Miami-Dade County, it's the City of Miami, that is a county road, Mr. Manager, correct? – the road in front of Carver, Grand Avenue.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, it's a county road.

Mayor Lago: I made a promise and I hate to make promises for the entire Commission, but I think this is a good promise. Whatever the outcome is of the pending lawsuit that's happening with WAWA, when eventually something gets constructed on that site, we as a Commission, we as a City put public safety as our number one priority. Just like we did when there was an issue, there was a shooting at the public school, this Commission was the first city of any city in Miami-Dade County to step up through legislation that I wrote and that my colleagues supported me to ensure that we put our own police officers in every single public school. So, I made the PTSA understand that I would get to the bottom of it with the help of my Commission and our ACM to understand the issue of the crosswalks and what's going on there, because the county says it's our responsibility, but that's a county road. So, I want to get to the bottom of it and I'd like to see if maybe with the ACM's help and the City Manager's help, we can finalize the issue of the crosswalk, because when that construction gets completed, I want to make sure that there isn't a lag in regard to delivering that crosswalk, or why are we eliminating a second crosswalk, why aren't we keeping that second crosswalk. I see the Public Works Director stepped in and that's something that I'd like to see if we can get an answer in the next week, the issue with WAWA and the crosswalks. Who is responsible for those crosswalks? – is that in our scope? – is that in the county's scope? The county says it's our responsibility, but that's a county road, so I think that we need to address that issue. Mr. ACM.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Once again, good morning Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission, Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager – I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: Can you just pull up a seat?  
*City Commission Meeting*  
*June 8, 2021*

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: When it comes to it, it could be a recliner. So, when it comes to traffic control around school zones, that squarely falls in the county's camp. And so, if there are any modifications made to a school zone, it goes through the review channels involving the division in Miami-Dade County Public Works that handles that. So, we are happy to engage with them. We had a meeting with some school community members the other day, and Commissioner Menendez and we told him what you have just said, which is that we will bend over backward to help them facilitate the safest operations at the school during the critical times at school, which is pickup and drop-off. I do know and I think Chief Hudak is here; Chief Hudak can also attest to the fact that we have a strong police presence during those times, but we will work with the community, the school, Miami-Dade County, and WAWA when it comes time for the establishment to open, to facilitate operations that are safe and prudent for the entire community, and the balance of all the interest that are entailed.

Chief Hudak: Good morning Commissioners.

Mayor Lago: Good morning Chief.

Chief Hudak: The two crosswalks are two different schools; I think that's what the big part of it. What we have seen traffic-wise is the one on Grand Avenue, obviously is actually also controlled by one of our school crossing guards. So, we have historically had a school crossing guard for the Grand Avenue area, that will continue to be in play even through the construction of the WAWA. The second one is, we are finding a lot of problems for our neighbors in that area of a lot of parents dropping off at the other school kind of park in that neighborhood, they need that crosswalk to come for their students walking from school. So, I really don't see, at least from the Police Department's recommendation that we would deter from having two crosswalks. No one has opposed us about removing it. I believe once they contact Public Works, they'd also contact us and we'd be fully in support of keeping it the way it is right now, so we can continue to control the safe passage of kids and the parents going to and from school.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Well, will you do me a favor, Mr. ACM, will you write me an e-mail just explaining where the responsibility lies so that I can make sure that we memorialize toward the PTSA, because they obviously keep speaking to the Commission and we keep having these meetings. Yesterday's meeting was about an hour and-a-half and I'm willing to have as many meetings as they'd like, as long as they'd like, but I want to make sure that they are pushing the right entity to deliver on those crosswalks and make sure they don't take away one of those crosswalks. So, I think they are the best thing and it's one of the things that I had promised that we were going to get this memorialized and push it to them, so they understand that you need to speak to your School Board member, and you need to speak to the county, to make sure that gets addressed as a result of being a county road.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I'd be happy to sir.

Mayor Lago: I appreciate that. Thank you.

*City Commission Meeting  
June 8, 2021*

Commissioner Anderson: May I comment just for a moment?

Mayor Lago: Of course, please, the floor is yours.

