

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-7
September 13, 2022
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 (On Zoom)

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Leonard Roberts

Gregory Hamra

Jamie Sheehan

Agenda Item G-7 [11:18 a.m.]

Discussion and update regarding opening of Villa Valencia small dog park, Catalonia/Anderson pocket park and projected opening dates for Salvadore and Ponce/Mendoza dog parks.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)

Mayor Lago: Item G-7.

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Agenda Item G-7 - Discussion and update regarding opening of Villa Valencia small dog park, Catalonia/Anderson pocket park and projected opening dates for Salvadore and Ponce/Mendoza dog parks.

Commissioner Anderson: G-7. I wanted to give you all an update on some of the dog park issues in the City. When staff has it ready, I've brought in some pictures of the Villa Valencia Dog Park that's recently opened that takes care of some of the smaller dogs, I'd say probably 20 pounds or less type dog would be suitable in this park. It's open to the public. It's an amenity at the -- and part of the development agreement that exists at Villa Valencia. So, this helps solve some of the problems that we're having at Catalonia Park. I think the remaining issue in order to be able to redirect traffic for some of these little dogs is just, you know, informing people. The same way they got informed about Catalonia Park, it was mainly word of mouth. We can word of mouth, you know, between the NSAs and other dog owners to redirect some of that traffic. The other issues that we have is we have a timeline available now for the Ponce Park -- or I should say the 1505 Ponce project. And Miriam Ramos has been working closely with the developers on that and can provide us an update on the timeline on that one, and then I'll follow up with the last park, which would be Salvadore with the City Manager. So, if you could take the...

City Attorney Ramos: Of course, Commissioner.

Commissioner Anderson: Helm here since you've been working on this as of this morning.

City Attorney Ramos: Sure. So, they have agreed to put in the improvements necessary in that portion of the park that we've designated to be a dog park at no cost to the City, and they will be providing us with a licensing agreement for the use of that area. And they think that the projected date for those improvements to be completed is the end of this year, so December or so. And once they start building and they need the area back, then we'll talk about when they need us to be out of there. But for the time being, it will allow us to use that area as a dog park that's been improved by them.

Commissioner Anderson: And that's roughly a complete lot, so it's suitable for the large dogs. So, we're just talking about a few months down the road to be able to provide that pressure relief there for the large dogs in the neighborhoods.

Vice Mayor Mena: How long --? Is there an anticipated timeline for how long it would be open? In other words, if it's...

City Attorney Ramos: I can find out. I can...

Commissioner Anderson: We have...

City Attorney Ramos: Oh, Leonard's here. That's right.

Commissioner Anderson: We have the individual behind...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, if it's...

Commissioner Anderson: The dog park here.

Vice Mayor Mena: If it's more or less end of the year completed, and then, obviously, whenever you start your project, it's going to come offline, so like what are we...

Leonard Roberts: Exactly, yes. Leonard Roberts, offices at 299 Alhambra Circle, with Location Ventures. We represent -- I represent -- or with the developer Location Ventures. We -- our anticipated timeline -- we're still doing -- going through the process of getting everything together and we're anticipating roughly a year, a year and a half or so for all that to be completed before we actually break ground.

Vice Mayor Mena: From now.

Mr. Roberts: Yeah. Well, call it from October 1st.

Vice Mayor Mena: A year, year and a half from October 1st, okay.

Commissioner Anderson: So, yeah, we can get a good...

City Attorney Ramos: You'll have it at least a year, I think.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, most likely. Okay, okay.

Commissioner Anderson: So...

Vice Mayor Mena: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: That'll fill that need pretty quickly. And last but not least, we have an update from the City Manager on...

City Manager Iglesias: And if I can ask...

Commissioner Anderson: Salvadore Park.

City Manager Iglesias: If I can ask at that time, that lot will be used as a staging area?

Mr. Roberts: Correct.

City Manager Iglesias: Okay. So, once the construction starts, that lot will be a staging area for the construction operations until...

Vice Mayor Mena: So, my understanding is once construction starts, the dog park is coming offline, right?

City Manager Iglesias: The dog park is gone.

Mr. Roberts: And then once we're completed, we have a permanent dog park will be in its replacement.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

City Manager Iglesias: So, you'll be on, then construction off, and then come back on again.

Vice Mayor Mena: Got it.

Commissioner Anderson: Right. And that dog park will be just like the one at Villa Valencia that is open to the public...

Mr. Roberts: Exactly.

Commissioner Anderson: A public amenity that the building is providing, maintaining...

Mr. Roberts: Absolutely, yep.

Commissioner Anderson: Et cetera.

Mr. Roberts: Absolutely.

