

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item K-2
September 11, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Assistant City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton
Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller
Public Works Director, Ed Santamaria

Public Speaker(s)

Robert Ruano
Jackson Rip Holmes
Maria Cruz

Agenda Item K-2 [10:12:50 a.m.]

A discussion on regulations regarding bike riding on City sidewalks

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The next item K-2, discussion on regulations regarding bike riding on City sidewalks.

City Attorney Ramos: Yes. So the pilot program for the bike share has been deployed and we are going to start seeing, I haven't seen them yet, some of you may have seen the bike share program being deployed, the bikes being out there for people to pick up. So in that vein we thought we needed to look at, like we did with scooters, where are people allowed to ride bicycles and where we want them to be allowed. I shared an opinion with you last night that explains that under state law bicycles are permitted to be ridden on sidewalks generally, unless a municipality wishes to

prohibit them from being ridden on sidewalks. This is a discussion to see what it is that we want to do. I want the Assistant City Attorney Stephanie Throckmorton to come up and explain what our Code says right now. I do believe we've discussed with staff, Jessica if you want to come up as well, that staff does not believe that in residential neighborhoods that we should be disallowing them on sidewalks, because we don't have an infrastructure where they are safe to be ridden and it's probably is not a big issue to have it on a residential street versus, for example on Miracle Mile whereas you will see we already prohibit them. So I'll let them explain and then we can have a discussion about what you'd like to do.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Good morning. Currently the Code states that bicycles are not allowed on sidewalks on Miracle Mile and were posted. I believe where it's posted on the City blocks north and south of Ponce, north and south of Miracle Mile on Ponce, same where we've discussed with scooters. So those are the only areas in our Code were posted in Miracle Mile where bikes are not allowed on sidewalks.

City Attorney Ramos: Are they currently out on Giralda Plaza?

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: I don't know if it's posted or not, I'll have to ask the Parking Director if it's posted there.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I don't believe it's posted.

City Attorney Ramos: So can you give us your opinion generally, Jessica, from a technical standpoint so the Commission can appreciate that?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: As you know, we do not have robust bicycling infrastructure in the City of Coral Gables. It's not connected; it is not helping to address the mobility needs that we have here in the City. We don't have a place for families to ride their bicycles with their children, because as you know we also have a traffic calming issue where families are afraid to be in their streets. It is our opinion, Public Works, that people should be able to ride bicycles on the sidewalks until we have adequate bicycling infrastructure. Sidewalks are not where we want to have people riding their bikes, but right now it's the only place that we have for people to ride their bikes to get from place to place. As it relates specifically to Giralda, it would be my recommendation that the stakeholders be brought into the discussion because I don't know if there is an issue with people and their bikes on Giralda at this point. I personally have not gotten any complaints that it doesn't mean that you haven't gotten any complaints. So I would surely encourage that they be brought into the discussion before considering not allowing bikes. But also, I prefer that the Code remain the same as it relates to restrictions of just limiting

it where posted, because there's a lot more flexibility than writing it into the Code, which I also would have recommended for scooters had we had engaged in that discussion.

City Attorney Ramos: Jessica, I believe we had talked about having a stakeholder present from the group in Giralda, was that person ever asked to come?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I did not reach out to anyone, no.

Commissioner Lago: So let's move in that direction. Can I just ask a quick question? Let's look at other municipalities. What are they doing in regards to similar areas like Giralda, for example, Lincoln Road on Miami Beach? Are you allowed to ride bikes on Lincoln Road?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I'm not familiar.

Commissioner Lago: Robert?

Mr. Ruano: No.

Commissioner Lago: Are you familiar of any other areas in Miami-Dade County where you have a similar situation as Giralda, Miracle Mile where...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Not in Miami-Dade County actually, no. The way the trend is, is that it's more mixing all – if we are not going to have separation then we are going to mix everything. So slow streets that share space with people walking and other modes of transportation. So we would like to either be separate or slow and together.

