

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-2
May 13, 2008
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Slesnick Donald D. Slesnick, II
Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Maria Anderson
Commissioner Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne "Chip" Withers

City Staff

City Manager, David Brown
City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
City Clerk Staff, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Richard Namon, Coral Gables Resident
William Schiff, Coral Gables Resident
Ian Martinez, Coral Gables Resident

Time [1:35:00 p.m.-02:13:13pm]

Mayor Don Slesnick: Now in the package and in the items we were given based on discussion that has arisen and has become public as well as well as within the city hall about our Fourth of July celebration there were two items--one item had been requested by Commissioner Cabrera, and I can't put my hands on it right now, but it is a comparison of all the monies we spent on the different events that this city; and I think that at the time that Commissioner Cabrera asked about this; most all of us said we love our special events, we love the fact this is a hometown, we love the fact that we do things and get people together, so here goes, the Farmers Market, I am going to give you the rounded figures, the Farmers Market costs the city about 28,000, 29,000 a year; the egg hunt, Easter time, the Extreme Egg Hunt cost about \$30,000. That was at how many parks Fred?

Fred Couceyro: Twenty.

Mayor Slesnick: 20 parks and how many people?

Fred Couceyro: About 5,0000.

Mayor Slesnick: About 5,000 people. I just want to give you an impression, Gallery Nights cost the City about \$5,800 for the year, Police Memorial cost about \$2,900, Halloween costs about \$10,000, Christmas tree lighting or Holiday Tree Lighting costs \$10,000 approximately, the Holiday Park, which we run for the better part of a month cost \$100,000; the Board and Committees Reception, which we treat our boards and committees members to one reception a year in thanks for their services, \$8,000. The junior orange bowl parade \$54,000, Venetian Pool Events \$8,000; and youth center events in total \$27,000; so that gives you an impression a range of the kinds of monies that are spent....

Commissioner Withers: On top of that you have another \$175,000 that we give out to local groups as sponsors.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's correct.

Mayor Slesnick: Exactly, so that is a good point Chip; we have a cultural budget for grants of about \$175,000 where cultural groups and festival and event groups can apply to our cultural affairs advisory committee for grants to help them sponsor public events; and those public events are concerts and shows and different things and art presentation and so on. So that gives you the full suite. Now we come down to the question at hand, and I presume is the question at hand, and that is, the question is, what we do about the Fourth of July this year; and as you know the debate has ranged around one, the cost of the Fourth of July, and secondly the condition of the golf course, the cost has been given to us in a May 13th memorandum from the Manager the projected cost for this year of the Biltmore, the fireworks and everything is \$150,000 that does not include any damage that may be done to the golf course, that does include a large sum of money to protect the golf course to prevent damage but if it happens it happens. In a reply to a Commission request that the Manager come to us with an alternative proposal, so that we could do a hometown celebration of the Fourth of July, if we didn't do the Biltmore he and the Parks Department have come up with a Youth Center Day time event, which would be like I think it would be like an expanded Farmers Market and an expanded St. Patrick's day event, it would be a fair event; it would include rides, face painting costumes, balloons, music

entertainment carnival and prizes and carnival things, cookout foods, etc. in other words a carnival like setting for \$20,000, \$21,500.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Can I ask a question?

Mayor Slesnick: Yes, Sure, I was only trying to maybe set the stage and save some time. So I have set the stage..

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: This might save the stage, too. If we wanted to do it, if we give you direction right now to do it, could we even do it at this late of time; could we do the Fourth of July Celebration at the Biltmore facility if want to move forward right now. Or is that a mute point?

City Manager Brown: I still believe we could do that, but time is running short.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Alright.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll be very candid I think the Fourth of July at the Biltmore is way excessive for where we are living, the times we are living at; so my vote would be against that particular venue, if there is a smaller hometown venue that is less expensive, go for it, but I think \$150,000 some in a year where we have really have had some serious cuts to what we have; and it also seems it is for a select few up there who get to eat; and to me that seems excessive in hard times and the people; and I also believe that it could damage the course, you know it is in a beautiful course which actually does add income to our coffers, and I would hate to see that ruin; but if it is a small town event that is not a problem; and I am sure we could pull it out at the Youth Center, or at the Fred B. Hartnett Park, something like that, but I am not for the Biltmore Fourth of July.