City Manager Iglesias: And Commissioner, Salvadore Park, in discussion with our Public Works Director, we've got about two weeks' work of revisions and changes. We've gone through, as you know, through various iterations. That -- after that -- after two weeks, it will go back to -- for permitting, but during that time, we will provide it to Procurement for a contractor process. We're going to use our continuing services contractors. That takes about a month of two bid and then analysis of the bids, and awarding, making sure the insurances are in, and et cetera, et cetera. That takes about another month, so we're looking at probably two and a half months to start construction, somewhere in that area. Once we start construction, the problem is obtaining materials, which is something which is out of our control so...

Commissioner Anderson: Alright, so we should be...

City Manager Iglesias: We're looking at...

Commissioner Anderson: Breaking ground by December or less?

City Manager Iglesias: We're looking at awarding the bid -- yes. We should look at awarding the bid in the next probably two and a half months. And then the question becomes how -- obtaining materials, which is a big issue right now. We have the aluminum fans, we've got catch basins. We've got some issues like that that could delay -- that could be a delay, and that's something that -- but that's out of our control. As long as we -- we can award the bid and get moving on that. But I do think the iterations were worthwhile and I think we've come up with a very nice dog park.

Commissioner Anderson: I just want to add, there's been a robust discussion with the neighbors. We're preserving the existing trees that were on the swale area. We've moved the sidewalk away from the street so it's safer for children going through there and providing some nice amenities in the park as well, additional shade with some trees along the way, so it's going to be quite a nice park.

Public Works Director Diaz: Absolutely, and the Manager couldn't have said it any better, so I don't really have anything else to add, but that's the plan.

Commissioner Anderson: One last thing I have to add is some of the drainage issues were pre-existing, so we're solving a problem that already existed during the same...

City Manager Iglesias: We're also correcting those issues.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Commissioner Anderson: (INAUDIBLE).

Public Works Director Diaz: That is part of what we're doing.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay, so thank you.

Public Works Director Diaz: Alright.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you all for your hard work.

Public Works Director Diaz: Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Before you move on, we do have a member of this public who wanted to make a comment on this, Gregory Hamra.

Mayor Lago: Sir, the floor is yours.

Gregory Hamra: Hi. Can you hear me now?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mr. Hamra: Okay, great. I was having trouble unmuting. I thought -- okay, so we're up to G-8 now already?

Mayor Lago: No, not yet. Not yet, that's next.

Commissioner Anderson: But you're ready. I know you are.

Mayor Lago: Alright. So, let's take a step -- let's take a step back. Let me finish up with G-7 and move on to G-8, okay.

Commissioner Anderson: So...

Mr. Hamra: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: On G-7, I'm going to ask the Commission to consider whether or not we really need to put a temporary fence and whether the public -- you know, the neighbors across the street there who I've been receiving numerous emails from, and probably you have as well, want that temporary fence in at Catalonia Park because on a -- based upon the timeline that we're looking at right now for the delivery on these additional parks, one, I don't think it's necessary. And number two, there's already an existing park online that we can start directing folks to.

Mayor Lago: I think...

Commissioner Anderson: Your thoughts, folks?

Mayor Lago: No, listen, I'd like to hear from Commissioner Menendez. I think that he was the individual on the Commission that proffered that potential temporary park in Catalonia.

Public Works Director Diaz: And if I may, we're literally in the -- about to get a PO on this, so we need to...

Commissioner Anderson: We need to make a move now.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Before we...

Commissioner Menendez: I...

Commissioner Anderson: Spend \$13,000.

Commissioner Menendez: I -- thank you, Mayor. I've also received emails from residents that live next to Catalonia, and they're the ones who have to call in to the City to let them know that there are dogs unleashed. And we've seen the videos. We've seen it firsthand. And though I think it's a great move to have a dog park or -- at Villa Valencia, we have to understand that the folks that have their dogs running without a leash are basically flaunting our own City code, the signage that's there. And I honestly believe that, you know, we need to separate at least at Catalonia unless Commissioner Anderson's suggesting Catalonia as a dog-free park. For the safety of the kids, I can't take a chance that folks who let their dogs run free in violation of our own code will actually go to the other park. As long as they continue at Catalonia, the kids' safety

