

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item J-3
October 10, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Safety Director, Frank Fernandez

Public Speaker(s)

Henry Iler
Craig Collar

Agenda Item J-3 [12:08:18 p.m.]

Commission update on annexation feasibility report

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I had set time certain Commission update on annexation feasibility report for 11:30 (a.m.) and it is now 40 minutes late, which is fine, and we have a neighbor from Little Gables here, and I'd like to get a status report.

City Attorney Leen: So Mr. Mayor, I would like to call up our experts and our attorney on this matter. I would just like to preface it by saying that once you hear the report today and hear from the public, the next step, so keep this in mind just to give you context, the next step would be if the Commission is satisfied and would like to proceed, at that point you would direct staff to set up a public hearing, which would be at 5:01 p.m. an evening this month most likely, where we

could have the public hearing where the Commission would formally decide whether to proceed with the annexation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. I was Mayor from '93 to 2001 and this was one of the issues that were discussed at length at the time. We wound up incorporating Hammock Lakes, Snapper Creek, Pine Bay Estates and others, and at that time we did not take up Little Gables, but we decided it was not convenient at the time. Today our situation is different; Little Gables is in the middle of Coral Gables, it's surrounded as you can see from the very comprehensive report, surrounded by us on southwest and east. It impacts our safety issues, we impact theirs, and we should provide services to them and isn't an area that today because it is not in Coral Gables, it doesn't have our zoning codes, it doesn't have our strictures, but they would be grandfathered in with whatever they have today, as long as it complies with the County building code, if it doesn't then it would not be approved; but personally, looking forward to having Little Gables amongst us, as well as, the High Pines Ponce-Davis neighborhoods. I wanted to separate them because Little Gables, I think, is farther ahead. We did a survey there; 68 percent of the residents were for; we had a public meeting at the Youth Center, many of you attended, and I'd like to hear your report and look forward to the public hearing where we will decide what to do sometime in the month of October.

Mr. Iler: Members of the Commission, my name is Henry Iler, I'm a planning consultant based in Stewart, Florida and with me this evening is Craig Collar. We have a PowerPoint, not too long and I know you are a little bit busy, so we'll have time to go through that quickly. Of course the two areas you know well, the Little Gables area off of Tamiami Trail and High Pines Ponce-Davis over on Red Road and Sunset. Little Gables – about 200 acres in size, we've got a very updated number of voters, we've just got the voter list from the County Elections Department this summer, 1,624 as of about three months ago. Household income around \$60,000, owner occupied homes about 50 percent a little bit more. It's mainly low density residential; actually the residential except for the Gables trailer park is very compatible lot size-wise with its neighbors to the east and to the south. A lot of those lot sizes are 3,500, 5,000 square feet, not that much different from the Gables area in that part of North Gables. You have High Pines to the south, 675 acres big, really about three times larger than Little Gables, population around 3,000, but we also have a good voter count there as well, 2,382 as of this summer.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor if I can step in. The reason why we are looking at voter counts is because they are the only ones that will be able to formerly vote as a part of annexation, so I don't want you to think we are fixated on it for another other reason other than that is the pool of the residents that will be able to make a decision to move forward.

