

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item L
October 25, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant to the City Manager, Solanch

Economic Development Interim Director, Belkys Perez

Greenspace Management, Deena Bell

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item L [a.m.]

Discussion Items

Mayor Lago: We are going to do a few housekeeping issues. Number one, can we have the results for the Pumpkin Carving Festivities.

Ms. Lopez: Good morning once again. So, thank you to all of the departments and divisions that participated this year. I always say that every year they get bigger and bigger in the construction, but the winner of this year's which is the Seventh Annual Great Employee Pumpkin Contest is pumpkin number 3, City Attorney's Office.

[Applause]

Mayor Lago: Congratulations.

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City Attorney Ramos: It's all Gus, it's all Gus. We can take no credit.

Mayor Lago: You want to put the theme music on and let's see the pumpkin in its full glory.

Ms. Lopez: While Gus gets the music going, thank you to the Adult Activity Center, Venetian Pool and Economic Development who also participated.

[Music Playing]

Vice Mayor Mena: The Mayor's play list (laughter)

Mayor Lago: Before you leave, can we talk about two quick items which were going to be items that I was going to discuss under Mayor's Comments. First off, I want to congratulate you, along with our Public Works team, Solanch, our Solid Waste Department, Matt Anderson, am I forgetting anybody else in regard to the success this weekend. We had over 375,000 pounds of hazardous waste this weekend.

Mr. Anderson: We had 425 cars pass through the event in the three hours. I know Commissioner Anderson passed through; Commissioner Fors joined us at the event. That's like our average turnout right now. I just started getting the numbers back in. We collected over 10,000 pounds of electronic waste. I'm still waiting for the household hazardous waste, but by the time I get those numbers back, over the last seven years, we've collected and diverted out of the landfill over 400,000 pounds of hazardous waste, electronic waste, clothing. We also did donations, Mayor, that you were leading up for Hurricane Ian, so our Fire Department was out there collecting. On behalf of that effort, our partners at Camillus House where the clothing gets donated to them and obviously our E-waste, household hazardous waste and paper shredding. It continues to be a staple in this community as far as the events, the feedback that we receive from the attendees has been amazing. They are always looking forward to the next event. We received a lot of compliments and the next event that will be taking place Earth Day 2023, which is April 22, 2023, in the City Hall parking lot.

Ms. Lopez: I know that Camillus House, we got their weights back also, they collected around 2,400 pounds of clothing, including several suits which they said that they were in need of, so they were very grateful for that. Thank you to our Fire Cadets that were out there helping with the collection of the donations for Hurricane Ian relief, and they were helping at Camillus House too, and Kelly and everyone from Police was out there helping us direct traffic and sponsoring the shredding, the paper shredding.

Mr. Anderson: I also wanted to mention too, the Growing Place, the school next door. They actually did a collection last week and their elementary school collected all the clothes that were donated from the elementary school and Marlin Ebbert, the Chair of the Sustainability Board and I went over on Friday, spoke with the students, which was amazing and received all that clothing that they donated, and it was given to Camillus House. So, thank you again for their support as well.

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Mayor Lago: Great work, as always, and the event continues to grow and like you said, it's a staple in this community and a lot of other communities called me, all the Mayors have said, listen, you guys are the envy of all other cities in regard to this effort that you are doing. So, thank you to both of you and to our Solid Waste Department, Public Works Department. Did I forget anybody else?

Mr. Anderson: Police – Police provided support for traffic. We ended up causing a traffic jam.

Ms. Lopez: We had Economic Development out there.

Mr. Anderson: Belkys was out there.

Mayor Lago: I just want to make sure we say thank you to everybody, because again, we go out there on a Saturday and give up of your own time, it's a team effort. So, thank you.

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Thank you so much. Another discussion. Talk a little bit about what's happening in downtown in regard to the next cleanup effort.

Ms. Lopez: Yes. So, we have our next downtown community cleanup has been scheduled for Monday, November 7th at 5 o'clock. We will once again be meeting at the Chamber of Commerce office over at Alhambra. Registration is live up on our website and our community calendar, as well, and we will be starting to promote it on E-NEWS and social media, these two coming weeks leading up to the event.

Mayor Lago: So, let's work together with my office, so we can give some sort of cash prize again.

Ms. Lopez: Than you Mayor.

Mayor Lago: To incentivize people to really join us.

