

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Non-Agenda Item
May 23, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Non-Agenda Item [12:08 p.m.]

Commissioner Menendez: Important item. Was mentioned earlier today that there's a Bill before the Governor to sign, and he hasn't signed, and I did a little bit of research when that Bill was mentioned. It's SB-942, and it's described as "End to Dog Breed Bans," and that Bill, Legislation impacts the county's laws regarding Pit Bulls, and we already have challenges with our parks and large dogs unleashed where children play. My concern is, if and it seems like the Governor is really looking into it, because he hasn't signed it yet, but that's a preemption of our local laws, that State imposing a law that preempts our local law. I have an issue with that. I think we've always had an issue with the State preempting what we do as a county, as a city, but because of my concerns of having this pass, because of the size, strength and just the size and strength of these dogs, if they were to suddenly to appear in our Catalonia Park, at our local parks, and we already have problems keeping kids safe because owners sometimes let their dogs loose. I have a very big concern. I don't know what the sentiment or thoughts are of my colleagues on this, but if the Governor hasn't signed it yet, I urge the residents that are concerned about this, to reach out to the Governor's Office and express your position, and if you don't want him to sign it, communicate that you ask that he doesn't sign it for the reasons I stated or for other reasons you may have. I don't know if

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my colleagues are open to perhaps, collectively, through our legislative team, communicate to the Governor's Office that we, City of Coral Gables, have reservations about lifting our own local laws when it comes to safety for our children.

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioner, why don't you, as the afternoon progresses, maybe you can draft a resolution through the City Attorney's office and present it and we'll vote on it and send it to the Governor.

Commissioner Menendez: I appreciate that.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for your leadership on this topic.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. In addition, to the safety of the children, which is predominant, it's also for the safety of the other dogs that go in there and play, because they are going to be off leash at that point. I have had occasions where I had to get dogs off my dogs because they were biting and fortunately, they were just Chihuahuas. This would be a much different situation with a dog of that nature that you cannot unlock the jaw. It would be tragic.

Commissioner Menendez: And through the Mayor, I want to share an experience that I witnessed myself, which is why I know the dangers. Next door to the house I've lived in for so many years, I heard a noise through the side bedroom window, between my property and the house next door. Somebody had brought a Pit Bull, unleashed in their backyard, and there was a retainer wall about, let's say four feet high. One of my elderly neighbors was walking on the sidewalk, going from LeJeune towards Salzedo, just to get to her house. That dog was running full speed trying to hurdle that wall and kept on crashing into the wall with its chest, full speed. They would back up and try to hurdle the wall again, going full speed. If that dog had gotten over that wall, my neighbor would not have been alive, because of the determination, the strength and speed of that dog; and just think about running full speed into a wall multiple times, that didn't deter, and I have no issue with that, but in terms of comes to the safety, I witnessed it with my own eyes the potential for disaster, and that's my concern.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Alright. We'll take a five-minute break and then we'll be back to address item F-2, which is time certain.