

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-3
May 27, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr. (Absent)

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Carmen Olazabal

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Fausto Gomez, Legislative Lobbyist

D-3 [Start: 9:55:10 a.m.]

Legislative Report by Fausto Gomez of Gomez Barker Associates, Inc.

Mayor Cason: Now we have D-3 our Legislative Report by Fausto Gomez of Gomez Baker Associates. Fausto.

Mr. Gomez: Good morning Mr. Mayor, Commissioners.

Commissioner Lago: Good morning sir.

Mr. Gomez: Manny Reyes and I, who is joining me here today, are pleased to provide an outline of our Legislative accomplishments in Tallahassee on behalf of the City of Coral Gables. I believe you have that in your package. Let me just very briefly go over some of what I think are some of the major accomplishments that we did on behalf of the City. Number one is, this was a rather calm year and it was calm because when there is money usually things go calm, as well as since we have an election there was not a lot of policy initiatives, and so therefore policy

initiatives were put out until probably next year or the year following, as well as the dollars being allocated. Notwithstanding that, at the end of session there was the usual chaos in the last week of legislative session begins with policy items not being approved and then trying to be amended in further negotiations; and notwithstanding that sort of brief chaos, Coral Gables did exceptionally well this year, not only in the money but also in the policy aspects of what we had requested. Let me just say on water projects direct funding Coral Gables received \$400,000 for the comprehensive INI infiltration program, which is as you know we have infiltration in our sewer pipes as well as \$200,000 for canal bank stabilization. If you all may recall a number of years ago we got \$5 million to dredge some of the canals in Coral Gables as well as to stabilize the banks, this I believe is really the second opportunity that the Legislature put in \$200,000 for that; and in addition to that we received \$50,000 for Coral Gables City Hall concrete restoration, so that's a total of \$650,000 in direct line items.

Mayor Cason: What you mean we've received it you mean it's in the budget, but it could be vetoed.

Mr. Gomez: Could be vetoed, although Mr. Mayor I do understand that the water projects are completely and totally safe.

Mayor Cason: Great. Wonderful.

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you a question. Fausto thank you again for being here. I had a meeting with the Interim Public Works Director about a month ago in regards to that \$400,000 that you are discussing, that's basically a requirement by the County in reference to a study that must be performed with a due date, correct?

Mr. Gomez: To the best of my knowledge, Commissioner, that is a program where you have water seeping into your sewer pipes and we are essentially paying additional dollars for the flow of waste water and we have paddleball water as well as storm water in our pipes that was a program, I believe it's well developed last year. Last year in the budget it was \$500,000 for this program, which the Governor vetoed and you are absolutely correct on that point Mayor Cason. This year the Legislator put in \$400,000 for this program.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mr. Gomez: Law Enforcement Trust Fund, as you know for a number of years we have to every single year put in language in the budget allowing the City to pay itself back for funds which the City advance for the construction of the Communication Center at the Police Department. Again,

it was included in this year and the City pays itself back on an average of \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year.

Mayor Cason: How many years' worth of....like that do we have?- a lot?

Mr. Gomez: I think I'll be retired by the time that you pay yourself back. The Legislature asks us, particularly legislative staff, the question you asked is how many more years? If I recall correctly we pay ourselves back close to a little bit less than a million dollars, and it really all depends on how much money there is in the Law Enforcement Trust Fund on an annual basis. Some years even though we have the authorization there is no money there so we don't pay ourselves back, other years are banner years, but it averages \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year. Although we are not the lobbyist for the Coral Gables Museum. Obviously, we kept an eye out on a couple of items; one is \$200,000 for the Environmental Sustainability Design Education Program as well as \$42,000 for the Coral Gables Museum Grant Support that comes through the Department of State; and finally in the appropriations arena, again this year there was a move afoot to get rid of the communications services tax, local business taxes, and all those myriad of sources of current support to the City. Just to give you an example, communication service tax, the City currently receives \$4.3 million, and on the business tax the City currently receives in the neighborhood of \$3 million, so those monies that you currently receive are safe for another year. If we go to the policy arena, pension reform, which I know is a very significant issue, and if you recall three or four years ago, we were able to amend the State Statutes in order for Coral Gables to classify as what's called "deem to comply" with both 175/185 for the receipt of premium tax dollars. When I appeared before you, before Legislative Session, one of the things you all asked me for was to make sure that, that remained and that remains in Statute. I'm glad to report that, there was no pension legislation that passed, and even though the League of Cities had reached some level of accommodation with the police and fire representatives, it was a much safer bet for no legislation to pass, and no legislation passed. Red light cameras which I know is in Coral Gables, they continue. One in public records, which I believe I know that your City Attorney spoke to me about, which was to make sure that the Public Works legislation that was being pushed by interest in order to be able to sue different cities and receive significant attorney's fees for those law suits did not pass. Interestingly, was an item that I think is important to the City, which is bicycling, pedestrian trails. Senate Bill 2514, for the first time, for the first time amends Florida Statutes so that the Florida Department of Transportation is authorized to acquire, construct, and maintain bicycle and pedestrian trails, which I think is rather significant because I know that we have in the City a rather extensive bicycle and pedestrian trail program. What would be required is for the City both to apply through the MPO, Metropolitan Planning Organization, so that we can put our program into the Florida Department of Transportation's five year work program, and in addition to that we would have to apply, as I shared with the Interim Manager when we met.