Ms. Lopez: Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: We'll figure out exactly what we give, but we'll have some money available from my personal donation before people start talking about, we don't give money out, we don't have that type of budget here in the city, so we give personal donations. All my colleagues do for a litany of different charities. So, we'll do something nice. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. Lopez: Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you to both of you, great work. I want to mention a few quick items. I have a Town Hall meeting that I welcome all my colleagues and any employees who would like to attend, to please join us, November 2nd at 6 p.m. We are going to have Senator Ileana Garcia, who did an incredible job this year in regard to appropriations. She'll be joining us there and talking
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about state issues. We are also having a Solid Waste Sunshine Meeting, October 27th, between 5 and 7 p.m. Staff has been working very hard on a presentation that will be very detailed, current state of our Solid Waste Department, options, opportunities, new technology, more of an educational experience than anything having an open dialogue on what the Commission – let's see how we can continue to offer better services and be more sustainable and be really the City Beautiful moving forward. Besides that, I spoke to the Manager and our staff yesterday. I've called for our Sunshine meeting to discuss executive benefits and the conversation that we've been having for some time and salaries. The City Manager told us that we will be proceeding forward with a meeting on November 10th, is what we are trying to schedule.

City Manager Iglesias: After the...

Mayor Lago: After our next Commission meeting.

City Manager Iglesias: An Executive Session.

Mayor Lago: So, are we having it on the 9th or the 10th?

City Manager Iglesias: We are scheduling now Mayor.

Mayor Lago: So, I just want to make sure that we can get a date by the next 24 hours, so that we can start properly notifying any interested parties who wanted to attend that meeting to be present.

Commissioner Anderson: Would that be a 5 p.m. meeting?

Mayor Lago: Yes, it would be a 5 p.m., we called for a 5 p.m. meeting, along with the solid waste discussion is a 5 p.m. meeting. All these meetings that are important in nature are 5 p.m. meetings. I have two remaining items. I'd like to see if I can get a picture up for the first item.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can I ask you a quick question on the last item?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is there any reason that we can't just each be brought up to speed on whatever it is staff wants to communicate to us. My general understanding is that this was done pursuant to a compensation plan that was approved by this Commission pursuant to the prior City Manager's instructions and request, and then, if one of us has an actual question or concern about something in there, bring it to the Commission at a Commission meeting. Like I appreciate the idea of a Sunshine meeting, and I'm happy to have a discussion in the open at a Commission meeting. I guess my question is, what are we looking to do at the Sunshine meeting?

Mayor Lago: I think there are a lot of questions and then again, there's a lot of misinformation, something that has been brought up by a resident before. There's a continued effort to mislead and you have certain residents in this community that has a lot of questions and I want to make sure like you always do, that we be as transparent as possible and have this conversation in the open

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air, if there are any issues or any questions, we can do it. The county uses a little bit of a different format that we don't. The information is accessible, readily accessible through the budget. The county, for example, has all salaries and all compensation and all information of employee's salaries online on the website. You can literally see it; you can click, and you can see it. The purpose of the meeting to me was, there is a snowball effect, and it happens here very, very quickly, based on what one or two individuals say, and before you know it. I just got one right now, literally a text message that I can show you from a resident saying, pleading and begging stop the discussion on solid waste and garbage pits. I can't remove my trash pit. I said, where did you get the impression that I was going to remove your pit. Where did you get that impression? We are going to have a conversation about how the city can be better and more beautiful and how we can do things incentivizing people to move in a different direction. So, there's already, there's an effort to curtail these discussions by having misinformation and by misleading people. So, my point is that we have it on the public record, we have a discussion, and we move forward based on that discussion. And we can also take some sort of action or give the Manager direction as a team.

Commissioner Anderson: I think it's important to have a transparent discussion, because it does avoid the rumor-mill that can get rolling. If we want to be transparent, we need to be able to do this in the Sunshine.

Vice Mayor Mena: Commission meetings are in the Sunshine as well. So, I'm just saying, a) we gave instruction as a Commission when we approved the compensation plan, let's start there; b) the increases that have been discussed were, as far as I know, and if somebody has different information we can discuss it at the meeting, consistent with the approved plan approved by this Commission in the Sunshine. It's also in the budget, approved by this Commission. So, the idea that this was done not in the Sunshine a) is not true; b) I'm happy to have all the transparency in the world. Let's talk about it. My only question was, we can be informed by staff and if somebody wants to come out and say that they have a problem with one of the decisions, then they should ask for some sort of change. If we are being honest, I think that the Sunshine meeting has a potential to turn into a bit of a spectacle, and I'm not really clear on if we need an entire Sunshine meeting dedicated to a decision that's consistent with a compensation plan that this Commission approved. I'm happy to put all the information in the Sunshine and talk about it, but – you want to do a Sunshine meeting, I'll be there, but I'm just asking if it's absolutely necessary, if it can be part of a Commission item.