Mayor Slesnick: We have a couple of speakers that have signed up and as it has been our tradition today, this was not a public hearing, but I would like to give them that opportunity. Let me also before we do that say a couple of things too. Just, number one, is that my family and I love the Fourth of July at the Biltmore with the fireworks, for those people though who think this is a tradition that goes back ions, it does not.

City Manager Brown: It is about ten years.

Mayor Slesnick: About ten years, so understand that we are not cancelling something that Merrick started, if we do cancel it, that has not been decided yet. I love it, my family loves it, but I do have concern. I have deep about budget, and I have deep concerns about the golf course. I also have deep concerns about cancelling it or changing it. The word cancels may be to drastic, and I get things, well let me before I read this letter, I will tell you that there was an orchestrated e-mail campaign to blister this commission with e-mails, set forth by one person in the city that said some very tainted and inflammatory kinds of remarks, that had I not know anything about this and had read his e-mails I would have sent a strong e-mail to me telling me that I was a jerk too, that e-mail and by the way, it is my understanding that he has access to thousands of e-mails in our City, or I believe it is thousands I got a total, I counted them last night, I got a lot e-mails, I got 49. I got 49 e-mails.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That is a lot.

Mayor Slesnick: It is a lot of e-mails, but it is not, we have 45,000 residents, I got 49 e-mails, of which several were supported of the decision not to have it most were against it. I responded to each and every one of them, and in each and every case people would respond back that they appreciate and understand the situation better and they were not as irritated, but they still wanted the fireworks, I had several people respond that having thought about all of the information on the table, that they then had change their mind, so it was a mix bags, but mostly supportive of keeping the fireworks, but because I knew where the e-mails came from, that didn't affect me as much as this letter. I got a letter from a young girl who is a school student, "Dear Mayor Slesnick, my name is Grace, and I am seven years old. I would like the fireworks at the Biltmore. It is a tradition in my family. We go with all of our friends, and it is the only time our community comes together", which I think there are other times by the way, as I have stated, "I studied the American Revolution this year; and I learned how important the Fourth of July is when we celebrate our freedom, so please right back and let me know if I can help. Your friend Grace Lawhorn." Her grandfather is one of my golf partners, so it is especially meaningful to me, and that is the thing that really makes our decision hard and hurtful, because I feel that way and probably my daughter would have written the same letter to me, but I want everyone to know upfront that the decision that I will help make is based on I think a lot of factors, and certainly the one thing I would say in return to Grace, and by the way I will, I waited to write back to her

until we made this decision, but that it maybe the only time some people use to get together but our community offers literally tens and tens of times over the year to get together and many people take advantage of that; and I love getting together with our community and it is very important to me too.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Could I ask some questions, Commissioner Anderson expressed her views on the situation; and I appreciate that, but before I come to a conclusion on mine, I would like to ask the City Manager and of course I want to hear what the people have to say that are here to talk about it; but a couple things Mr. City Manager; first of all in the budget you put in money, how much money did you have in the budget right now for this?

City Manager Brown: The \$98,000 is covered.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Alright, \$98,000. Alright, that is the 2007-2008 Budget, in the 2006-2007 Budget, how much did we have budgeted? Did we budget?

City Manager Brown: I don't have all those figures because I couldn't come up with the overtime of 07-08.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But we did budget?

City Manager Brown: We did budget. The answer to your question is the difference between the '06 and the '08 Budget is the \$55,000, it is going to cost to protect those traps, protect those tees.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But we did budget and we didn't spent last year

City Manager Brown: We budgeted and spent as if we were protecting the course, because it was going under renovation. Now that the course has been redone, it is estimated that it would take \$55,000 more.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No, I understand that.

City Manager Brown: That is the difference between the two budgets.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: The year before we budgeted for this?

City Manager Brown: Yes, sir.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: We didn't end up spending because we put the course under renovations. Is that correct?