Commissioner Lago: Fausto a quick question in regards to that. Having Commission Quesada sit on the MPO, obviously he could speak maybe a little bit on behalf of that. In regards to here where you are talking about, I'm trying to find the exact location which states it – maintain – you say FDOT would have to maintain the existing or is that proposed.

Mr. Gomez: Obviously, FDOT can only provide resources to state roads and state infrastructure. Here we are talking about local infrastructure, so therefore the statutes were amended so that FDOT can provide resources for local infrastructure, which are bicycles and pedestrian paths.

Mayor Cason: Was there any pot of money mentioned?- anything carved out or is it that we compete against roads and everything else?

Mr. Gomez: This came about because the incoming Senate President has a proposal to put a trail coast to coast, bicycle trail in Central Florida, and in order to do that statutes needed to be amended so that FDOT then is authorized to expend their own resources of trails of this nature. So there was, I believe, a \$15 million allocation for this, which is geared to Central Florida; however, statutes have now changed and since statutes change now any city or any jurisdiction in the State of Florida can apply through their local MPO to be admitted to the five year work program of the State, and then receive an allocation. The question, I believe is, is there a specific line item in the State Transportation Trust Fund for this purpose?- the answer is no, but now FDOT is authorized to fund it and if it flows up through the MPO then it will get funded in the five work program. Another issue which is of less important to Coral Gables is parking meter revenue and that's basically, the state wants to take 50 percent of all parking meters on state roads. I don't believe that we have parking meters, a significant number of parking meters on state roads, I've checked with Finance and they don't believe that's significant for the Gables, although it will impact our budget somewhat. Finally, a couple of items, which is ethics, there is now a new proposal that every elected official will have to take a four-hour ethics course on an annual basis, with two hours of ethics and two hours of Sunshine Law, and that really is about it. There are other items there that include derelict vessels and anchoring and mooring, I included those because Coral Gables is a coastal City. We have a significant number of our residents that's on the coast and so therefore I wanted for you all to be aware of that; and with that Mr. Mayor, I'd be please to answer any question you may have.

Commissioner Quesada: The Coral Gables Museum, the \$200,000, is there still a possibility of that being vetoed or no?

Mr. Gomez: Yes sir.

Commissioner Quesada: There is.

Mayor Cason: June 1st?- what's the deadline for...

Mr. Gomez: June the 4th.

Mayor Cason: June the 4th.

Commissioner Quesada: Do we have a sense of – last year we got vetoed for those funds, do you think – if you were a betting man would you say the percentage of us getting that plan item vetoed?

Mr. Gomez: I'm not a betting man.

[Laughter]

Commissioner Quesada: If you were.

Mr. Gomez: But I really don't know and frankly I can tell you, we've received word from many sources including straight from the Governor's office that the water projects are safe, but we have not received any communications in regards to the Coral Gables Museum.

Commissioner Quesada: OK.

Mayor Cason: We tried.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes. You've done a great job two years in a row getting it on there, it's just the Governor knocks it out each time.

Mr. Gomez: I would suggest there is still time for you all to communicate with the Governor's office on the importance of this project.

Mayor Cason: OK. Anything else? Fausto thank you once again. Thank you for supporting the City and bringing home the bacon.

Mr. Gomez: Thank you sir.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you sir.

[End: 10:06:50 a.m.]