Mayor Lago: Listen, it could be part of the Commission, without a problem.

Vice Mayor Mena: In the Sunshine.

Mayor Lago: I don't have a problem, but the issue its already a spectacle, because you have entities and you have individuals in this community sending text messages to tens of thousands of people trying to intimidate and impose their will, so this Commission moves in a direction, which in my opinion, I don't see this Commission moving in that direction. You see a litany of other things that are happening, things that are being said that are incorrect, because I've talked to several employees to ask them in regard to, did they receive the magnitude of the benefits that are being... and there was another case. And also again, we have to be very careful when people are

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trying to manipulate the discussion for their own personal benefit. The best way to curtail that type of behavior is to have the conversation in the Sunshine, that's why I move in that direction, because I don't know any other way to address it, because it's the constant barrage of misinformation which has put us in a position where we have to address it.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, if I may say, we were planning on having a meeting with all of you individually before that Sunshine meeting and before the next Commission meeting, to properly show you where we are as far as compensation. However, one has to be living in a vacuum not to realize that there has been an issue as hiring nationwide. Finding people is extremely difficult. I have been almost 15 months trying to find a project manager and I can't do it. So, some of these things, I don't know why they come up, because you have to be living in an actual vacuum not to realize that this is something nationwide, this is not something that's just inherently a problem with Coral Gables. So, we intend to have an individual meeting with all of you to explain this whole situation and I would like to do it before our Executive Session at the end of the November 9th meeting.

Vice Mayor Mena: And just for the sake of clarity and not to mince words. The reason it's been brought up now is because the Fire Union is in the middle of negotiations with us relating to their collective bargaining agreement and this is a tactic that's being deployed to apply pressure to that negotiation. That's the reality of it. Anybody that wants to deny that I think is not being honest about what's going on, when entities go out of their way to publish the information when they have a coordinated animation on social media relating to the story within days, it's pretty obvious that what's going on here. So, if you want to have a Sunshine meeting and if our friend Mr. McCallister wants to come again from the county and hurl insults at the Mayor and at this Commission about public safety and make another spectacle out of that, let's do it, but I think at some point you do it to the detriment of your own staff and I think at some point you have to be honest about the impact it has on morale in the city, and I think we just have to be careful about continuing to add fuel to the fire instead of just moving forward and doing what we need to do on the votes that we'll be taking and the decisions we'll be making visa vie those negotiations, which I'm confident we will do.

Commissioner Fors: Can I add something? I think the Fire Union there's no doubt about it that they believe that this conversation regarding the executive packages is relevant to their ongoing and lengthy negotiations with respect to the collective bargaining agreement. The only thing that I disagree with is that they are certainly relevant to them, but if I remember correctly, the first person to discuss the compensation increases that came out in the budget was Maria Cruz during public comment, thereafter a blog wrote about it, and then without a doubt the Fire Union has brought that into their negotiation and their leverage, whether that's something that they feel is good for their strategy or not, that's up to them to make those decisions. But it was the resident Maria Cruz who first brought it up. Separate and apart from that, just so I'm clear, when you say Executive Session, we are talking about the Shade Session, right.

City Manager Iglesias: Shade Session for the fire contract.

Commissioner Fors: And that's going to be the day of...
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Vice Mayor Mena: The 9th.

Commissioner Fors: The 9th of the meeting.

City Manager Iglesias: After the Commission meeting.

Commissioner Fors: We are trying to do the Sunshine meeting before or after that?

Vice Mayor Mena: After that.

City Manager Iglesias: Because we would like to meet with all of you individually at a Shade Session, then we can have the Sunshine meeting after that. I need to meet with all of you individually and that gives me time to do so.