City Manager Brown: Correct.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Alright, the other issue, did we look at any alternatives?-other than, I know we looked around, other than this one in the Youth Center, but did you look at possible shooting off or having, or shoveling everybody, not shoveling that is not the right word, bringing everybody to maybe the driving range or any other mechanism that maybe the would have some opportunity to view fireworks on golf course but in such a mass that was, that we have seen before.

City Manager Brown: We didn't consider sectioning off the golf course, because the entire surrounding area, we wouldn't be able to stop people from coming and going off Bird Road, Mariola Court, Granada Boulevard, Alhambra.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So you don't think you can control it?

City Manager Brown: We don't think we can control it.

Mayor Slesnick: Bill, about the course though...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No, I understand, I have mixed feelings about this to be honest with you, because nobody has played golf more than I have on that golf course, I can assure you of that.

Commissioner Anderson: [inaudible]

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Nobody has played golf on that golf course more than I played on that golf course.

Commissioner Withers: Well Maria, Maria plays there.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Now, on the past year, I am sure she has, yes for sure. So I understand that.

Commissioner Withers: In fact she is finding all of your golf balls.

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: You are probably right, you know having said that, this is a tradition that I really don't, let me preface, I don't really care about sitting on the Biltmore veranda looking over it, this is more for our residents, and I don't buy the thought that not necessarily a lot of people from the City of Coral Gables do not go to the Fourth of July. Certainly there are other people from other municipalities, but that is OK, that is the American spirit, but there are a lot of residents that do take their kids by their hands and take them to the Biltmore Golf Course; and I was just making sure that the City Manager had looked at all possible alternatives. For instance, I know that in Miami Shores, Miami Shores shoots off fireworks at the golf course and they bring people into an area that they sort off courteterd off the golf course; and they are able to control the situation; and I need some assurances that you took a good look at all that, and possibly looked at downscaling the event and still shooting all the fireworks off and maybe not having all the kids games or whatever that goes along with the event in general; but more downscale the event, because it does mean a lot to our community.

Mayor Slesnick: Bill, before you answer that, do you think the impression I have gotten is that if you change the event you are not going to get the same satisfaction from the people you are trying to satisfy, if you take away the kids games and if you look at the golf course we fill out the entire, almost all of the driving range, almost all of the area to the east of that and back over to where you couldn't see anymore, so they had to stand this way, I mean, I don't know how you can put those people, and if you open it all of those people would show, I mean just say well the first 5,000 people can get in. I am not just saying, how are you going to control where you put those people.

City Manager Brown: I want to answer the Vice Mayor's question--there is only, and the Fire Marshall is in the audience, but there is only two places you can shoot fireworks in the City, maybe a third; but when you start to shoot fireworks you have to have the ability to have parking; and the underlying issue that we don't talk about in the memo very much is the parking that the Fourth of July utilizes is now gone with those homes across from the Biltmore. So if we were to try to make that shot this year and go ahead and spend the money, you are going to have cars infiltrating into the neighborhoods deep because of those lots.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But weren't we parking people and shuttling people from the....

Commissioner Withers: Youth Center.

City Manager Brown: The Youth Center, but there were a couple of hundred cars in those lots.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: A couple of hundred cars across the street?

City Manager Brown: Yes, now the other place where you can shoot and wish we had talked about and it is not our property, is the University of Miami Intramural Fields, but that is only a three inch shell and the same parking concerns come up because of the...

Commissioner Anderson: Liability.

City Manager Brown: Of the Homeowners Association and the liability we have to take on. What my recommendation was, and Fred and I talked for a long time is to start a new tradition and maybe the Youth Center is not the venue, maybe Ponce Circle Park is the area, but to start something that would build over years and we could use the infrastructure of the downtown. I have talked to Walt and any people that have mentioned shooting off of a building, but the only thing you can shoot off of a building are those things you use indoors which are the interior pyrotechnics, you can't shoot a three inch shell off of a building. You could do something later on at night, but it would be not the six inch shell that everybody is wanting to see at 9 o'clock on the Fourth of July.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I don't think you are going to get satisfaction on you are proposing.