is at risk and that's the whole purpose behind it. And I understand that perhaps people didn't understand what the fencing was. They think the whole park is going to be a dog park. We're talking about a small portion to let it be dog only so that the kids can play, and we're talking mostly toddlers. And people go, "There aren't that many kids lately." Well, it's summer. People have been vacationing, and it's a hundred degrees outside. But as soon as the weather cools off a little, and now that the kids are back to school, we're going to have a lot of toddlers there, a lot of kids with parents and grandparents. And I don't want -- and we had a parent approach us a few Commission meetings ago that he was walking on the sidewalk outside of the park, and I remember it was one or two or three large dogs ran at the gate, coming at him and his little boy. I personally cannot take a chance of having even one (INAUDIBLE) be put at risk because people disregard our rules, our laws, and are inconsiderate of the lives of the people around them. So, though I think it's great that we have a park at Villa Valencia, (INAUDIBLE) gets hurt at Catalonia, I personally don't know how I'll live with myself. So, that's why, to me, it's just a no-brainer. As Hermes says, they're about to get started. It's , you know, \$13,000, whatever it is. What's the cost of the safety and health of a child? To me, heck, I'll pay it out of my pocket if I have to.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay, so let me respond to that. I've seen dogs at the Youth Center. I've seen the dogs at other parks throughout the City, so if this is going to be the uniform rule for every pocket park that we have, we're going to have to have a sub-park, you know, squeezing down the amount of space and open space that we have available at every single park along the way. Now, we have laws that forbid people from having dogs off lease, and I see people walking by my house every day with their dogs off leash. It doesn't make no difference whether it's Catalonia Park, the streets, the Youth Center, Jaycee Park. People -- there are people out there that are not going to follow the law. We need to enforce it. It's a simple matter of enforcing it. And most of the people that I know respect the law. And once it was communicated that that is no longer an off-leash park, they stopped bringing their dogs there and letting them off leash. They'll walk through there with them, you know, to get some water on a leash because there's a dog watering station there and it's hot, so if you're out for a jog, it's a nice place to stop to get them some water and then keep moving on. But it's a matter of enforcement. It's a matter of

notice. It's a matter of signage and communication with the residents in the neighborhood. Every single resident that emailed me regarding this matter, voiced their opinion, whether it's the next door neighbor, et cetera. They don't want that partitioned off. It restricts the amount of play space. So, I think at some point we need to listen to the residents. And if we're going to be partitioning parks off at Catalonia, then we're going to have to do it to all the parks.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think you make some fair point...

Commissioner Menendez: I...

Vice Mayor Mena: I think you make some fair points. The only thing is when we actually discussed and voted to do that, we had residents here who were for it also. We had a whole meeting and discussion on that specific park. I don't recall if you voted for it or against it.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, the encounter I recall being relayed was dogs outside of the park.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no, but we had a specific discussion, engaged staff direction to put up a fence. We even came back and talked about the type of fence.

Commissioner Fors: Right, chain link fence, screening.

Vice Mayor Mena: We've had multiple meetings about this specific park at this point. Again, I don't remember if you've voted in favor of it at the time or not. I...

Commissioner Anderson: No.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't know.

Commissioner Anderson: No. I had so many emails, and I still have emails about this.

Commissioner Fors: My general impression and recollection of that meeting was -- and I don't remember the details specifically -- but I felt looking back on it, like the fence had been a compromise, I guess, or a striking of balance between the different people we heard from that day. That's how I look back on the fence. That's why I'm a little hesitant to remove it. And I feel like if we do, then you are going to hear from all those people who were appeased that day by that middle ground.

Commissioner Anderson: I've not heard from one resident living across the street, want to take their children there that want the fence. Not a single one said, "Yay, we're finally getting a fence."

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, but you were here when all the residents who were -- who wanted it were -- spoke. I mean, we could pull up the meeting if you want, but we had a whole meeting.

Commissioner Anderson: No, that's not...

Vice Mayor Mena: I just want to be...

Commissioner Anderson: (INAUDIBLE)...

Vice Mayor Mena: I just want to be careful with absolutes. Like there are residents who wanted the fence that we had a whole...

Commissioner Anderson: (INAUDIBLE) wants the fence...

Vice Mayor Mena: Discussion about.

Commissioner Anderson: Was not the answer, want the dogs out is what they wanted. They didn't say, "Hey, let's partition the park." I mean, I...

Vice Mayor Mena: That was the -- that was the compromise reached that day after discussion with dozens of residents here. I -- you know, that's...

Commissioner Anderson: I know.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm not against -- I'm not disagreeing with sort of the substantive points you're making about the park, I'm just -- I'm concerned because we had a meeting. There were residents here and we reached a compromise. Nobody liked the compromise. It was a compromise. So, if we're going to pull back on it, I feel like we need to sort of give people notice, and you know, there's...

Commissioner Anderson: I...

Vice Mayor Mena: A lot of people who think this is coming.

Public Works Director Diaz: Not only that, I will have to put a hold on everything because...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Public Works Director Diaz: At the moment the contractors are buying material and (INAUDIBLE)...

Vice Mayor Mena: I know. I understand, right, right.

Commissioner Anderson: I think -- my -- and City Manager, you can correct me if I'm wrong. I said we need the input of the residents that live there. The only thing they received was the direction we're going to be putting this in.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, that's not true.

Commissioner Anderson: We didn't...

Vice Mayor Mena: That's not true. They were here.

Commissioner Anderson: You know...