Commissioner Keon: When we had spoken about it yesterday, I said I don't see anything wrong with someone walking their bike on Miracle Mile. You ride so far and you get to a certain point that you can get off your bike and walk it on the Mile to get to where you are going. It doesn't prevent someone from being able to use their bike to go throughout the City, it's just when you get to a certain spot where there is congestion and there are people on the sidewalks and there are tables and all of that and the same thing for Giralda that you can certainly ride to Giralda. I'm not so sure that it would be a good thing to have people riding their bikes through Giralda, but you get off your bike and you walk it.

Commissioner Mena: I think what we are talking about is riding.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: The way the Code is written it says the riding of bikes is prohibited on Miracle Mile....walking it.

Commissioner Keon: But sometimes – does it say bike riding or does it say no bikes on Miracle Mile?

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: It says the riding of bikes, the riding of bicycles.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: But it's very important that if we are not going to provide a place for people to ride their bikes, at the very least we have a place to park. We need additional bicycling parking in these areas.

Commissioner Lago: So what's holding you back in regards to delivering on that?- because the other day I brought it up on Miracle Mile and they said, Oh no, we have it, we have bicycle parking, but you are saying right now that we need more.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: So what...

Commissioner Lago: So that's why I didn't even continue that discussion because my colleagues told me we have.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: So here's what we are experiencing right now. We have dockless bikes now that we are staging at our bike racks, we have scooters that we are staging at our bike racks and then we have personal, your own personal bikes that are at bike racks. We can absolutely increase the amount of bicycling parking at the Commission's direction.

Interim City Manager Iglesias: We do have bike racks on Miracle Mile and people can ride and then just take a bike and store it there, but we don't have riding within Miracle Mile.

Commissioner Lago: So what would you recommend in regards to Miracle Mile and Giralda?- what would you recommend for additional bike racks? Do you already have something in mind?- are you going to roll out more?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: We have some of those locations identified where we could increase the bicycle parking.

Commissioner Lago: So what's stopping you?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: We can move forward.

Commissioner Lago: OK. So colleagues, sorry Mayor, it's your meeting, what would you like to do so we don't have this discussion again, because the last time we had this discussion it was...

Commissioner Mena: I think it's kind of an administrative issue.

Commissioner Lago: I know but I want to empower.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Have you addressed bicycles on Giralda?

Commissioner Lago: Not yet. We are still discussing.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: [Inaudible]...and forbid the riding the bicycles on Giralda. If there are a number of people there on Giralda, I think it's very dangerous to have someone riding a bicycle on Giralda and that someone is probably not somebody like...or us riding responsibly to a restaurant, but its teenagers or reckless people or whoever and they are going to run people over.

Commissioner Lago: But if I may Mayor, and I agree with your concerns, but I think we already made one error and I hate to go back to Riviera. I'm not going back; I'm just saying I think I made a mistake. I don't have a problem admitting it. We should have gone back to the stakeholders who should have forced the residents to listen and be engaged in the situation, not just abandon the whole process. So you made a very good point before, why don't we engage stakeholders here, have a sit down discussion. I'm not saying I'm in favor or opposed, I want to hear what the stakeholders have to say before I...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The stakeholders are the restaurants and the stakeholders are the users and 39,000 people on Saturday on Giralda and bicycle riding doesn't belong there. This is not a neighborhood where...

Commissioner Lago: But I think Mayor, we should have that discussion and come to an agreement after we have all the information before us. That's just my opinion.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I'm not suggesting that we allow bicycle riding. I am suggesting that the stakeholders be engaged.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But who are the stakeholders?

Commissioner Lago: Commissioner Keon made a very good point that I don't have an issue with somebody walking a bike on Giralda.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: They are the business owners. We have an organized group that represents...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would like to make a motion that we can get bicycle riding on Giralda.

City Attorney Ramos: Now sir would you like that done by posting or would you like to actually amend our Code?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Amend our Code and post it, both. I would like to make that motion and if there isn't a second then it will die. And then the next time somebody gets run over then we'll see who is responsible. Is there a second to my motion?- no. It dies for a lack of a second.