Commissioner Anderson: One of the concerns besides what I have already said which I hold to, I have real concerns we are facing one of the toughest budget years ever, and we may have to lose people at some point, depending on what the state tells us what to do, and what I have told people in my e-mails, and I meant it very sincerely how do we have the moral high ground to have a big party like that and then maybe the people who are going to be setting up, maybe some of the same people would get laid off. To me it is

more then just about that, if we could start a new tradition that is great, but it shouldn't be excessive like it is now, and it has become too much to do that. I think there are people that we have to consider that are out there that are working for us that may not be with us at some point; so I take that deeply into consideration, it is not about not being patriotic or anything like that. It is truly, it takes everything into consideration for me.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And I appreciate that, but shame on us, because we sat here a year and-a-half ago and said you know what, we are going to do the Fourth of July.

Commissioner Anderson: But you know what we had a mandate.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I know that is the issue.

City Manager Brown: Vice Mayor I wrote that statement, and I made that statement, but times have changed.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I know, I listened to it.

Commissioner Anderson: We had a mandate from the State, and we have to follow that mandate. Chip you wrote that very nicely in your e-mail was that the citizens have vote and they have a right for us to prioritize what we spend it on and I think what we have to spend it on is services. Police, Fire, this that and the other, and as you said special events are at the last bottom of the barrel, if we could salvage some we make them less expensive and still provide some type of service especially to our younger community that is fine. I don't have any problem with that, but I think the day of the overly large events for me is kind of the country club, the age of the old membership is long gone, and we just have to repurpose and rethink and retheme what we do.

Mayor Slesnick: Well, before we go any further deeply into our decision making, let's hear, we have three citizens that asked to speak, and Bill Schiff is the first 246 Candia. Bill?

Bill Schiff: Thank you, I think most of you know who I am I have live in Coral Gables for 55 years right now I sit on the Senior Citizens Board, and we sponsored a **cheap** program last year.

Commissioner Anderson: That is right.

Bill Schiff: For seniors which was very successful, but I think changing the Biltmore this year is not following your own word. Now I wrote not part of the e-mail. I am here on my own, I don't get nasty with people, and I wish Commissioner Cabrera was here, but I understand he had a family emergency and had to leave because I think he agrees, or I agree with him, or he agrees with me, I don't know which it is, but this budgeting and even though you are going to face hard times in the next year, this is still part of this years budget. So I think you ought to live up to your word.

City Manager Brown: Two-thirds is part of the budget.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: You can apply last year's to this too.

City Manager Brown: No, that is gone.

Bill Schiff: You are assuming that there may be certain expenses which you may not have that. The second thing is you are depriving the citizens, the citizens who pay the taxes which helps support that golf course, the right to use the golf course, even though they don't play golf.

Mayor Slesnick: But Bill we do things for a purpose, we built the golf course to play golf, not to trample on, we own the Miracle Theater to have shows in not to have...

Bill Schiff: But the golf course isn't going to be destroyed. There is obviously going to be a lot of clean up, you see that every year. So if you want to make the change that Commissioner Anderson is talking about next year that is fine, but you budgeted through this year. I think you should follow through with the word the citizens after taking it away last year, and that was understandable because you had to rebuild the course, but then you promise by your vote to have it this year, and now you are starting to back off, and I don't think that sits well with the electorate. That is something that you as a politician have to consider. So think about it and see if you can see it my way and keep the thing. Thank you

Commissioner Anderson: Thanks, I also wish the vote had been different in January.

Mayor Slesnick: Ian Martinez 418 Vilabella.

Ian Martinez: Hi, good afternoon, Mr. Mayor. I want to address the fact that young families use the Biltmore Fourth of July festivities to enjoy our nation's history and tradition of celebrating independence. And it just strikes me that we are going to be so cavalier and get rid of a tradition even though, albeit is only ten years old, and echoing Commissioner Kerdyk's words, the word was given last year that we would have it this year; and it just upsets me as a constituent and as a resident that, that word is not being honored. Secondly, I mean, we... I understand if we don't have our next... It has always been my understanding we pay exorbitant taxes for a young family to live inside the City, but I understand if we could get, I don't know if an RFP (Request For Proposal) has gone out to get perhaps, corporate sponsorship for next year.