Vice Mayor Mena: They were here at the meeting.

Commissioner Anderson: No.

Vice Mayor Mena: The gentleman who lived across the street said he looked out the window and he would see the dog -- there were several neighbors here that day who were against dogs at the park...

Commissioner Anderson: That's...

Vice Mayor Mena: And there was...

Commissioner Anderson: That's true. They were...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: Against dogs at the park.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right. And there were...

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: Several neighbors here that day who were for dogs at the park, and that's how we reached the sort of...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It was a -- it was two subsequent meetings. It was ones that were...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Against the dogs at the park, so we decided we'd enforce it, and we had active enforcement.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And then what happened is we had all the dog owners that have been subject to that enforcement and were upset about it.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And so, there was two different meetings, and that's where the discussion started on what it is. But I think...

Vice Mayor Mena: And then a third and a fourth, I think, about the type of fence that was going to go up.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, yes. There was designs too. You know, I think both Commissioners have a point. I think if you're going to not put the section up, then you shouldn't have dogs in there at all, and it shouldn't be...

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Dog friendly. Because what's happening is, I think there's a habit there that because it's barricaded, it's kind of a safe area for them to unleash their dogs. So, if you have dogs going in there, I agree with the Commissioner, they're going to continue to unleash their dogs. If you want to have a specific area where you can have unleashed dogs in there, then that's when the section comes in. So, those are -- they're -- there's -- you both make good points.

Commissioner Anderson: No, I mean, all our other parks, we either have them with dogs or without dogs or leashed dogs, okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Commissioner Anderson: It's not impossible to take a dog in on a leash Salvadore Park because I've seen people do it.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: They do.

Commissioner Anderson: And it's...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well...

Commissioner Anderson: But they have to be on a leash.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: There's -- and there's a few parks that we don't allow dogs at all because of the heavy...

Commissioner Anderson: The wear and tear.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: So, number one, I think it's communication. I don't think it's an appropriate park for dogs, period, because you have the rocks in the way, and they run into them, and they get hurt. But the rocks are also a problem for children. So, I think we need clear direction with staff, but I also don't see the need to waste money. And when it comes around to spending money on something we don't need to, there's not a strong need here. If we're going to be using the same logic, then we're going to have to install them in all the parks because there's always that risk that somebody is going to come in there and unleash their dog just like they unleash their dog walking on my sidewalk, okay. And there's always that chance you're going to have a percentage of people that are not going to follow the law. So, I'm not into wasting money, so that's why I wanted to bring this item back. We have some alternatives coming down the pike. We have one in place right now. I know that one of the residents that was routinely coming there every day because she needed to see her little doggy run around really just needs to be redirected where to go. Once that communication is done, that's one dog that's not going to be coming back, and then we just move down the line. So...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: If I'm not mistaken -- and I know the Commissioner's on -- Commissioner Menendez is on Zoom -- but I think his alternative would be, if you don't have the pinned in area, that it is a "no dogs allowed" park.

Commissioner Anderson: Correct.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Am I correct, Commissioner?

Commissioner Menendez: That's correct. If Commissioner Anderson is supportive of that, I'd be more than -- you know, have that discussion with our colleagues. At the end of the day, it's safety, and I agree with Commissioner Anderson, none of us want to spend money, but we know people violate the law. And just like people speed through our cities, and yet we spend money on traffic circles. So, to me, this is the equivalent of a traffic circle. Let's see if we can make the park -- that park -- and by the way, at the Youth Center, you're not even allowed to have a dog on the Youth Center field. The sign says it. But the difference between the Youth Center field and Catalonia is Catalonia is the size -- is much smaller and you have the kids and the dogs all -- and we've seen the video -- on top of each other. At the Youth Center, it's a 100-plus yard field. So, if Commissioner Anderson is comfortable with making it -- you know, having the Villa Valencia be the dog park and Catalonia be the kids' park, that's something I'd be more than happy to discuss. But at the end of the day, I don't mind spending some dollars if it means making at least -- you know, making the kids safe until Salvadore comes online.

Vice Mayor Mena: What's the distance...?

Commissioner Menendez: So, I'm open, but safety first.

Vice Mayor Mena: What's the distance between Villa Valencia and Catalonia?

Commissioner Anderson: Blocks, four or five blocks. That's it. You know, it's within...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: You have to cross Segovia.

Commissioner Anderson: Walking distance of my home, you know. And I used to take my dog there too. Before the sign went up, they let us know that it was not supposed to be any dogs in there. Because during COVID, it was a nice place to meet people up. So, the neighborhood has sent us -- and I passed it on through the Manager, and I'm going to ask the Manager to share with

you -- that the neighborhood would like some play -- a swing set in there. I'd rather see the money go to a swing set.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's not going to be enough.

Commissioner Anderson: Huh?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: No, I know, but...