Commissioner Lago: Let's discuss this. Currently, going back to Commissioner Keon's comments about being able to take your bike, get off your bike, and walk it through Giralda. Obviously you don't have to drive all the way around Alhambra to go, let's say to the bank, or to the bakery, or to one of the businesses that are right across the street. What are the alternatives for bikers, not bikers, but people who are bicycling through our City and residents, cyclists, excuse me? Goes to show how much of a novice I am, I apologize.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I'm also not a cyclist; I just ride a bike on the weekends.

Commissioner Lago: I just want to make sure I use the right jargon.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller:...and occasionally to work. But for example, if I'm riding my bike with my son, which I do nearly every weekend and we frequent some place on Giralda, we will ride our bikes to the location where we are going to have lunch; and that means that we will have our bikes sitting next to us at the table, but there is not bike parking within Giralda, it's at the end. But you know, I'm one example and there are many examples beyond me and I'm interested in hearing if there are issues that the business owners are encountering, I'm really interested in that, because...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me ask you a question in your experience, with the 39,000 people on a Saturday, do you ride your bike into Giralda or do you get off the bike and bring it to...

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I would get off my bike.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. That's my point.

Commissioner Lago: You are also with a small child too.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I would get off my bike no matter what if there are many people there, but in the middle of the night if there was no one there I would ride through.

Commissioner Keon: I don't think anybody would notice.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: At 3 in the morning nobody will object.

[Laughter]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. What's the Commission's pleasure? I made a motion which failed for the lack of a second.

Commissioner Mena: Listen, I agree with you.

Commissioner Keon: I do too.

Commissioner Mena: But I'm open to engaging stakeholders and getting more information before we do it; and I would do it just as a posting rather than an ordinance to Jessica's point, because a change in the future is a simple administrative change.

City Attorney Ramos: You don't need a change to the ordinance because it already says we are posted. Staff can have a meeting with the stakeholders and if the general view is that they should be prohibited then we can post it.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: That would be my recommendation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there a motion of any kind or a suggestion?

Commissioner Lago: Do you want to speak, go ahead.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have Mr. Holmes and Ruano.

Commissioner Keon: Maybe staff could also – you could look at the availability of bike racks or bike parking on Giralda to provide people with the opportunity to park their bikes and walk to wherever they want to go also.

Commissioner Mena: But isn't the bike racks at the end sort of a better situation or do you want them throughout Giralda, is that what you're suggesting?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I would have to take a closer look at Giralda because I have not specifically looked for additional locations on Giralda only on Miracle Mile. But the locations of the bikes – actually they are full quite a bit, particularly on these really busy nights where you don't want people riding their bikes through, that's the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's their right to ride the bike. Go ahead Mr. Ruano.

Mr. Ruano: Thank you. Robert Ruano, 1544 Murcia Avenue. First I would ask, is there a problem?- did somebody get hit on Giralda? Madam City Attorney?

City Attorney Ramos: I'm sorry.

Mr. Ruano: It's your item.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Nobody has been hit yet, we don't want anybody to get hit and with 39,000 people and 41,000 people on two days, we don't want, I think it's very dangerous to have people riding bikes, and the ones that ride bikes are not like you, responsible people or like Jessica Keller responsible people, they will be teenagers, they will be irresponsibility people and we don't want that.

Mr. Ruano: I understand, but we just had two months, of like you said, 39,000, 41,000 people on Giralda and nobody got hit.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: There were no people riding bicycles there.

Mr. Ruano: I understand, but this is coming down now and it's going to be a lot less people. Nobody got hit but when it was packed, now it's going to get lighter and you are going to outlaw bikes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

Mr. Ruano: I don't think that's a good solution. I mean I tell you; I think another solution if you have a concern, if you have a concern, I appreciate that Mayor, that you have a concern for it, because I wouldn't want anybody riding their bike fast through Giralda. I agree with you. But if you just post at the ends of the street, like they do in other places, "ride slow," the people have to ride slow through there. Then maybe they could enforce it if there was a problem. I can see you

don't want people riding in groups, riding long, you know riding really fast through there, but somebody like Ms. Keller said, her and her son, they should have the ability to ride down the middle.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No they shouldn't. No they shouldn't. She tells us that she got off, gets off and walks 75 feet to the restaurant and have a hamburger with her son and has the bicycle next to her.