City Manager Brown: We could do that.

Ian Martinez: I am not aware of it, but if we could get corporate sponsorship for next year to underride...

City Manager Brown: They... Corporate sponsorship provides seventeen thousand five hundred dollars (\$17,500.00) of the one hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars (\$155,000.00).

Mayor Slesnick: In other words, we already do corporate... I mean that's how much we raise, it's...

City Manager Brown: For the fireworks.

Ian Martinez: Okay, I mean, and I have read and I have kept abreast of the arguments going back and forth. One of the things is, that's been ... having it at Ponce Circle or at the Youth Center ... the fireworks, and this is like almost having the Boston Fireworks without the Boston Pops. I just don't understand how you could have fireworks on... not have fireworks on the Fourth of July. I mean, it's almost like a non...

Mayor Slesnick: Yeah, I mean, let's discuss this a minute here.

Ian Martinez: And I... the Fire Marshall, he was here, but...

Mayor Slesnick: Okay. He just walked in.

Ian Martinez: Yeah. I want to hear his comments where we could throw the fireworks, if you do decide... Commissioners.

Mayor Slesnick: Well yeah, I mean, let's talk about a couple of things. One is, is that we talk about our children and certainly a day time event that... You know, Key Biscayne has a parade every year, it's in the middle of the day and it's wonderful event. It's a wonderful event. The families love it, the children love it, and so for... it doesn't require to have fireworks to have a great Fourth of July Celebration.

Unidentified Speaker: But they have it at night.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: But they have it at night.

Mayor Slesnick: They have later at night, it's just jointed from the parade though, it solves two separate types of things. I mean...

City Manager Brown: Yeah.

Mayor Slesnick: So, the parade is a daytime event that everyone loves, it doesn't mean any less to the Fourth of July that you don't have fireworks; and secondly, there are lots of choices to be made about seeing fireworks in this general area; so it's not as if this is the only fireworks you can take your kids to. I mean, I am not trying to say that you are wrong, I am right. I am just saying, I think we should put it all on the table, and then we will sift through it.

Ian Martinez: The problem, the problem is, I am not a resident Key Biscayne, Miami Shores and Miami Springs, I am a resident of Coral Gables...

Mayor Slesnick: Well...

Ian Martinez: And I want to have and enjoy my City, and I understand the ...

Mayor Slesnick: You are a resident of Dade County; Dade County does the fireworks...

Commissioner Anderson: That's not a, that's not a...

Ian Martinez: Well, and that's, that's another comment I want to make which is, there is this exclusivity as to the event which is... the comment was made and appeared in the paper that other communities enjoy the benefit. And I think that argument is not founded in that, yes, the residents do enjoy it, and I am happy that other residents and non-residents come to our City, and I would encourage it, that's the founding principle of this country on the Fourth of July. If all the thirteen colonies would have gone their separate ways we wouldn't be a country right now, and that's what, that's actually what annoyed me the most was, we'll cater to the residents of Coral Gables, but we actually want Miami really to come in like that (phonetic). Well...

Mayor Slesnick: Well, let me say this. Again, this is our first chance to talk this out. I didn't make the comment, I presume I know who did, but the fact of the matter is, is I don't think it should have been taken like that. We have always opened, our Farmers Market is opened to the entire world; our Junior Orange Bowl Parade is opened to the entire world; our Fourth of July is opened to the entire world.

Commissioner Anderson: Holiday in the Park.

Mayor Slesnick: Holiday in the Park is opened to the entire world. I think that the point that was trying to be made... Well, let me do this, I don't care what the point was trying to be made, I'll make my point about it. I think that we need to consider in budgeting that we need to give the greatest "bang for the buck" to our residents first and foremost.

Ian Martinez: And, I wouldn't disagree with you.