Mayor Lago: We've discussed this for years.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, well, you've been purchasing swing sets more recently than I did. I used to get mine at Sears so -- just to give you an idea.

Mayor Lago: So, what is the will of the Commission? What are we --? What direction are we heading in? Is there some consensus in regards to making the park a no dog park?

Commissioner Anderson: I would say that would be the clearest design, other than the doggy water station. You can walk in leashed and let them drink. Or how else are we going to let them --? Yeah, why do we have a doggy water station in there if it's not going to be friendly to dogs?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We didn't design -- I mean, we -- I don't know.

Commissioner Anderson: I guess hindsight...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I don't remember now. I'm sure there was a discussion on it and why we did it.

Commissioner Anderson: Maybe we can use that one over at Salvadore Park.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, we do -- we started to put those in in certain areas so...

Commissioner Anderson: So, you can swap that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It might have just been a design that we hadn't gotten to yet.

Mayor Lago: Well, I mean, hopefully -- again, you hope that you can offer that amenity to a resident or a visitor who's following the rules, who has their dog on a leash.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Mayor Lago: When they don't have their dog on a leash, obviously, it becomes a free for all. So, what is the will of the Commission, so we can move on to the next item in regards to --? I want to give respect to Commissioner Menendez because, obviously, he's the one that brought up Catalonia. He's the one that's been shepherding this through the process so, Commissioner.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm comfortable going forward with the fencing unless we, as a body, agree -- are willing to go down the path that Commissioner Anderson's suggesting, making it only for kids, Catalonia. Those are the two options.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: So, we had a process adding the fencing for the safety of the kids, but if the Administration's comfortable with it and all of us, as a Commission, we're comfortable with

what Commissioner Anderson is suggesting, a kids only park, then I'm open to that as well. So, what's -- I'm interested to see what are the thoughts of all of us in terms of making it only for kids, considering Villa Valencia is a few blocks away.

Mayor Lago: Listen, I don't have an issue making it only for kids. It'll save the City money. Obviously, we were debating that before about need for infrastructure. We have a dog park, you said three blocks away?

Commissioner Anderson: It's -- the distance between Catalonia and Valencia.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: You're talking three or four blocks.

Mayor Lago: Three or four blocks. So, if that's the route and the will of the Commission, I think that we should try out to see, moving forward, how this dog park works and see if we need to have additional overflow or an additional -- more redundancy in regards to dog parks.

Commissioner Menendez: Commissioner Anderson, if you want to make the motion on that, I'll second it.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: And then I'll second it.

Commissioner Anderson: I think having dog waste in a kids' only park is not a good thing.

Vice Mayor Mena: I mean, my only reservation is I'd like to look at what we said when we approved the fence.

Commissioner Anderson: I think the...

Vice Mayor Mena: We had a room full of residents and we talked about this, and we made it to -
- again, I'm not disagreeing with your point. I kind of agree with it, to be honest with you. It was
a tough decision when we made it.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I'm a little uncomfortable with the fact that we made it and now we're
going to pull the plug on it, and there's no residents...

Mayor Lago: You want to...

Vice Mayor Mena: Here today.

Mayor Lago: You want to do -- you want -- Vice Mayor, you want to do this? We have a
Commission meeting coming up. You want to hold off on ordering the fence and the PO?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, I just...

Mayor Lago: Until we have the discussion, and then we can bring it back at the next Commission
meeting?

Vice Mayor Mena: I think that's probably...

Mayor Lago: Is that okay?

Vice Mayor Mena: The right thing to do because I'd just like to go back and look at -- again, this is effectively a reconsideration of something we already decided.

Mayor Lago: That's fine.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, I just want to see what we talked about, kind of go back and read what the comments were from a lot of residents at both meetings.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, Commissioners, would you mind that we defer the Catalonia portion of G-7 to the following meeting?

Commissioner Anderson: I have no objection to that.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm fine.

Commissioner Fors: Can we have staff...?

Commissioner Anderson: As long as we don't spend the money.

Commissioner Fors: Can we have staff provide the Commission with the excerpt of that transcript?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, we can do that.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'd like to ask honestly as a...

Commissioner Fors: Just before the next meeting.

City Manager Iglesias: Then we'll hold off on the PO.

Vice Mayor Mena: To that point, and as a standing sort of protocol, like if we're going to have a discussion about something that's effectively kind of reconsidering or changing course on something that was previously decided, if we can try to have those prior transcripts, resolutions, et cetera, attached to the item, it would make...

Commissioner Anderson: That would be good.

Vice Mayor Mena: It'd make it easier to kind of refer back to what was discussed. I'm trying -- I've been...

Mayor Lago: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

Vice Mayor Mena: Texting Billy while sitting here trying to get a copy of it to see if I could get it quickly.