Mayor Lago: So, I want to also put something on the record and then we'll step onto, excuse me, Commissioner Menendez has a few comments. Again, I've spoken to many, many firefighters and I want to speak on behalf of the Commission, if my colleagues have a different opinion, please feel free. We are incredibly proud, incredibly proud to have you working for the city. We are blessed to have you working for the city. You are an integral part of this community, and many have come and talked to me about their concerns in regard to the approach by Mr. David Perez and the unions. This is not an issue against the firefighters. We are in the process of negotiations. Mr. David Perez took it upon himself to politicize these negotiations by sending tens of thousands of text messages, spreading false rumors, being in concert with a blog that also has spread false rumors, false information, excuse me, but I want people to understand that this Commission stands proudly with the men and women of the Fire Department. We appreciate your efforts, your leadership. Every single time that you go to someone's home, or their business and you assist, we are beyond grateful, and I have listened to many of you. I got stopped yesterday evening when I was leaving from a meeting in downtown by one of the firefighters who came up to me to talk to me about the issue and was very adamant on how disappointed they are with Mr. Perez and the route that he has decided to take. I want to be clear with you, in the most respectful way, we will not be intimidated. We will do what's in the best interest of the city and keep our promises to the police and firefighters, and to echo the sentiments of the Vice Mayor with Mr. Billy McCallister, there is no room for that type of discourse here in the city. It is disrespectful to our employees, and it demoralizes our employees. For him to come here and emasculate our Fire Department the way that he did, was shameful, and I will not stand for it. So, moving forward, I look forward to having these conversations in the Sunshine, because I think they are critically important to really putting this to rest. This is a very difficult job market, very difficult job market, but we must always remember, just like I remember everyday as the Mayor what a privilege it is to work and serve in this community. It is a true privilege to work and serve in this community. Commissioner Menendez.

Vice Mayor Mena: I agree with everything you just said.

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Commissioner Menendez: Thank you Mayor. My thoughts. I honestly believe that solutions can, solutions have, and solutions will be found here on the dais, among the members of the Commission, with the support of the administration, with the input of the community. Solutions, final determinations, final solutions, action taken is not going to be handled outside City Hall, they'll be here. It will involve everyone. As the Manager said, it doesn't have to be Coral Gables, just pick up the newspaper; private industry, major corporations are having a difficult time keeping employees. It's a competitive environment between one business and another business to draw workers, draw employees. Coral Gables is not different than any other organization or entity in that situation. So, I personally, as a resident, as a person, if I see that employees have the opportunity to have their salary go up some, get better benefits, I'm supportive of them. I would like to see more benefits spread out and I want to make sure everybody is well taken care of going forward. However, I think what was alluded to a little while ago, and I'm not going to point fingers at anyone group or anyone individual. We are entering into an interesting cycle that happens sometimes every two years in Coral Gables and sometimes happens every four years in Coral Gables. All you have to do is go back two and-a-half years when we were talking about Miracle Mile and the rezoning, and those meetings were so unlike the tradition of Coral Gables. People lost their cool, and I don't want the city, the Commission, or residents be drawn into a food fight, because that's what some people would like us to go into, a food fight, because some people, small minority do their best work in a food fight environment and that's not Coral Gables. So, I think there's a solution with regards to the salaries and the increases and the benefits going forward. Something as simple as any time that there is going to be a large-scale increase in benefits and salaries, there should be perhaps a separate memo that is circulated to the Commission so that it sort of stands out and if there are any questions they can be addressed. Something as simple as that. However, the structure of the Sunshine meeting, we have to manage it well, we have to put parameters there, because our community has been coming together and I really don't want the next few months for our community to be torn apart, because there's some people here and I'm not talking about in this building, that would like nothing better than to have chaos and a food fight happen, because it's not good for our community, it's not good for our residents, it's not good for our city. So, I think we have to be smart moving forward.

Commissioner Fors: I have a couple of things to add. First, I think one mistake that's made up here frequently is, sort of taking a big issue and sometimes a controversial issue and trying to personify it by finding boogie men or boogie women to point their finger at. I think what we are discussing here is a larger issue of a collective bargaining negotiation that's been going on for a while, and I think its counter-productive to sort of try to create or find or point to villains in that process and name people by name, especially when they are not here. Secondly, we can tell stories about having run into firefighters and the firefighter saying that they don't like what approach is being taken and suggesting that that firefighter that he ran into is happy with it, but let's not forget, we can't deny we are dealing with the fact here, that the Fire Union, I'm talking about the Fire Union because it's their collective bargaining negotiation that's pending, has been presented with the city's last offer and a majority of them rejected. So, I don't think this is a situation where somebody is going rouge and the majority of the union doesn't agree with them. They voted on this, and they rejected it and that's part of the negotiation process. I'm sure they'll be more discussions, but a vote has been taken on this and the majority of firefighters have rejected it. Third, I've been the

recipient of a lot of those text messages too. I don't say I agree with that strategy and tactic. It is a
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way of disseminating information, but I also don't think you can put back all on the Fire Union if you can at all. First, we don't know for sure it was the Fire Union, but even if it was, some of those texts have dealt with complaints by the Police Union regarding their current compensation and by the motor pool, regarding their compensation. So, if we're going to talk about text messages being sent, we can't assign all that to the Fire Union. We have several departments and several trades in the city who are leveraging these or levying these complaints at this time. That being said, I have nothing further.