Mr. Ruano: She may not do it, but I think she has certainly the right to do it. As we've all said, the streets are for everybody. That doesn't mean that I stop, I lose all my rights when I get on that bike. And I'll tell you something that you are going to do by doing this, because the same thing has happened and I know people have said it, and I've done the same thing quite frankly. When you start outlawing bikes on a certain road, there are people that ride bikes that might go on that road on the weekend...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: On one street, one pedestrian street. We closed that street on purpose in order to make it a pedestrian street.

Mr. Ruano: Yes, but you are not putting a car in there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have a problem with bicycles and your attitude, bicyclists, not yours personally, I'm sorry. There are probably 20 people in the City of Coral Gables that are obsessed or that are very, very committed cyclists, 20; and they are the ones that are here complaining and vociferating on the rights of bicyclists to ride on pedestrian streets like Giralda. I want to hear the rest of the 51,000 people in Coral Gables that care about bikes that do ride bikes on weekends with their son and whatever, and do not insist on imposing their bicycles on the residents of Coral Gables and cutting into the swales or cutting into the median, or cutting into whatever, those people also have rights. They are not as vocal as bicyclists, not personally, but I'm astonished that we are allowing you to or that you want to ride a bicycle on Giralda, which is a pedestrian street, which we closed on purpose with 41,000. Yes, there will be fewer people, but there will be 20,000 and just frankly offended by it.

Mr. Ruano: Mr. Mayor, I personally and I won't talk about you car drivers, because we are all car drivers, OK, and if we are going to say you car drivers, people that come to the street and don't stop or don't signal and we have the same problem, but I will tell you, I don't want to ride through Giralda, but I do want to be able to take my family and ride to Rice, if I want to very slowly, obviously I'm going to do that, put my bike to the side, if it's not bothering anybody and eat there.

Commissioner Mena: Robert the challenge I have with this is the fact that we closed off this street to be more of a plaza...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Pedestrian.

Commissioner Mena: And when people, I think, unfairly say things like I'm driving a car and these cyclists are a nuisance to my ability to drive my car, your answer and the answer of most other cycling supporters that I hear is, we have as much of a right to the road as they do, which is true under the law. This is a road that we closed off to cars and so now you are taking sort of the opposite thing is, we are different than cars, we are allowed to go onto pedestrian.

Mr. Ruano: No. No.

Commissioner Mena: It's not just a safety thing, although it is a safety thing, it's also just a nuisance thing. If what you want is for people to be at outdoor cafes in an area where there kids can run around and things like that, you don't want people riding bicycles through there. I have no problem with people walking them through, parking them, having lunch, that's great, but I think the bigger concern is just that not just the safety, but the nuisance part of it and maintaining this as a plaza.

Mr. Ruano: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The other day I saw somebody riding a motorcycle and parking the motorcycle in front of...Café, which is almost halfway in. Do they have a right to do it?

Commissioner Mena: That has nothing – That is illegal, that's a motorized vehicle.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No it isn't.

Commissioner Keon: If you make a motion again, I'll second it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Keon: If you make your motion again, I'll second it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I will make a motion to forbid...

Commissioner Mena: What about making the sign that says people slow down?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I will make a motion to forbid bicycle riding in Giralda, not as a part of the code, but posted.

Commissioner Keon: And I will second it. It doesn't...people from getting off the bike and walking through and if staff believes you need more bike racks mid-block, so that people can do it mid-block as well as at the ends...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: There is a motion and it has been seconded.

Commissioner Keon: And you can walk your bike through there then I would think that they could do that administratively.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. We have people that wish to speak – thank you Robert. Mr. Holmes please. Identify yourself.