Commissioner Anderson: Come on, Billy.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I've already started getting it, so I appreciate everybody moving quickly, but obviously, you don't have time to review it, and I don't want to hold up the meeting.

Commissioner Anderson: No, no. There's not any...

Public Works Director Diaz: And we'll put a pause on...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: Right. I mean...

Public Works Director Diaz: The process.

Commissioner Anderson: Just send it to all of us so...

Vice Mayor Mena: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: You don't have, you know, all of us requesting separately.

Mayor Lago: Alright.

Commissioner Menendez: And I just want to add for the benefit of the public watching the conversation, discussion among the Administration and your elected officials, we're trying to find the best solution to keep our kids safe. So, I appreciate the fact that we're coming up with ideas and bouncing back, having that dialogue, because at the end of the day, that's what it's all about, keeping our residents safe. So, thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: When did Villa Valencia, the dog park, open?

Commissioner Anderson: This past month.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, it was recently.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't think it was open at the time, so I think that's an important...

Commissioner Anderson: No, no.

Vice Mayor Mena: Part of the equation.

Commissioner Anderson: It wasn't. That's why I brought you pictures. I was so excited.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: So was Dona Spain down the street with her little...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, I'm just saying I think it's an important part of the equation in terms of reconsidering this because if it wasn't open at the time, I think that we...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Commissioner Anderson: No.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, no, you're right.

Commissioner Anderson: No, it wasn't.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Commissioner Anderson: The grass wasn't down; the fence wasn't up.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No.

Commissioner Anderson: There's a big difference.

Commissioner Menendez: Great.

Mayor Lago: Moving on to -- before we take on G-8...

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before you move on, we did have someone requesting to speak on this item.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: It's Jamie Sheehan.

Mayor Lago: How are you?

Jamie Sheehan: Hi. Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Hi. Good morning.

Ms. Sheehan: I just have a couple questions in relation to Catalonia Park. Is Catalonia Park a public park or is it owned by the residents near it?

Vice Mayor Mena: It's a public park.

Mayor Lago: It's a public park.

Commissioner Anderson: Public park.

Ms. Sheehan: Okay, thank you. And then my second question would be, do you guys need a petition from those in Coral Gables who want Catalonia to have a temporary park for the dog parks -- for the dogs?

Vice Mayor Mena: I didn't...

Mayor Lago: Yeah, I'm not understanding or following your...

Commissioner Anderson: Your question.

Mayor Lago: Your line of questioning.

Ms. Sheehan: Would you like a list of Coral Gables residents/homeowners who are for the temporary park in Catalonia?

Mayor Lago: I mean, we always welcome as much information and, you know, individual input and guidance in regards to legislation or anything that we're undertaking, so we'd welcome that if you'd like to send it to us.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, send it to all of us.

Ms. Sheehan: Okay, yeah. We can definitely work on that because the truth is you're talking about a handful of people who just don't like to see people at the park with their dogs versus a whole city who is craving a dog park and enjoys using that dog park. So, we can very easily get you a list with over a hundred signees wanting a temporary park.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can I just --? I'll just say this, Ms. Sheehan, because I don't want you to waste your time, to be honest with you, and I'm not suggesting it will or won't be, but I think we should give you direction. I don't want to tell her to go get a hundred signatures from people all over the

city that want a dog park there, and we're still going to say, "Well, there's Villa Valencia down the street."

Mayor Lago: No, but I mean, listen...

Vice Mayor Mena: So, that's -- I'm just asking a question.

Mayor Lago: And I...

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't want her to spin her wheels.

Mayor Lago: And that's fine. I mean, we are addressing the dog park issue on multiple fronts.

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed, agreed.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner -- Vice Mayor Mena has addressed it with the Underline, which is forthcoming. We have Commissioner Anderson who has addressed it now with what's coming down 1500 Ponce. We have now Villa Valencia. I'm finding an option while the Manager and I negotiate on acquiring a multiacre park in the City that we've been working on for the last few years, and we're getting closer every single day, and I think it's going to be a great opportunity to have a multiple use park where a large portion of it can be for dogs, a large portion of it can be kept green, and another large portion of it can be -- have an intramural field or something. That is being worked on right now, and I hope to bring it back to the Commission three, four months, and I think it's going to be a big game changer. It's multiple acres that is currently in private hands, and we're in the process of negotiating that to bring it into the City. So, there's going to be a lot of options for dogs. It's a major priority for the Commission. I just ask for just a little bit of patience so we can deliver on something which is exceptional, not just something that's temporary, something that really addresses all corners of our city so that not everyone who's interested or has

a dog has to go to one dog park. You can go visit maybe four or five different options throughout the City.

Commissioner Anderson: We have a lot of dog owners.