Mayor Slesnick: Okay, that's...I think that's the only legitimate point to be made here. We have never considered ourselves an exclusive society. Everything I go to in this... especially, Carnaval on the Mile; I mean there's Emeralds, St. Patrick's Day, John Martin's Day, I mean, I would venture to guess that the high percentage of all these people when the Biltmore had the wine festival people come from everywhere; and we welcome them with opened arms and warm feelings. In fact, right now we are working on a story for the American Airlines Magazine that's going to be featuring Coral

Gables. Why are we doing that? To bring people to Coral Gables, non-residents, and so...

Ian Martinez: And the event at Biltmore was one of the, one of the events that's highlighted in one of those travel magazines that I remember a couple of years ago.

Mayor Slesnick: Yeah, well... I don't know that there is heavy tourism to the Fourth of July because of the time of the year; and secondly, most of the rooms are rented out to the hotel guests, I mean to local guests that come in. So, you have got great points, and I just wanted you to understand that, and as you know, I felt badly that you felt that there is some subversive scheme or plan or lack of sincerity on the part of anyone who would think differently. I hope you understand that's not the case, and that the comment whether it was made for the right or wrong reasons, I can assure you that what I am saying I think I believe in, and that is, the only thing I care about is giving the biggest "bang" to the citizen, and then if we can it, welcome with opened arms everyone else we should, and do.

Ian Martinez: And I think the problem is the communication was from this board was to the citizens. Everybody I think understands that we are in dire, you know, study measures because of the budget. And I mean, I think that's conveyed especially young families in the City feel the pinch the hardest. However, that being said one of the reasons we chose to live in Coral Gables is because of the many tasked events that are held here and I think taking that away from the residents and putting us on Ponce Circle, not meaning any disrespect to that idea.--We have all been there for I think the Fourth, not the Fourth of July, but the Irish festivities. It gets crowded and that's only about four hundred people. I mean, I just don't see how we are going to get the five thousand, six thousand people that show up to the Biltmore into that Ponce Circle. I just... I don't see it. It won't, it won't happen. I mean unless they put them in...

Mayor Slesnick: The Biltmore is more like twenty thousand, it's not...

Ian Martinez: Yeah, twenty thousand, I mean.

Mayor Slesnick: Okay. Well wait, I will lose a Commissioner. So real quickly, do you want to say something?

Ian Martinez: My time is up. That's...

Mayor Slesnick: Well, yeah. Thank you.

Ian Martinez: Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: Richard Namon.

Mr. Richard Namon: Richard Namon, Coral Gables. 5555 Oakwood Lane. A number of issues really come up in this one, and it's hard for me to even know even where to begin. This is one of the greatest advertisements for the City of Coral Gables. You know, you talk about advertisements and publicity and this is certainly a major event that brings good feelings about Coral Gables. The concern of the Golf Course, I guess when I used to play golf, and I hit a golf ball into the sand trap; I don't know which feared the situation more me or the trap. I mean, golfers walk around golf courses with weapons in their hands called golf clubs, golfers dig davits. When it's been raining, golf balls plug in the greens leave damages and marks. It's grass, it grows back. The City of Coral Gables seems to be more worried about the golf course than the spirit of the Fourth of July. And, you say this is a budgetary item, it's all about the money. Yet, each year I see the pension fund deficit growing, it's up to at least one hundred and seventy million dollars (\$170,000,000) right now, but for fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) we can't possibly afford the Fourth of July that's been budgeted for... with the minus of that fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00). I don't know what good will happen with the monies that is saved by having this scaled down event; but there is an old phrase about only Englishmen and mad dogs go out in the noon day sun. All these events, if you have replaced by Ponce Park, are in the timely weather that we have here in South Florida. The Fourth of July, I can find most of you, if you are a little bit older especially, these places, the Youth Center and Ponce Park are not very good. That's why the Fourth of July event has been held in the evening, it's more civil at that time of the year. So, I don't see how you can have a noon day substitute for the Fourth of July. If anything is done, it would have to be otherwise, and I will ask Mr. Kerdyk, Jr., what his father would have said about closing down the fireworks for the Fourth of July. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I know what I want to say. It will be excitement.... (phonetic)

Mayor Slesnick: Do you have any desire in asking David to come back one more time to take a third look at something...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I think he should because I feel uncomfortable... Let me just say I feel uncomfortable canceling it this year. So, maybe we could ask Mr. Brown to come back again with one last look at what you can do.