Commissioner Anderson: I have a few comments.

Mayor Lago: May I respond. Again, we can act like nothing is happening, but we all receive text messages in this community, and they were all meant to sway and intimidate and push the Commission to provide further incentives and a better offer than what we offered to the firefighters. It's simple. No one on this Commission is going to be intimidated Nobody is going to better an offer based on a few thousand text messages that are sent, because not one resident called me. I don't know if you received any residents calls that said, hey Vince, you better do something, because they are going to keep sending those text messages. And yes, Commissioner Fors, it was the firefighters. We all know it was the firefighters, both locally and at the county in concert to effectuate change on two issues: number one, annexation; number two, the issue of the contract. You bring up the police officers. The police officers were provided a contract which they accepted and it's my understanding, correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Manager, Raquel is here, they are still currently valid, correct.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, this year.

Mayor Lago: For another...

City Manager Iglesias: This year.

Mayor Lago: For this year. So, they are not out of contract and it's my understanding that the moment that we finalize our negotiations with the firefighters, we will be moving briskly, immediately to start negotiations with the police officers.

City Manager Iglesias: That is correct Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I don't want to get into too many details, but everybody here on this Commission knows that we made an offer to the police officers, and we were in lockstep in offering the firefighters the same offer, and that has changed. So, without getting into too many discussions that were mentioned in the Shade meeting out of respect for the negotiations, I do not want to move in the direction that certain people have in this community where they start using those tactics, intimidation and pushing and rumors and false information in an attempt to somehow, someday sway us to say, okay, forget about it, throw the towel in and just give them what they want. That's not the way things work in the real world. They don't. And to say it was the motor pool, I know it wasn't the motor pool, because the motor pool doesn't work that way; and I know that none of the other employees will conduct themselves here. To say that it was police, is an insult also. So, again,

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moving forward, we have an offer on the table, we have a Shade meeting which will happen on the 9th, I'm looking forward to that meeting, and putting this behind us, taking a necessary action, moving forward and the moment that we resolve the pension negotiations, excuse me, the discussions and negotiations with the firefighters, we will move onto the police immediately and we've been very clear that that is our stance and police is well aware of that, because they understand it and they want to move expeditiously also. Again, the intent of my conversation here was not to even bring this up, we are moving on. We are moving on from it; we are going to address it on the 9th. I just hope we're all ready to really negotiate and play ball and get through this and not politicize this process anymore. This should be handled the way business terms are handled, sitting down in a room and having a conversation.

Commissioner Anderson: Mayor.

Commissioner Fors: I have to say something because I've been – I'm sorry Commissioner.

Commissioner Anderson: You know you do this all the time.

Commissioner Fors: Give me a second.

Mayor Lago: Can I have Commissioner Anderson – Commissioner Anderson go ahead, please.

Commissioner Anderson: I'd like to dovetail a couple of comments that were offered, Commissioner Menendez as well. I'd like to make decisions not in a vacuum but being able to have better information. I've had employees privately before, you always research what's out there in the industry; what is your competition to be able to get positions filled, and we need to be able to have that type of information for the entire employee base in order to make intelligent decisions. We do it for our Capital Improvement projects, we weigh which to prioritize, which ones we need to move forward first. We don't always agree with staff on that, we've pushed the Fire Station ahead from the recommendation that the staff had made, because we know it's a life safety issue. So, I'm looking forward to the Sunshine meeting. The memo idea that Commissioner Menendez had, I think is exactly some of the process so that we are better informed and I think the public will be better informed, instead of hearing information out of context that distorts what the real picture is, so they understand what the competition is out there and other industries and what the wages are out there and other industries that are competing with us, then what seems to be unreasonable in a vacuum is ultimately reasonable. So, I'm looking forward to the Sunshine meeting and let's have a robust discussion.

City Manager Iglesias: Just to be clear, we haven't done anything that has not been approved by this Commission.

Commissioner Anderson: I understand. Just more detail in the memo, more comparisons, the research that you're aware of in making some of the recommendations that have been made.

Mayor Lago: So, moving on. Mr. Clerk, can we have my photo up, please.

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Commissioner Fors: I have one more comment to make.