Ms. Sheehan: I think that's absolutely wonderful. It's just that we've been waiting for a good while, so that's why we would like a temporary park. It doesn't need to be anything fancy, and I think there's enough resources to make Catalonia, even if it's just for one month, to allow us to utilize the park as citizens, that we have the right to use it. Just because you have maybe two or ten residents near the park who are in disagreeing of it, that's not fair for the rest of us in the City. So, I'm very happy to pull that list because we have the names accessible to us right away.

Commissioner Anderson: Ms. Sheehan...

Ms. Sheehan: Again, it's -- we're happy, we're excited. The City is definitely making efforts for the future, but we're talking about months, and we're asking for just a very temporary thing. In terms of safety, I mean, that can happen anywhere, Menendez. Kids -- cars are a bigger threat today than dogs. So, because one person -- max two -- have a story to tell, I have plenty of story to tell as well. And we can't base it off of one story that the rest of the citizens are not allowed to now enjoy their time together. We get together at that park and we enjoy making friends, being a community that is being stopped because you have a handful of people against it when they don't own that park.

Vice Mayor Mena: Ms. Sheehan, can I ask you a question? Because I'm not a dog owner, and I've -- one of the things that we discussed was the fact that the -- we have Villa Valencia has come online. There's a small dog park there, not too far from the location. Do you not --? I'm asking you if you see that as a decent alternative, and I don't -- and again, in the context of we're talking about a temporary solution potentially at Catalonia, so do you not view Villa Valencia as either a

permanent or even temporary, if you will, solution until there's a bigger option like Salvadore online?

Mayor Lago: So, I think that -- I think -- Ms. Sheehan, I think that moving forward, we've talked about multiple options, and I think that we want to do things the right way. I don't want to rush into anything. So, out of respect for Commissioner Menendez, who was the individual who proffered this discussion about Catalonia, we're moving forward. You have a few blocks away an opportunity at Villa Valencia. You just saw the facility, it's very nice. That should be adequate for everyone or for the individuals in that neighborhood. I think it's time to move forward. We -- let's finish up the agenda, and we have a pretty long day today. Unless there's anything else my colleagues would like to add to this discussion.

Commissioner Menendez: Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Excuse me?

Commissioner Menendez: If I may.

Mayor Lago: Yes, please. It's your item. Your -- it's part of your item. I know it's...

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you. And in response to Ms. Sheehan, the temporary park -- the temporary area that, Ms. Sheehan, you're supporting, I proffered. And though -- as Vice Mayor Mena said, we had a lot of residents say that they were concerned because of multiple unleashed dogs and multiple incidents. So, the reason I proffered the temporary area was to continue and maintain community in a safe environment. And though there are hazards throughout the City, no matter where you go, we, as the City government, are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of our -- all our residents in our parks. We are the ones that manage. We are the ones that are responsible for the safety of everyone. So, that's why we are having this discussion to balance community and safety, and hopefully, we come up with the best solution with input from yourself

and others. But at the end of the day, it's a balancing act between community and safety. And I do believe they can coexist if we work together.

Vice Mayor Mena: And could I just add one thing, Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because I think it's important when we're talking about fairness, because I take that very seriously, and I appreciate your comments, Ms. Sheehan. If we were talking about this as a future project at its infancy, I understand your fairness comments; it's only a few people, et cetera. But what I would just ask you to consider from a fairness perspective is this park was acquired and approved with resident input, and it was done so based on a representation that it was not a dog park, or that it would not allow off-leash dog parks. And now, after the fact, because a certain amount of people -- and obviously, circumstances changed with COVID and people were home more, and we all appreciate that, but because a handful of people didn't abide by the rules as they related to the park that was actually approved after resident input, now you're saying, "Well, it's not fair that, you know, all these dog owners across the City want this here, and just a few people who live there don't want it." Well, the few people that live there were told that this would be a certain type of park, and changing that on them, I hope you degree is also somewhat unfair, so we're in a bit of a situation where we have to balance all the fairness factors for everybody involved, not just the points that you made, which again, I appreciate.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, okay.

Commissioner Anderson: I think we can move on.

Mayor Lago: So, moving on, before we move on to G-8 -- thank you -- I'd like to have Chief Hudak come up and address an item that was brought up by Ms. Cruz. Thank you again. And first off, before you mention anything, I know it's been a long road, and I just want to say thank

you for always being available and taking this so seriously. You know, this was an attack on members of our family, their reputation, and it's time that we do something to make sure that we clear this and we make things right.