City Manager Brown: At the Biltmore or in town or in the Gables?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Well, I would like to see it at the Biltmore, but you know... Let's put it this way, what you have planned is not sufficient for me. That, that to me is not a good alternative, but I am only one vote up here, so...

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Withers, I know you have gotten... something.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yeah, he wants...

Commissioner Withers: No, I mean, I...Listen and I stick with what I have said before, I... We just heard a presentation on the Country Club of Coral Gables, who knows how much money we are going to have to put out on that. I just think it's a very, very, and I am sorry Mr. Namon, I disagree with you. I mean, you know to some residents, fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) is a lot of money; and I just feel that if we have priorities in this City, and we need to hire police officers, we need to equip fire trucks or we need to do things that mean a little more to the residents as far as their health and safety goes than Fourth of July, I mean, I grew up watching fireworks on golf course my whole life in this City, and it hurts me because I have a couple of grand kids that love to watch fireworks. I am just going to make sure I find a place whether it's Key Biscayne, whether it's Palm Beach, whether its Boca Raton, whether it's Ft. Lauderdale, or whether it's Miami Shores. I'll make sure that I'll take my family to a place that watches fireworks. If it's not here, that's a little inconvenient for me, but I will find a place from them if I want to keep that family tradition going. So, I will be glad, I don't know how the City Manager feels about this, he's dug his heels in on this one, I think. Because he feels, you know, this is a way to save the City over one hundred thousand dollars, and that's just an estimate. If we have a lot of rain that day, from what I understand that the cost to repair the golf course could be even more.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That savings of one hundred thousand is not utilizing the budget.

Commissioner Withers: Well, yeah, but I am sure we are going to put the monies into reserves, I am sure we are going to put the money into the Country Club, I am sure we are going to put the budget somewhere else when it's done, you know. That's how I feel.

Mayor Slesnick: Okay, I would like to also respond. One thing that Mr. Namon said is, you are absolutely right, we have bigger fish to fry economically and budgetarily; and I hope that, you especially being an observer of the Commission know that we are working on those, that we are not writing those off. We are working on them sincerely and seriously as possible. David, I admit I agree with Commissioner Kerdyk that I don't think that the alternate game plan is of that much value. It has not been received that well by people who are critics of us, guessing. So, I think that we either do nothing or... You know, if there is some way that you came back to us with a ninety-eight thousand dollar (\$98,000.00) plan or something around the Biltmore for the fireworks.

City Manager Brown: Let me sit down with Fred and see...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's what I like. (phonetic)

Commissioner Withers: I think... Hammocks next year should be a possible venture. (phonetic)

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yeah.

Mayor Slesnick: The other thing I thought about. I have to say, I had a wild idea because it involves another thing which the same person who I do not appreciate has...

Commissioner Withers: Do you need me...?

Mayor Slesnick: No, go ahead.

Commissioner Withers: Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you. Sorry, Chip.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Have a good trip.

Mr. Namon: I will only say one thing, if it comes to be that, you know, there is no Fourth of July, five, what is it twenty thousand households in Coral Gables, displayable American flags that we can put out on the Fourth of July.

Commissioner Anderson: That is a very nice...

Mayor Slesnick: Well, let me tell you what I did last year too, Mr. Namon, and I can tell you other people. I refuse not to celebrate the Fourth of July last year and we cancelled it because of the construction. And so, I took your Coral Gables Mayor, me and my wife's car and signs and we went out and reached out, and talk about outreach, we participated in the Key Biscayne parade as the Mayor of Coral Gables and was well received. But, it made me, it made me anxious for not being here in the City and, but David... David, David here is an idea I had thought of that we are also being, we are concerned, we have expressed our concern, some of the things that have been said by certain persons e-mails have almost been a turnoff to me. I don't know why people think that sometimes what they want to say just kind of turns us off as opposed to encouraging us to think in the positive vibrations, if you will, but it's crime watch, and we know that Crime Watch is important to a lot of us, but we have a budget issue there, and that's fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) by the way. Fifty thousand makes Crime Watch whole for some time to come, and that's the fifty thousand that we are talking about here. I was wondering, what if we got Crime Watch to put together an army of vigilantes to guard the golf course and pay them the fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) that we would have paid otherwise to overtime, and that would continue Crime Watch, too. So...