Commissioner Anderson: With regard to the crosswalks. I know we mentioned doing it by the time that construction is over, but I think we need to take a proactive approach to have this in place during construction as well. I've canvassed the area; I've seen the trucks moving in and out the construction site. It is a very dangerous situation that we have there, and we need to have it occurring now, engage the county now and try to have something in place by the time that school begins, because it doesn't cost much to paint lines, okay; and there are possibly alternative pickup patterns that can be arranged. I've also talked to the neighbors in the area and there is a problem for them to even get into their neighborhoods, because they way the traffic flows in that area parents don't understand that there is a lane that is supposed to be dedicated for those residents to get into their neighborhoods, but indeed it's been blocked a lot. So, I think we need to look at it holistically from both our responsibility on the traffic flow issues, as well as looking into alternative designs for pickup and drop-off and getting this done before school opens up again.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, Commissioner Anderson, the project not only involves onsite improvements, but also right-of-way improvements and during all phases of construction a contractor is required to have a maintenance of traffic plan that is intended to protect the travelling public, whether they be on foot or whether they be in vehicles. And so, we will do our best to ensure that that MOT requirement throughout all phases of construction is the maximum it can be, and we can have the safest condition possible.

Chief Hudak: And Commissioner, also to that point on that MOT, when we go through that, that the Police Department does have a seat at the table, and we make sure that not just the construction people have their staging area set up. We do continually at those two schools specifically, have our highest level of enforcement. Our biggest issue that we are seeing, both at Gables High and the other ones is, really most of the people that get citations are the parents in the drop-off blocking the traffic. We see it every day. I think the majority of our tickets at Gables High School is parents stopping in the middle of the street on LeJeune, on Bird Road, just dropping people off, which is just unsafe. It has nothing to do with inconvenience, its just not safe. So, we have always had, not just the school crossing guard, but also an officer assigned in that area. Again, because the street side is ours, but the school, not on the elementary, not on the grade school, the elementary schools actually in the City of Miami is an interesting line, one school is ours, one school is the city's, but our officers do patrol the west side of the school, because we do have that and we've heard the same complaints from the neighborhoods, they just park everywhere, people's driveways to drop-off. So, its modifying the intelligence, the intelligence parking I should say and queuing up, and we will continue to do that through the construction as well.

Mayor Lago: Chief but, I want to put this on the record for the Commissioner. The purpose of me putting this item on the comment section is very simple. Someone needs to take ownership of this. When you talk about MOT, when you talk about the ability for people to cross Grand; the contractor and the developer are very well aware of their responsibilities. This is what I do for a living. When you are dealing with a construction project, you always have a MOT, a maintenance

*City Commission Meeting  
June 8, 2021*

of traffic plan. This is nothing new. This has been ongoing for years if not decades. So, the issue here is more important, whether we get to the bottom of who is responsible for the new design and implementing a new design. I'm not worried about the MOT. I know that the city staff is going to handle that, the county, and the developer. If they do not handle that, they are going to get fined. My biggest issue here is, getting to the bottom of the fact that you have certain parents, that for example, contacted Commissioner Menendez, contact Commissioner Anderson, contact my colleagues to my left and to the right, I want to stop that. I want to have one point of person who is responsible of the county, because they are saying that the County City Manager, this is from the parents, this is what they are telling me, that the County City Manager says it's the city's responsibility. So, what I've asked for is a simple e-mail from the ACM explaining who is responsible and then passing that along to the county to say listen, I want to make it clear, are you aware that these parents are not happy about potentially losing one of the crosswalks, what is your reasoning behind that? Maybe we need to have a sit-down meeting with the county to really understand it. But from my understanding is that the county is passing the buck off to the city and that to me, is unacceptable, because at the end of the day, we are not getting to a resolution, and I want to deliver that, and I think that's the most important thing we can do.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Mr. Mayor, I'm happy to put out an e-mail and indicate that it is our opinion, in my estimation factual that traffic control around school zones is not under our purview.

Mayor Lago: And it's always been like that.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Not like it's any different.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Correct.

Chief Hudak: When we've modified it in the past, Commissioner, and I'll make myself available at any group that wants to talk from the police side, through the Manager, but every time we've had these issues where something has been modified in parking or right-of-way around the schools, we've been consulted from the Miami-Dade Police Department and we have not had any contact whatsoever about modifying the school zones. We'll follow up with that and I'll get back to the Assistant City Manager to make sure that we haven't heard anything to the contrary.