Mayor Lago: You can make them during your time after I'm done with my comments. This is a simple sculpture, beautiful in nature. Its sitting in front of Hillstones for the past five, six, seven years. We talk about ADA as an issue here in the community and we talk about beautifying our street. If you look around you, you have a bench, you have two garbage cans, you have a traffic box, and you also have a sculpture. I'm currently working with my team, Public Works, and the county to see what we can do about those traffic boxes. I think technology has advanced significantly where we could potentially even make them smaller. We contacted FPL, it's not FPL, that is Traffic Light Management, my understanding, and Mr. Cueto is helping us in the county. We are going to hopefully addressing that issue with the ACM and the City Manager and our Public Works team to see if we can find some sort of solution for that. At a minimum, at least reduce them in size and tuck them away somewhere where they are not in the middle there. What I'm asking for support from my colleagues on the Commission is, I would like to open up and move that sculpture to maybe a park or move it somewhere, if it's possible. Come in Solanch, please, you are always welcome.

Ms. Lopez: Solanch, City Manager's office and Belkys is here with me as well. So, this one and the others along Miracle Mile are privately owned. We had allowed them as a city to stay out there after the Venetian Pole exhibit. We've already, through Economic Development and Historic, communicated with the owners and we are working with them because they are aware that they need to now be moved. So that's already in the process, because they are privately owned.

Mayor Lago: So, what I would like to do, I think there would be a hindrance to moving them because of the weight and the significance. They've got to rent a truck. Could we facilitate maybe moving them with our forces, because I've been, this is not staff, this is – we've been getting to the bottom of the ownership and all the process in place. I would love to see those moved to kind of open that walkway up and give it a little more breathing room. It could really accentuate the beauty of the corridor.

Economic Development Director Perez: Mayor, I believe the letters will be going out. We have identified all the owners already. It's not as difficult as it seems, because the pole is attached from the concrete base, so when they take it, they will only be taking the pole.

Ms. Lopez: The base is ours.

Economic Development Director Perez: Yes, the base is ours, and will be taken to 72nd. However...

Vice Mayor Mena: The base is ours?

Economic Development Director Perez: Yes. This concrete base is ours, so it was made for – so what we could do is, we could find a solution where we can remove them all now, put them in a certain location, have the business or the owner pick it up from a certain location.

Mayor Lago: So that's what I'd like to do, especially getting into the holiday season. This is part of the plan of cleaning the streets, the facades, the beautification of the walls that are in construction. I really think that there are positive benefits to this. I don't know how my colleagues feel about it, but I'd like to see if maybe we could do it, and maybe store it at 72nd Avenue. They can come and pick it up there, they can be notified. Anybody have any concerns with that?

City Manager Iglesias: Even if the owner allows us to do that, we have no issue doing that.

Mayor Lago: Do you need a resolution to move this forward?

Ms. Lopez: I think we need to reach out to the owners and get their okay to move them.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's on our public right-of-way.

Mayor Lago: It's on our public right-of-way, so.

City Manager Iglesias: We'd like to work with the owners also, but it is on our public right-of-way so we can move them whenever we wish.

Mayor Lago: I'm going to pass the gavel. I'm going to make a motion to have those removed and placed on 72nd Avenue and have the owners notified that they can come pick up their Venetian Poles there.

City Attorney Ramos: When those were put in our right-of-way, what was the agreement with those owners?

Ms. Lopez: That we would allow them to keep them there.

City Manager Iglesias: I think we need to look at that.

City Attorney Ramos: When we have an encroachment agreement, we say we can remove it at any time. Did it have that language?

City Manager Iglesias: I am not sure. That was done five or six – I don't know.

Vice Mayor Mena: Assuming that's the case, I think if there's a problem, come back and tell us.

City Attorney Ramos: I just want to make sure, because I don't want to be moving private property.

City Manager Iglesias: If there is no encroachment agreement, then we can move forward and store them at 72nd Avenue, and they can do with them as the owners wish at that point.

Mayor Lago: So, if there is an encroachment agreement, they are there forever?

City Attorney Ramos: No, it depends. Most encroachment agreements say that the city can move them at any time, so that's a question. What's the language in the agreement?

Mayor Lago: So, what I would like to do is, while you are researching that. I don't want to wait another month. So, I made a motion, if there are no issues, we can move it forward. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: All in favor.