Mr. Holmes: I agree with your position Mayor Valdes-Fauli. It's such a complex thing, the whole transportation issue, but I do agree that it is a safety issue. If you are on Giralda Plaza can you imagine somebody sitting there with their kids having dinner and a bike ploughs into them, alright the child could be injured. It's that simple. As a Miracle Mile property owner, I should start out by saying, my name is Jackson Rip Holmes, I live at 35 Sedonia Avenue in Coral Gables. I'm in affordable housing; I'm in favor of affordable housing, that's all I can afford. I urge you to go slow. I think there is a place for bikes, but I don't think it should include a situation where they can plough into a pedestrian. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you sir. Ms. Cruz, Maria Cruz – bike riding. Good morning.

Ms. Cruz: I was going to try to be quiet today, but I couldn't help it. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I understand that people like to ride bikes, not me, but I know that people do, but let me tell you, I have a sidewalk in front of my house. Now I have to look both ways before I get on the sidewalk, because the people that ride bikes they don't have to worry about me. When they are riding the bike, they have the right-of-way. So if I step on the sidewalk I could be in trouble, OK. I think there is a time and a place for people to ride bikes and I agree with you, the Plaza is not a place for people to ride bikes; and I think that when we say that they can ride bikes on sidewalks, they need to be taught that the sidewalks are for the people, you know for the walkers first, for the pedestrians first and not their own possession.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you ma'am. Alright, there's a motion and a second, will you call the roll please?

Commissioner Mena: Sorry, take a timeout here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Mena: Listen, I agree with again, your position on this, but again, I don't necessarily want to rush into it without hearing from the owners of the businesses on Giralda Plaza.

Commissioner Lago: I'm voting no.

Commissioner Mena: And I'm not sure what the downside is.

Commissioner Lago: Waiting an extra meeting, waiting an extra two meetings.

Commissioner Mena: So, I'm in favor of the general motion and doing it as a posting, as we discussed, but I think we should wait to post it here until we get feedback from the businesses.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The motion is to forbid the riding of bicycles in Giralda. Will you call the roll please?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

Commissioner Lago: No

Commissioner Mena: Not at this time. No.

Commissioner Keon: Yes

(Vice Mayor Quesada: Absent)

Commissioner Keon: It fails.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It fails.

Commissioner Keon: I would suggest that we allow them to come back in whatever period of time. Jessica how long would it take you to come back after talking to the restaurant owners on Giralda about the issue of bikes? What do you think?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: I would need about three months.

Commissioner Lago: OK.

Commissioner Mena: Three months to do what, sorry?

Commissioner Keon: I think that's too long, I really do.

Commissioner Mena: That's too long.

Commissioner Keon: That's too long a time to talk to people...that's going to be hurt by it.

Commissioner Mena: There is a Giralda subcommittee with the B.I.D., Nick Sharp from Three-Fold, I think is the Chair of it. Let's just reach out to them, get their general viewpoint on it. What I don't want is for them to feel like we didn't ask them and we didn't get their input. We may or may not follow their input; I'm going to be perfectly honest with you. We may make a decision that we think is the right decision regardless, but I do want to know what their input is first and understand their perspective.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Through the Commission and the Chair, Ed Santamaria, Director of Public Works. I recommended to Jessica to give herself sometime in this, because we do have a lot going on, and all at the same time we have a number of community meetings that we are undertaking in the next few weeks, but three months is a very, very conservative timeframe. We might be able to do it within the next month-month and-a-half.

Commissioner Mena: I'm not asking you to have a whole neighborhood. Look, I'll give it to the next meeting. I'll reach out to Nick Sharp myself, if I have to, and get his input and tell him to get the input for me and that's that.

Commissioner Lago: If they could have a member come and speak at the next Commission meeting.

Interim City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, I think we can get a hold of Giralda portion of the B.I.D. to get their input and then look to see what they are looking at, because you can always ride your bike to each end and walk in.

Commissioner Mena: Of course, that's a given. Nobody is disputing that.

Interim City Manager Iglesias: So I think we can get a hold of them...

Commissioner Keon: At the next meeting then, is that what you're saying?

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

[End: 10:37:05 a.m.]