Police Chief Hudak: Right. Thank you, Mayor, Commissioners. As our last meeting, as I instructed or I advised, the case involving the 14 officers came to a conclusion. It was sitting on my desk. My decision was rendered on Thursday of last week. I met with the 14 officers -- or 12 of the 14 officers that were originally involved as the subject -- or the -- I'm sorry, the complaining officers. I met with them, their union representation, as well as the Internal Affairs commander and went into great detail about the complexities of the case and what transpired over those three years. I advised them that there were two employees of the Police Department that had been identified through statements. Their conduct was not in line with our SOPs. All of the -- with the exception of one -- allegations or charges, if you will, were sustained, and I sustained those with the exception, I believe, of one that was not sustained. It was supported by the other statements that were given by other officers involved. The complexity of the issue was because of a timing issue that -- by Florida State Statute 112, which is the Police Officers Bill of Rights, these cases have to be completed in 180 days. Because of things outside of our -- my current administration's control, we were not able to actually award discipline to the two individuals of the department that were -- those allegations were sustained against. That was explained in detail to the officers on the complaining side. Currently, where we're at right now is we are -- well, I can't really say anything other than negotiations. The union has approached me and put us on a notice that we are looking -- and I say myself, the City Attorney, and the City Manager are personally addressing the issue, so I can't -- and I'm sure counsel will advise me we don't want to talk about what those discussions are right now. It's a labor management issue with those individuals. However, the union has contacted and kind of put us on notice through me, and when we have something to put forward to you all as far as recompense or some issues on that case from the City's standpoint, you will be probably noticed like we would in any other collective bargaining issue where it's either in a shade meeting or individually, whatever the Manager and City Attorney decide. So, that's where it stands right now. The case, for all intents and purposes, cannot be -- it can be grieved.

There is no arbitration on my decision because there was no discipline awarded. The union's aware of that, but like I said, right now we're in kind of the negotiations with the union representing all of the officers currently here in the department, and we -- when we have something to advise you all of, then we will do that. And again, at the Manager's direction, it was myself, the City Attorney, and the Manager will be involved in these discussions with the union and the officers.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Thank you, Chief. I know that maybe we can't have some conversations here in the public right now, but I'd like to ask the Manager and the City Attorney, and yourself to please sit down with me at some point in the next week or so to have a conversation. My intent, and the intent of the Commission -- if I may speak for the Commission -- is to bring closure to this, bring closure to this horrific situation, to this embarrassment to those officers by making them as whole as we possibly can.

Police Chief Hudak: Understood.

Mayor Lago: I don't know how we're going to do that exactly, but I want to make sure that we are as careful and thoughtful as we possibly can to ensure that these women -- these individuals who serve our city and our community feel welcome, feel respected more than anything. So -- and I know that, you know, you're doing your best, along with the Manager and the City Attorney, and this is a very -- it's a difficult situation. It's a difficult situation to be in, but I want to make sure that we try to bring some closure to it, and at one point, hopefully meet with the officers and can truly express our -- how sorry we are for that incident occurring, even though it wasn't our fault. But at the end of the day, I have no issues apologizing if it ensures that someone -- if an issue can be brought some closure at one point or another.

Police Chief Hudak: If I can, just one point, because I know the questions are going to come up and...

Mayor Lago: I understand.

Police Chief Hudak: To clarify this for you all's edification. The two officers that were identified in the investigation were not linked to the actual spreading of the original picture, internet trolling, things that was going on. The conduct -- or the misconduct that I sustained was for gossiping, spreading it amongst themselves, and there was a supervisor involved in not doing what they were supposed to do, and those were some of those sustained issues that came up. These weren't -- not that we could prove...

Vice Mayor Mena: So, there's no evidence relating to who originally circulated the photo and who originally started the rumors.

Police Chief Hudak: Correct.

City Attorney Ramos: Correct.

Police Chief Hudak: Correct.

City Attorney Ramos: We had someone from outside, if you remember, that did pro...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, yeah.

City Attorney Ramos: Bono work...

Police Chief Hudak: Yeah. That's...

City Attorney Ramos: And there was no conclusion to that investigation.

Police Chief Hudak: So, we've combined three different separate investigations, quite large, into this. This one should have really kind of started off because as soon as we were noticed -- and I

want to say day three -- we should have -- you know, the Administration should have taken this because as soon as that complaint is -- we have to open those up. It was not done. It was then revisited through our current Internal Affairs commander and had to redo those all again. So, really, these officers gave four sworn statements throughout this entire issue.

Mayor Lago: But it -- this...

Police Chief Hudak: But nobody -- none of the two officers that were disciplined this time were unequivocally proven to be the ones that disseminated it, pushed it out. They did share it, which is against...

Vice Mayor Mena: After the fact.

Police Chief Hudak: Our rules. After the fact and posted on there, and that -- we have sustained that. And there was supervisor accountability that was not adhered to, and that was part of the findings on this specific case, and that was explained in detail to the female officers that were involved along with myself.

Mayor Lago: So, thank you, Chief. I appreciate that, and I look forward to meeting with you.

Police Chief Hudak: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for your hard work.