All: Aye.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Great work Belkys. Great work Solanch. Thank you so much. I have one more item that I'd like to put up photo. So, these are multiple photos. So, this is on Laguna, right in front of Artigiano. These are sidewalks that I've been working with Deena and our Public Works Department. So, this is a tree that was probably cut down five years ago and was never replaced. After five years its growing back, see the little leaves there. I think if we wait maybe 50 years, the tree will be back. I'm being facetious. My point is that this has been like this for a long time, and that whole street has been completely and utterly abandoned and not been maintained. Next photo. The sidewalks are dirty, cracked, broken. This is in Merrick Park, by the way. Next photo. You can see the growth – the next photo. The grates that go around are either missing, they've been stolen, and if you look closely, I know it's a stubbing hazard, because I stubbed my toe on the grate. My concern is that somebody will get hurt, fall and potentially really injury themselves. Next photo – same issue. Next photo. You'll see my bigger concern. This is happening throughout. These are grates that are elevated two and three inches off the ground. They are a major tripping hazard. I've had residents come and talk to me and say, listen, I've tripped on this grate. What can we do?

Commissioner Anderson: I don't think they are needed.

Mayor Lago: And this is another one. So, all the way to Neiman Marcus it literally is an issue; the grates are overgrown, sidewalks are cracked. At least we should trim those saplings. You call it saplings, right Deena, the overgrowth.

Ms. Bell: Deena Bell, Greenspace Management. These are smokes that were there probably pre-Merrick Park, we've done site walk through. Identified they are really overgrowing their locations. They've popped up curbs; they've popped up tree grates. So, I think it's time we have to have a project to fix the whole infrastructure of the street.

Mayor Lago: I think that we have a development that's coming, supposedly across, literally adjacent to this property, on the building that abuts Artigiano and it faces Neiman Marcus, so they are probably going to have to fix all those curbs. But I would at least like to trim the trees while we wait for that and maybe remove some of those grates and sand down so that that metal isn't like a potential tripping hazard, while we wait for that development to come into place which is going to have to replace all those sidewalks anyway, because it's a pretty significant development.

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Public Works Director Diaz: We'll double-check the specific development, maybe we can spruce the area up. Unfortunately, we are talking about this specific area and ultimately in order to fix those sidewalks, we believe that those trees have to go.

Commissioner Anderson: Can't you just eliminate some of the cement there and add some landscaping.

Public Works Director Diaz: We looked at that. Some of those roots are above the curb, they are lifting the curb from the pavement in some areas. The roots are mangled with some of the metal frames around it. So, it would be very, very difficult.

Commissioner Anderson: You can cut those roots. You know oaks put roots down.

Mayor Lago: I don't want to cut down trees down just to cut them down. That's a perfectly healthy tree. What I would do there is try to find another solution instead of cutting the tree down. I know that you guys are the experts, but there has to be some sort of other solution instead of cutting those trees down.

Public Works Director Diaz: We can look into it a little further.

Mayor Lago: Yes, it would be nice.

City Manager Iglesias: We would look at that, see if we can save the trees.

Ms. Bell: We'll look at them on a tree-by-tree basis. I did a walk-through, and there are, I don't know, 15 or 20 of them through the whole corridor, so we'll have to address them on a tree-to-tree basis.

City Manager Iglesias: One of the issues, Mayor, is we have 41,000 trees in the right-of-way, so this is a big issue, lifting up sidewalks, lifting up grates throughout the city. It's really a continuous maintenance issue, and it can be quite costly because of the fact that we do have those Tree City U.S.A. city, and when you have 41,000 trees in the right-if-way there's a lot of maintenance. So, we'll be happy to look at that and see how we can save the tree. It's a nice tree.

Mayor Lago: I think if you go there, let's say if you go there mid-day and you experience the fact that there is great shade there, and when there is that much concrete and there is that much asphalt, it's just nice to be able to have some sort of canopy there to protect the residents and also the businesses.

City Manager Iglesias: In the future, we need to look at our sidewalk program, because the sidewalk program is really getting hurt by the fact that there is so much maintenance, lifting and so forth, so it hurts the new sidewalk, and you have to go back and replace existing sidewalks that has been lifted and has been damaged by the trees. So, I think we are going to – I think in the following year's budget, I think we are going to take a look at that and see what we can do as far
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as looking at maybe different maintenance budget from a new sidewalk budget, because of the effects of the trees on the overall one sidewalk, sidewalk budget that we have, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: We didn't have the quality of staff at a certain point that understood that you need a ten-foot space for the tree, and I think if we just give the tree more space, number one, no one's going to be walking that close to the tree trunk and you can put some nice landscaping under there.

Ms. Bell: It's just the tree root ball space is very small; you know the live oak is a large species, so the roots are actually circling themselves now and the trees are becoming stunted so not many of them are in good health. So, we'll study them on a tree-to-tree basis.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, we did that on Miracle Mile, some of them had to go, because they were in poor health, but others were saved, and we just developed the design around it and gave them more root space.

City Manager Iglesias: That was done, yes. That was done through structural soil, there's also structural support. Down there we have anchors holding the tree down; structural soil was used, that was a very expensive design.

