

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-12
August 24, 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

Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-12

Preliminary presentation regarding “Youth Zone” traffic initiative for areas that experience youth activity (Sponsored by Commissioner Fors)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto G-12, Commissioner Fors.

Commissioner Fors: Alright. I’ll just give a brief update. The Youth Zone initiative that I’ve been working on. I’m very excited about it, it’s a shame there are no residents here.

Commissioner Anderson: But they can look at your recording.

Commissioner Fors: Only 16 on Zoom, but they can look at my recording. I will say that we received a message from two folks that they are watching on Channel 77.

Mayor Lago: Your mom and your grandmother.

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[Laughter]

Commissioner Fors: I'll leave them nameless, but I do think there is a distinction between that because we were told have it during the evening, the residents come and participate, if you are watching on television you don't necessarily intend to participate, and therefore we are really talking about the preference of time which you want to watch the meeting, which obviously you can get around by recording the meeting or watching a rerun. Nevertheless, getting back to the Youth Zone initiative very briefly, I don't want to take a vote on anything today, we've just, I think sort of not really crystalized, but set out the four main elements of the proposal, Ms. DeZayas as well as the Assistant City Manager. In a nutshell, as I've said before, it's the concept of having youth zones, which are something like school zones, except in areas where there are not schools, but there is high youth activity, such as exhibit A, parks, especially certain areas, like the Youth Center that are recreational as well as adjacent to across the street from places like the library. Four main components, number one is, going to be speed limits, that's a broader issue that we are working on in various different areas, but that's going to be a component here and that obviously involves the cooperation of the county, etc., and other government authorities and that's sort of a slice of a bigger plan that's already underway. A component of potentially sidewalks, one example being a group of residents that I met with who live near Betsy Adams Park where Betsy Adams Park does not have parking, actually parking on a vacant lot right now which probably won't be vacant for long, but there are no sidewalks leading to that park. So perhaps a program where the city would fund parks, sorry, sidewalks leading to neighborhood parks to increase pedestrian safety in youth zones 100 percent, instead of 50/50 with the owner. In my view, there wouldn't be that many situations, but this is something that would be an element of youth zones. Third, general aesthetics and signage. One thing I want to emphasize, and I emphasize to staff is that I think we should try to do this in a memo that I asked the City Manager to...said it best, incrementally. I don't want to try to create entire youth zones from one day to the next or not the entire package that is. I want to get the low hanging fruit first, perhaps start working on concept packages for different aesthetic look and feel to those areas, combined with perhaps, not at this time, a reduction of speed limit, if that's not something that can be accomplished immediately, but an urging of slowing down in those areas, a reminder that it's a high activity youth area, along with a campaign and public relations.

Mayor Lago: Are you going to try to do traffic calming at all in those areas?

Commissioner Fors: Not really, sort of, yes. The idea would be to traffic calm in the same way that they become special areas, but we were actually thinking about trying to exempt structural work, youth zones are exempt from traffic calming, in other words, this formula goes into just change the feel and theme of that area. One point of discussion still is, what that area is, how far do you go, what's the radius stemming from that park. There is also the question speaking of low hanging fruit, perhaps attacking a pilot area like the Youth Zone, for instance first, seeing how it works there, but what I really wanted to do today was sort of give you an update on that what I've been working on and get an opinion, not the opinion, but the consent of the rest of my colleagues, or at least a majority of them, to continue using staff to crystalize this plan; the plan being to come back, maybe not the next meeting, but the meeting after, with a resolution which speaks about

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potential measures more definitively that we can actually vote on, then staff can move forward in terms of talking to the county and working on certain plans and expending time knowing that the majority of the Commission is behind them. So, if there is no preemptive objection to the exploration of this plan, that's what we'll do on the next go around.

Mayor Lago: I like it. I'm looking forward to it.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm looking forward to it.

Mayor Lago: I'm looking forward to you presenting the legislation. I think it's great.

Commissioner Fors: Alright. Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Totally support.

Commissioner Fors: Alright.