

# **City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**

## **Agenda Item D-1**

**June 2, 2009**

**City Commission Chambers**

**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

### **City Commission**

**Mayor 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, Patrick Salerno**

**City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez**

**City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman**

**Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

### **Public Speaker(s)**

**Fausto Gomez, Gomez Barker, P.A.**

**Dan Gelber, Senator (Coral Gables)**

**Erik Fresen, Florida Representative (Coral Gables)**

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D-1 [Start: 9:21:22 a.m.]

Fausto Gomez of Gomez Barker, P.A. to report on the 2009 Florida Legislative Session

Mayor Slesnick: I hope to beg everyone’s indulgence, we are going to skip around the agenda today for various reasons, but first I’d like to bring up Fausto Gomez, our lobbyist for the City, and he has brought with him some special guests that he wants to introduce to the citizens of Coral Gables, and we the Commission would like to welcome them very heartily, and then Fausto you are going to give us...how long is your report?- how long is your report?

Mr. Gomez: Three to four minutes.

Mr. Gomez: Good morning Mr. Mayor, Mr. Vice Mayor, Commissioners, it’s a pleasure to be here with you, but before my remarks I would like to introduce two of the members of the delegation that represents Coral Gables exceedingly well in Tallahassee, Senator Dan Gelber who has joined us here and Representative and President, I’d like to call them up.

Mayor Slesnick: Senator and Mr. Representative we are very pleased to have you here. For those of you who don’t know, the senator who most people maybe associate with Miami Beach represents almost the entire southern sweep along the coastline of our City, and Representative Fresen represents North Gables, just about all of the area north of Coral Way. So very good to have you both here, and you won’t need to say it, but Senator Gelber is considering a run for the Attorney General for the State of Florida; and we wish him well if he does that; and

Representative Fresen has been actively vying for, or at least allowing himself to be considered for Speaker of the House down the road. So we are very proud that two of our representatives in the State Legislature are so active and so committed to the state. Senator.

Senator Gelber: Thank you; and I am going to be very brief because your very able expert Fausto is going to tell you sort of the details of our budget. This was an incredibly bad year for Florida; Florida has a lot of issues, you all see it locally across the sweep of the State, its everywhere. But despite that you all were able to eek out at least a million and-a-half of Stimulus dollars, but I would urge you; I would give you one message, I guess, and that is over the course of the next twenty-four (24) months lots of the things we did were really simply to bailout the boat, we really didn't fix plugging any holes, and I think probably we got three billion dollars of Stimulus money in our budget this year, and another three or more next year; after that there is a cliff we are falling off of, although some will argue we fell off the cliff already and we don't realize it. I would urge you all to watch us very carefully up in Tallahassee, and Fausto does a remarkable job, he's a very enlightened observer and effective advocate, but I do think it requires public officials to really watch what's happening up there, its far away and a lot of damage could be done up there when the legislature is in session. Everybody sort of takes a sigh of relief when we....but the truth of the matter is there is a lot of peril at stake right now. We need these people who are responsible, who are giving us input during not only the sixty (60) day session, but before and after; and I want to thank you; I get calls and e-mails from you all as well as visits to my office up there, that's critical and hopefully whenever challenges we face, I think we know what they are going to be, we'll be able to get through it with a lot of unity and a lot of work, and I appreciate your work, and I appreciate Representative Fresen, he is a very able legislator, who has represented you very well. So thank you all and hopefully we'll have a better year.

Mayor Slesnick: Senator thank you and good luck on whatever you decide that you are going to seek; Mr. Representative.

Representative Fresen: Thank you for those kinds words Senator, and I have to echo most of them I think. Fausto and his team come very early to us in the session and layout what the City's priorities are, but as any of you know who are familiar with the legislative process, it's a process that's kind of out of sight out of mind, and crazy things happen. So the more that you are in our face, and I know that the Mayor was up there a couple of times, and he told me the other day, thank you for staying out of our tax code, those are actually things that – there are times when its interesting and we need to almost explain this, that in the legislative process so many things start happening kind of at a warp speed toward the end that there are times where we may not even be aware that a certain piece of legislation may have an adverse effect to the cities that we represent, and so forth. So being present, being in our faces, letting us know what is affecting your City, what potentially could affect the City; and certainly obviously what your priorities are as Senator Gelber mentioned with some of the Stimulus dollars, we were able to bring down, I believe one-and-a half million dollars (\$1.5-M) in transportation dollars to whatever extent, I mean, being a life long resident of the area and having grown up here, you know, there is a quality of life element to growing up in these streets and being able to ride a bike and skateboard as I did, the transportation flow is one of those things. I know Commission Cabrera was telling me yesterday, I was thrilled to know, that there is finally going to be a beautification along the median of Segovia, I didn't know that, but makes all the sense in the world, its always been a kind of