Mayor Lago: Well, thank you. I'd like to see something in the near future brought to us and maybe we can work on that development, Oscar Roger is the developer.

Public Works Director Diaz: We'll double-check the details.

Mayor Lago: I think you can speak to the attorney who happens to be here and he can give you a little bit of an idea, part of the concessions, so I'd like to see at a minimum, maybe we can even move some of the trees that are healthy that you deem appropriate that are in the way, if the sidewalk is too small maybe we can move them.

City Manager Iglesias: And also, Mayor, we have the covenants online now, so we can check the covenants the responsibility for it.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Anderson, is there anything you would like to add before we adjourn.

Commissioner Anderson: On the chili cook-off.

Mayor Lago: Yes – come. I'm going. I'm going. Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: Good.

Mayor Lago: Anything else.

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Commissioner Fors: I have a few things I'd like to add.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Fors.

Commissioner Fors: First, I want to apologize to Commissioner Anderson for trying to speak ahead of you but understand that I felt that I needed to do it and I think we saw why a few moments ago. We are talking about a very important controversial issue that the Mayor does not want to continue talking about in the Sunshine. He'll often jump to you before I'm done discussing it, and if I don't try to jump in before you, then we move on to a little blue pole in front of Hillstone.

Commissioner Anderson: I had flagged the Mayor and again, this is not the first time this has happened between us, and you jumped ahead, especially on the fire issue. We will have our Shade meeting, we will have our Sunshine meeting, and we'll be able to be fully informed on all the issues.

Commissioner Fors: Well, I'm sorry for jumping ahead of you and its because he often employs these tactics with regard to the fire issue that's why its happened with regard to the fire issue, but I'm sorry, nonetheless. Secondly, I wanted to clarify something regarding the way my statement about the text messages were reframed, just want to make clear that I'm not accusing police and fire, sorry, police and the motor pool of sending any text messages, just to make that clear. I was only pointed out that the substance of some of these text messages and corresponding YouTube videos dealt with police compensation and the situation at the motor pool, they didn't all deal with fire. Third, I want to place on the record that I believe another practice, which is unproductive which deals with, in addition to trying to personify problems and identify boogie men or boogie women instead of taking the problem by the horns and discussing it as an issue that pertains to the whole city is, trying to accuse people of politicizing issues. Its not the first time or the last month or so that when the Mayor does not agree with one side of an argument, he'll say that he'll accuse the other side of politicizing it. In my opinion, claiming something is being politicized in and of itself politicizes it. I think that's unproductive as well. I'm not going to go any further into the compensation of anybody, motor pool, fire or police, we are going to have meetings for that, but anyway you slice it, whether you agree with the tactics being employed or what tactics are being employed during these negotiations. At the end of the day, the buck stops with the Commission. At the end of the day, the city is the employer, and if your employees, if there is unrest among them, at the end of the day you're not doing your job of keeping a smooth high moral environment, you may not be, and you need to look in the mirror and ask yourself if you are approaching this the right way or not. That's all that I hope that we do during the next Sunshine meeting and Shade Session. I'm not saying that that's the case or not, but everybody remembers that at the end of the day what our employees do and how they feel whether we agree with it or not, or whether they are even justified in feeling or acting that way, ultimately is our problem and it needs to be resolved one way or another. I hope we can do that without truly politicizing it by naming people by name and by claiming that its being politicized. With that, I have no further comments.

Mayor Lago: How about I respond really quick. I look forward to having a conversation in our Shade Session to address the Fire Union and as I did last year, and I will do in the next month, I'll be having two meetings that I welcome all my colleagues to attend, which Commissioner Fors
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never attended and that was my meeting with all the employees in multiple different locations, not only here in City Hall, but in 72nd Avenue, to meet face to face without the Manager, without directors and executives, to face what their concerns are, what their issues are and how we can continue to work together. I also have a secondary meeting and I look forward to meeting with all the executives and the directors, like I did last year, to have a separate conversation in regard to what we're doing to push this city forward.

Commissioner Anderson: And you've Sunshined those, right.

Mayor Lago: I Sunshine those meetings and I welcome everybody, and just like I do every single Friday, when you face the music, meetings start at 2 o'clock and I get not only residents and business owners, but I get also employees who come to meet with me to discuss every single issue, and I welcome everyone, starting at 2 o'clock this Friday to come and see me. Vice Mayor, would you like to add anything else to the discussion?

Vice Mayor Mena: No. Thank you all for everything.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Meeting adjourned.