

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
July 26, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Historical Resources Officer, Dona Spain

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-1 [12:09:46 a.m.]

A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to negotiate with R.E.I. (Renuart Enterprises Inc.) to be the contractor for the rehabilitation of homes within the MacFarlane Homestead Subdivision Historic District as affordable housing for low and moderate income households, with funding from the Building Better Communities General Obligation Bond Program (BBC GOB). This is pursuant to Section 2-678(14), “works of art for public places, and art design and conservation services,” of the Procurement Code entitled “Exemptions.”

Mayor Cason: H-1.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I’m going to ask Historical Resources and Cultural Arts to come forward on this item.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: Thank you. This is the restoration of the MacFarlane homes. We have identified two homes. The property owners have signed restrictive covenants.

We have an architect that is on board and this is for the contractor. This contractor was a contractor for the Art Building at the University of Miami, did a great job, has worked with this architect before, we would like to hire him for these projects, so we can get going.

Mayor Cason: OK. These people have expertise, so this is the reason why we are going?

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: I have a few questions, if you don't mind.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: Sure.

Commissioner Lago: I know we all have a vested interest in this. We've been working on this for, I think, coming on three years now. Commissioner Keon and the Mayor have been instrumental, I know the Vice Mayor is not here, but they've all been instrumental in getting this off the ground, so I'm finally happy that we are here today, especially for this neck of the woods, which is recently getting a lot of attention and a lot of good attention. We had some issues in the past in reference to, I don't want to say shabby, but it was not up to par with some of the work that was done in MacFarlane and some of the adjacent homes. Are we going to use a different siding, siding option or are we going to go with the...

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: We intend to bring that to the Historical Preservation Board this coming month, along with one of the homes, one of the two homes, and request...to the Board that we use something similar like parly board and not wood. I think it's really essential, hopefully the Board will approve that, if not, we'll come to the Commission because these people don't have a whole lot of funds, the property owners, and when you get money it may not be maintenance of the home.

Commissioner Lago: Yes. So I think we need to, again, I want to make sure that we, these designated historic properties that we preserve them, but I think that we also do a little bit of disservice when we don't consider the maintenance. I was in the neighborhood on Thursday, I went to see the five shot-gun homes that border the City of Coral Gables, and I'm going to be sitting down with you probably in the next week to discuss some opportunities that we have to revitalize those five shot-gun homes to preserve them, but I notice, I think its two homes that are in question that, the home is in perfect shape, but the exterior façade is as if the wood is melting.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: I know it's horrible.

Commissioner Lago: I don't know if that the material they use was not appropriate or that they didn't properly water seal it. Again, I'm not calling it into question, I wasn't involved in that, but I want to see that make sure that we don't put an additional burden on the owner.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: This is the proper contractor and the proper architect to handle that, so we are really excited.

Commissioner Lago: Do you know how much money we are talking about in reference to both homes?

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: Well, we have \$600,000 from the County and that's why we've limited it to two homes...

Mayor Cason: \$592,000.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain:...particularly if we have this type of material.

Commissioner Lago: Before, I'll just ask the Commission to indulge me one more second. I want to make sure that before we end and we move onto another item that we properly acknowledge Commission Xavier Suarez...

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: Absolutely.

Commissioner Lago:...and we also acknowledge Mayor Gimenez. Without them getting on board and bringing this to fruition this would be like many things in the City of Coral Gables, a lot of talk. This is one of the items that we are checking off, like Miracle Mile, like the parking garages, like the repairing of the sidewalks, the trees, buying of parks, a lot of things that for many, many, many, many years was talked about and had not been accomplished. I want to congratulate the staff and I want to congratulate my fellow colleagues and thank Commissioner Suarez and I think we have a representative here from Mayor Gimenez' office, I want to thank them for their commitment to our community and especially the MacFarlane and Goldengate areas. I know that the residents there are extremely ecstatic about what the commitment the City has made in reference to that neighborhood, so thank you. Thank you to you Dona, by the way. If it wasn't for you we wouldn't get this done.

Mayor Cason: You want to make the motion?

City Attorney Leen: Can I add something to that? Just in making this motion. I want to make it clear that this resolution, although it talks about negotiation does grant, basically delegate

authority to the City Manager to actually enter into the contract as well. It's not going to come back to you, partly to expedite this matter.

Commissioner Lago: Let me interrupt you, because I forgot to say thank you to Craig, I apologize. We so much forget that he's to the right and we take him for granted, but he did an incredible job, Miriam his staff. If it wasn't for the multiple times that we met with Mayor Gimenez' staff and with Mayor Gimenez, and with Commissioner Suarez this wouldn't have gotten done. So this was a great effort all around, all around.

Commissioner Keon: Yes, but really special thanks to Commissioner Suarez because he was the one that allocated the dollars to us to be able to do this from the County, so a very big thank you to him.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: Absolutely.

City Attorney Leen: And the other thing its exempt under our Zoning Code, I just want to be clear, its exempt under our Procurement Code, because conservation and as you know, the reason we are using R.E.I. is because we know that the County would like them and has used them before, and we believe that they are the best one, very similar to a Sole Source. So from a legal perspective, I felt that the appropriate way to proceed was to bring it to the Commission for approval and then you'll be delegating the Manager the authority to move forward with this, and part of this is because we are using government funds and we want to make sure we do this in an expeditious a way possible.

Commissioner Lago: If you get a chance, just one last thing. If you get a chance, I was walking MacFarlane the other day, on Thursday as a matter of fact with Commissioner Russell from the City of Miami, if you get a chance to visit the neighborhood, I know that we were there the other day for the groundbreaking, the building is going up in reference to the community center, so the residents are ecstatic about it, the streets are super clean, people are complying in regards to Zoning, the residents are excited about that, but I really think that we should have maybe a Sunshine meeting on site, I'd like to show you the ins and outs of the five shot-gun homes, if anybody would like to come with me, those are the ones that border the City of Miami, its five of them.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: And are they owned by the church?

Commissioner Lago: Yes ma'am.

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: OK – because that’s why they didn’t qualify for this money, because they have to be owner...

Commissioner Lago: We are looking for some different opportunities, but what I want to make sure – revenue streams, private revenue streams, I’m going to come and ask everybody on the Commission to see if we can push forward. The reason why those are important is because those are a true representational

Historical Preservation Officer Spain: Absolutely.

Commissioner Lago:...and I know that you could probably speak a lot more eloquently than I would in reference to the historic significances, but we are going to preserve those, and we are going to move people into those homes that are Coral Gables residents, that are maybe City of Miami residents who live adjacent to it, but we need to do everything in our power to not allow those to basically just crumble; and what we are doing today with these two homes and what we are doing to fix the other two residents that are having an issue with the siding, that area is becoming a hotbed for people going in and moving because they want to live next to Coral Gables for a reduced price, and prices there are going up. So you are seeing a lot of gentrification and what I’d hate to see is that since the church doesn’t have the necessary funds to keep those five properties up, I was in them and they are in pretty rough shape. They are salvageable but we need to make sure that we address it, and I think there was actually a squatter living in it and they removed that person. There are two of them are vacant, three of them are rented out right now.

Commissioner Slesnick: I’d like to see that we could set up a Sunshine meeting.

Commissioner Lago: I’d love to. I think it’s a great idea. Can you take care of setting it up with the City Manager and staff...?

Mayor Cason: OK, on H-1, who wants to make the motion?

Commissioner Keon: I’ll make the motion.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Keon makes the motion, Commissioner Lago seconds – City Clerk.

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)

[End: 12:18:03 p.m.]