Commissioner Anderson: I will be happy to help... I will be happy to support a crime watch budget for that... this whole thing.

Mayor Slesnick: Yeah. No, I know, I... and I am not, I am just saying... David, you know...

Commissioner Anderson: ... and they have a longer lasting neighborhood...

City Manager Brown: I am going to try. Let Mr. Couceyro and I sit down...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yeah.

City Manager Brown: ...out of the box and utilize the budget for seven different types of events that would be satisfactory to the Commission.

Mayor Slesnick: Alright, but I agree with Maria, and I have to say that I think we can make that case that if it comes down to spending extra money, I would rather see...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Crime Watch.

Mayor Slesnick: ...some money put into Crime Watch...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yeah.

Mayor Slesnick: ...and then to abandon that for twenty minutes of fireworks. Because twenty minutes of fireworks is very impressive to me, but Crime Watch serves a year long...

Commissioner Anderson: Day to day, twenty-four seven.

Mayor Slesnick: ...day to day, yeah.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And you know, that would be good going forward. Next year's budget, that would be good. This has already been addressed in this year's budget here, but certainly for next year Crime Watch I will probably see supplemented.

Mayor Slesnick: No, this year, they are out of money. They are broke, I am told. That may or may not be true, but they are broke.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Anyway, you got the assignment.

City Manager Brown: Alright, here is just another good example. Each one of you have individually told me, what are you going to do about Fire Station 2? That's fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00), and it wasn't budgeted because we cut it because of the budget cutbacks; and I am trying

to find that fifty thousand dollars because I have got to paint that thing, and it's terrible.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Right.

City Manager Brown: So, there's the fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00).

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Alright, let's... you have got the idea.

City Manager Brown: But, I'll get back to you.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Alright.

Mayor Slesnick: Well, let me say this. Does anybody here think we should spend the fifty thousand extra?

Commissioner Anderson: I am sorry.

Mayor Slesnick: Does anybody here really feel we should spend the extra fifty thousand dollars on this? That's the first question to ask.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Well, I would like to see a more extensive program than what was...

Mayor Slesnick: Well David, but I don't. Maria doesn't.

City Manager Brown: I understand

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: [inaudible – spoken off microphone]

Mayor Slesnick: Chip doesn't. So that... So...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: We have got three votes.

Mayor Slesnick: ... the fifty thousand is off the table...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Alright.

Mayor Slesnick: ... because we do need other things.

City Manager Brown: And, I intend to use...Whatever we spend on Fourth of July, and we will use the current budget, whatever we spend I am going to put toward Fire Station 2, or Crime Watch or what... whatever the pressing need is.

Mayor Slesnick: And I think people should understand we don't save the money for our own bank accounts, it goes to something else that's needed.

City Manager Brown: It just goes to the list of priorities that didn't get funded.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Right, but it's hard for me to believe... You know, we're just belaboring a point, but let me just say one last comment as far as... I mean we have a one hundred and thirty million dollar budget and we coming down to fifty thousand here and fifty thousand there. I mean, we have scheduled this for the fireworks display, and certainly yeah, we can always say that, you are right. You are one hundred percent right, but there is no reason to just sit here and keep on beating a dead horse so to speak.

City Manager Brown: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So, let's just see what we can do.

Mayor Slesnick: That was still brief?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Barely.

Mayor Slesnick: I would like to inform everyone that our latest word is that Commissioner Cabrera's father has been transported to the hospital, but he is in stable condition.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's more important.

Mayor Slesnick: And, at the moment Commissioner Cabrera says he doesn't need anything, his family is on the way to the hospital and his father is in stable condition, so our prayers go out to the Cabrera family and to his father especially and...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Good, right.