Mayor Lago: Okay. I appreciate that. The final issue is the listen tour. I asked residents and business owners or anyone who continues to be interested in engaging with the City Commission, with the City. As you can tell, we are running a little bit of a different style of meeting and I want people to be aware that their opinion matters, that their input matters, and its important to the future and the way we are going to handle ourselves here in the city. We have, from the last time I checked, close to 600 people who have finished the survey and transparently its placed, the survey is placed and the results are placed on the Commission, along with what we are going to be voting now when we adopt the strategic priorities plan for the Mayor's office, it says the Mayor's office, but its really the Commission, in my opinion, because we did ask for the Commission to give input

*City Commission Meeting  
June 8, 2021*

and this is going to be a roadmap for the next two years for us to really achieve what we want to achieve as a city. So, to close out the Mayor's comments. I ask people to please go the city website under listening tour and make an appointment to see the Mayor or my fellow colleagues on the Commission, fill out the survey, if you haven't done so, and have your voice heard. I want to take this opportunity to present D-1, which is a resolution. After much input from the residents, along with my colleagues on the Commission, we put together the Strategic Priorities Plan for the Mayor's office, which I mentioned before, everyone has had their input and an opportunity to provide input; and I would like for a motion to adopt that resolution so that we can place it on the Commission and that its transparently available for everyone in this community to review it, and that document by the way, is not static, that document is an organic document where people or entities can continue to bring great ideas and I will bring that document back to the Commission when we need to, as the City Attorney has said before, when we need to make changes or add or deduct. So, I'll entertain a resolution.

Commissioner Anderson: If you want additional input, how would you like us to communicate it to you?

Mayor Lago: Well, I brought it before the Commission, I think a few meetings ago, and I'm more than willing to accept any input or I can defer to the next Commission meeting, if you would like we can defer it, so we don't adopt it today and you can add whatever additional input you'd like.

Commissioner Anderson: I can add things now or we can, its organic so we can add things later too.

Mayor Lago: Whatever you'd like. You can just send it to me, copy the Clerk, and Madam City Attorney is it a problem, is it a Sunshine issue if we copy my colleagues?

City Attorney Ramos: If it's a one-way communication you're fine, but I think the intent was to bring it back quarterly and then have things added at that time, so maybe that's a better way to do it, that way you can have a discussion in public.

Mayor Lago: But I'm willing to wait two weeks, if you have items you want to work on. Its not a big deal, we can defer it, it's okay.

Commissioner Anderson: I think they are already happening now. I'd like to move forward now, so I make a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)  
*City Commission Meeting*

*June 8, 2021*

Mayor Lago: Thank you by the way, I appreciate your support, and this will be coming back quarterly and if you have anything that you'd like to put now, we'll just memorialize it with the Clerk and we'll continue to add onto it. And I want you engaged. This is not my plan; this is the Commission's plan. I want after two years to sit here and say, what we were able to do, and a lot of the budget decisions that I will be pushing for will be based, majority based on the strategic plan.

Commissioner Anderson: The things I'll be bringing to you, topic-wise is the septic to sewer prioritization. We need to do some work there with the county to determine where the low-lying areas are and which systems we want to move forward on.

Mayor Lago: Can I touch that item just one second?

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I met last week with the ACM, the Chief of Staff and the County Commissioner, Raquel Regalado in regard to about six or seven issues, one of them was septic to sewer conversion and what they are doing. And I will be presenting a piece of legislation, which anyone who is more than willing to piggyback on and join me on that piece of legislation, which will be hopefully, and staff is working on it now, is requiring that when a property is sold that the seller, excuse me, the buyer produce an inspection which currently gauges the viability of the existing septic tank. That will give you something that doesn't happen now. When you have a three-point inspection on a home, as we are all aware, you see what's visually in front of you and is tangible, you can touch, but people forget about septic tanks, because its underground; and I know there is an additional cost, but let me tell you why I think it's a good thing, because if you find out at that moment when you do this \$200-\$300 test, maybe its around \$400, because you have to drain the septic tank to see if its fractured, it allows you at that point to tell the seller via certified document, we have issue with the septic tank, I would like a credit at closing to replace and repair that septic tank or the drain field. What happens now is a lot of people close and they don't know what's underground and they run into an issue six months later and you know how lucky, you close on a property and a month later you have a septic tank issue and it cost you \$15,000, \$20,000 to fix. So that's something that I'm working on, if anybody would like to join me on that piece of legislation, I'd be more than welcome, and I think its important because it protects buyers in our community and at the end of the day, more important than anything, its always important to protect buyers, but it really sends a message and we need to start figuring out how we compile this information because once you have that document, hopefully we would know there is a few hundred septic tanks that needs to be replaced, these individuals get a credit, how we are going to address that these septic tanks get corrected. You are probably wondering, Vince, are we moving to sewer? – yes. The intent is there, but the money is not there currently, so why not fix the issue until sewer is made available either through some federal grant, state grant, some matching grant, just because there is a problem there it means we have to deal with it and we have to find a way to find a solution so that these septic tanks are not leaking into our water and resulting in more and more issues here locally. We're good.

*City Commission Meeting  
June 8, 2021*



Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

DRAFT