

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item J-2
June 8, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Senior Sustainability Analyst, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item J-2 [2:54 p.m.]

Report and update regarding County/City's fertilizer ordinances

Mayor Lago: J-2 is the issue of fertilizers. How long of a presentation is that Mr. Manager, or is it just a simple update?

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Five minutes, ten minutes, we can be very brief.

Mayor Lago: Two minutes would be great.

Commissioner Anderson: Two minutes.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: To give you all just a brief background, especially for our newer Commissioners. In February of 2021, the city adopted Ordinance 2021-10, which created

City Commission Meeting
June 8, 2021

application of fertilizer in the City Code. City of Coral Gables was one of the first municipalities in Miami-Dade County to regulate the application of fertilizers, along with Miami-Beach and City of Miami. We were at the forefront of this. In April, the Board of County Commissioners adopted one of, if not the most stringent ordinances in the state regulating the application of fertilizer and it serves as a minimum countywide standard. So, it applies to us here in the City of Coral Gables and its much more stringent than the ordinance that we passed in February of 2021. It requires registration and education for applicators countywide, regular testing for athletic fields, parks and golf courses. It requires quarterly reports from golf courses, and it has a much more detailed provisions regarding the application of fertilizer and the prohibited application period in the rainy months is longer than the one that the city adopted. Because of that the county provisions apply to us and are not more stringent than ours, so we will be enforcing the county provisions rather than ours. I just wanted to have Matt Anderson here to give you guys just a very brief overview of the educational materials that we are pushing out, along with the county to make sure our residents know about this countywide ordinance, and let them know that the county will not be enforcing the ordinance this summer since it was adopted so close to the summer season, but going forward we are going to be making a strong educational push to make sure our residents know about these rainy blackout months and the countywide ordinance. So, thank you Matt.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you. And we have Martha here as well from the Communications Department who has been assisting us with this. If you can bring up the few slides that I have really quick, please. And we've been working really closely with the county on pushing out the educational materials that they've been producing. So on this slide right here is something that the county produced and we branded with our Coral Gables logo in a different background that's more of a Coral Gables feel, but just starting the educational process and pushing this material out on both social media and E-NEWS, so I wanted to show you guys those examples and the county is continuing to produce more educational materials and as they are producing them, they are sharing them with us and we are rebranding those, and then also, I've them to also make some stuff in Spanish so we can also push that out as well. We've already started our education process by putting this, I believe its on the previous edition of E-NEWS and including that on social media as well, and we've also updated our city website, which had our previous city ordinance information regarding fertilizers, so we've updated that to include all the county's information and also linking out to the county's website that has all their information on the ordinance and upcoming educational opportunities; and then last, but certainly not least, the county is having a Zoom education webinar on Friday, June 11th, so we are going to be promoting that and participating in it and promoting that for our residents and then we are also be posting the recording of the Zoom on our website once it is completed. So, again, continuing the great partnership we have with the county and their Chief Bay Officer, Irela Bague who used to sit on our Sustainability Board and also with DERM, so just helping them on educating and it's great to have one consistent rule going across all the municipalities from the county level, so they are not only being educated with another city, but the landscapers that are working in the other cities as well, I think is really, really important.

Mayor Lago: Can you do me a favor Matt, in the near future, whenever you want to come back, three months, six months, a year. I want to see how this is working out.

*City Commission Meeting
June 8, 2021*

Mr. Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Because we have some serious exclusions that I don't think are real. For example, what we afford to golf courses, to me, I don't think that really works, in my opinion. I don't have any proof behind it, but some of the people that use the biggest fertilizer amounts in this community are golf courses, and supposedly by having certain people on staff and taking certain precautions, they are able to avoid polluting the water, but everybody else in this community is not able to avoid that. I want to see the numbers, because the last numbers that came out this week that I sent over to the ACM and to the City Manager via text, and I know you saw those numbers that came out from Key Biscayne that they are actually doing their own testing that were sent to me. They actually tested Coral Gables. All the water quality that came back was poor, poor water quality across the board. So, this is a lot more than just fertilizer. This is issues of septic to sewer, and this is issues of water runoff that deal with the streets when it rains, and everything washes into the catch basins and into the outfalls into the bay.

Mr. Anderson: And I will say that our city definitely has an advantage in the fact that we have this ongoing, really comprehensive water quality study going on with FIU, so we have data before this ordinance is passed, and we will come back to you guys throughout the process and at the end, so we can have measurable, show those measurables not only to you all, but to the county as well and the effectiveness of the ordinance and continuing to work with all the educational institutions we have studying our waterway.

Mayor Lago: I would really like to make sure that we remember that, and you come back maybe in six months to a year, and I want to see where we stand.