landing strip in the middle of a what could be a beautiful avenue in our City. So to whatever extent, I'm always here, the door is open, the phone is always available, anything you guys need, we are here to work hard. Its going to be probably as tough if not a tougher session next year as it was this year; we are committed to doing the right work, but as Senator Gelber said you need to stay on top of things because I agree with him, I think we may have already fallen off what could be a budget cliff, and now its just to make sure that we can actually sustain, and I know that the City is facing itself a nine million (\$9M) possibly more of a budget...nine million was the number last week and apparently it's a little bit more this week, so I don't envy the task before you, I'm sure you are going to do it responsibly, and anything I can do to help, I'm always here. So thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: I didn't know Erik before he ran for office, but he came highly recommended by my daughter, he helped save the neighborhood.

Mr. Gomez: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners very briefly, first of all I want to thank obviously Senator Gelber, Representative Fresen as well as the other members of our delegation; Representative Robaina who was going to be here this morning, be he just sent us a text that his mother had emergency surgery in South Miami Hospital so he couldn't be here, and Senator Diaz la Portilla who couldn't be here as well, but they all along with Representative Carlos Lopez-Cantera effectively represent your interest in Tallahassee; and I'd like to introduce Manny Reyes my associate who is here with me. Let me just very briefly because you should have a memorandum in your package; very briefly just give you an analysis where we are at. Legislative session was remarkably kind to the City of Coral Gables. Legislature appropriated close to one and-a-half million dollars in Transportation Stimulus money. Additionally, to that we were able to get we were able to get again language that allows us to pay ourselves back from the Law Enforcement Trust Fund, and that generates from between one hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$100,000-\$250,000) a year, and I know Commissioner Anderson, that was one of the key planks that you had certainly...

Commissioner Anderson: Way back when.

Mr. Gomez: On the legislative front, there are a lot of things that failed that frankly we were fighting against; revenue caps, property tax caps, extending development order permits for three years, relaxing zoning regulations for community residential homes, removing sovereign immunity from cities for....claims, establishing a moratorium for impact fees, prohibiting local governments from enforcing ordinances to require mortgage holders to maintain or secure foreclosed properties; all of those items have specific interest in the City of Coral Gables, as well as tower crane regulation all failed; and frankly we had to spend the majority of our legislative year fighting proposals of this nature throughout the course of the legislative session. Also failing unfortunately are two key things for Coral Gables, in the appropriations arena; one, until the last day of the legislative budget conference Coral Gables was slated to receive a million dollar appropriation from the South Florida Water Management District for water projects. Ultimately, no city in the state – no city in the state received individual allocations for water projects as we have during the course of my representation. You know we average close to a million dollars a year in that area; and the reason was either the Speaker or the President couldn't agree on a funding source for water projects, and the total amount of water projects that was in

discussion and the offers back and forth between the House and the Senate was fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000); and of that fifteen million dollars Coral Gables was on the list for a million bucks (\$1,000,000). Secondly, another issue that failed was unfortunately the Coral Gables Museum; and again no city and no entity in the State of Florida received a dime for cultural or historical or things of that nature through a line item process. In fact the total amount of funding for museums, for culture is two and-a-half million dollars, that is the lowest amount that has been allocated in the last twenty-five years, the lowest that has been allocated in the last twenty-five years; and what the Legislature decided to do was that there was going to be a grant process and we have provided that process and we have provided that information to the administration, and the total amount, the maximum amount allocated is twenty-five thousand dollars per entity. Now obviously that was also of significant importance to Coral Gables; we monitored that, we tried to get a line item appropriation for the Museum, we were unsuccessful simply because the money wasn't there, and the policy was not there to spend Stimulus dollars on the Museum. So in those two areas obviously we were unsuccessful. In general terms, I would say that Coral Gables based on the environment that we were facing where the Speaker had to resign immediately before session, where we had forty-four freshmen involved in the process, where we had a budget deficit of six billion dollars (\$6-B), where you had the lowest amount of Bills passed this year than the last fifty years in Tallahassee, and you had to scramble at the end to try to amend legislation because everything was stuck in committee. In that environment I think that we fared rather well, and I think it needs to be recognized that these members who are here in front of you today did the yeoman's work for the City of Coral Gables; and I particularly want to thank the Vice Mayor and Commissioner Withers and the Mayor for joining me in Tallahassee during the course of the legislative session; I appreciate that and I look forward certainly to all of you going up next year and to the support that all of you always provide in our legislative efforts. Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you; are there any questions for Fausto? Fausto thank you for your good work; the citizens of Coral Gables are better for it, appreciate it. Mr. Senator, Mr. Representative thank you for not only representing us, but for taking the time to come here this morning and be with us, any closing thoughts? Thank you, appreciate it.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you very much.

[End: 9:33:22 a.m.]