Mr. Iler: The owner occupied homes here are quite a bit higher, around 80 percent, and household income averages about \$158,000. The application to the County is quite involved, I have a list here, you've seen these before, some of the Commissioners. Of course you have to give the reasons for the annexation, a statement as to whether the areas are enclaves and actually both of these areas are complete enclaves when you consider all cities around their boundaries. Little Gables of course surrounded on three sides by Coral Gables, City of Miami on the north, total surround by cities; High Pines and Ponce-Davis once again, totally surrounded on three sides by Coral Gables and on the west by South Miami, so really these are enclaves 100 percent under the County definition. You have to give them land use and zoning plan with your application, the services that you are going to provide and a timetable for that and a number of other things; and also submit a petition with at least 20 percent of the voters supporting the annexation application. So that's a very important point. If you have more than 250 voters in an area, you have the 20 percent rule come into effect; and then finally, you have to have a resolution from the local City Commission forwarding the application and asking the County to consider the annexation of the area. On the next slide, we have the approval criteria that the County uses and a lot of them are very similar to what you might look at. One of them is financial impact on the County's budget, obviously, a very big one. And, speaking of the financial impact on the City, these numbers, similar numbers were given to you about six months ago in February and they have changed a little bit, but not a whole lot. The estimated revenues a total for both areas over an 8 year period, 2020 to 2027 was the period that we choose, it's going to take a year or two here for things to kind of kick in and the City to take over, if these are annexed, estimated income from both areas about \$36 million; about \$3 million negative from Little Gables and about \$38 million positive over that 8 year period from High Pines Ponce-Davis. Of that the Public Works Department would expect to hire about 11 new workers and 8 vehicles, they have to purchase 8 vehicles; the Police would have about 8 new officers by their current estimate, and 2 NSA's, Neighborhood Service Aides, and about \$748,000 in new vehicles and equipment. The Fire Department would not have a staffing need right off the bat, but they would expect over the 8 year period to be hiring something in the area of about 12 firefighters over time and about 300,000 plus new vehicles. Also...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm sorry; I'm going to have to interrupt. As it relates to Public Safety with Police, it was my understanding that there would be three officers in each of the zones, plus a neighborhood resource, we needed two school resource officers, which are not officially in the police officer cadre, just as a distinction and the Neighborhood Safety Aide. So Commissioner Mena, this has been an important issue for you that if we are going to look at annexing, how do we make sure from a public safety standpoint that we are well staffed, that our residents are not compromised in our desire to have public safety in the annexed areas as well. So, we have added three police officers which is a zone, they work 8 hours, 24 – a zone for Little Gables and a zone for the High Pines Ponce-Davis, if it moves forward; and then because

Epiphany and Lourdes is our schools, we have budgeted for school resource officers in those schools even though they are private schools, and then the Neighborhood Safety Aides, one in each area with the vehicles to come.

Commissioner Mena: What exactly is the distinction between a school resource officer, just that just mean that they are there for dismissal and arrival and things like that?- they are not regular patrol, fulltime just dedicated to the schools. OK. So setting those two aside, its three per area, three new officers, right, how does that compare to the rest of the City in terms of, I don't know if you look at this, Director Fernandez, from the perspective of....

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm not trying to highjack your presentation, I just didn't want the public to think that we were adding 8 new police officers into the equation, because its nuanced differently, we are we well covered, its new police officers added, but I think that there are details that the Director can assist with.

Commissioner Mena: But, I want to be clear on a couple things; one is the three in each area on patrol, that's six and you have the two school resource officers, these will be new hires?

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Those will be new additional positions, new hires.

Commissioner Mena: New officers, when you say additional positions you can take somebody from a desk job and put them out...

Public Safety Director Fernandez: No, no. What we have right now we are budgeted for 192 total sworn positions. These positions will be above and beyond the 192.

Commissioner Mena: So it will be 200.

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Yes sir.

Commissioner Mena: OK. How does this compare as far, and I don't know if you look at this in terms of per capita; obviously the High Pines Ponce-Davis area is a much larger geographic area, although not necessarily much larger in terms of population, so how does this compare to the rest of the City in terms of staffing?

Public Safety Director Fernandez: It's about a 2.5 square mile area the officer will be patrolling, in some cases down to two miles, so it will be consistent with most of our zones in the City.

Commissioner Mena: But High Pines Ponce-Davis is, just looking at the numbers here, is more than three times as large geographically than Little Gables, so obviously those ratios will be very different if you are having three officers...

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Right, but we are also overlapping the officers that are down there right now in concurrent zones, so the overlap; think about the radius so they will overlap each other. Additionally, the three officers obviously would not cover days off, so the officer will be covered by existing resources, so off-setting those three with additional resources that we have with the 3.8 officers per thousand in Coral Gables.

Commissioner Mena: I assume these projected numbers in officers you had input in this and were involved in providing these numbers or is this something that was done by....

Public Safety Director Fernandez: That's staff and myself working on these numbers.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me ask something along these lines too. We surround this area today and I think it's not realistic to think that we don't have the need for those officers today, because they are smack in the middle of us, you follow what I mean? Yes, we would have to patrol that area, but that area has an impact on Coral Gables today...

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Absolutely.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli:....and continue to have an impact whether it's part of us or not and it's not that we are incorporating something in northwest whatever it is, and we need new officers for there, they impact Coral Gables today.

Public Safety Director Fernandez: No doubt. As we mentioned during the Town Hall meeting that you had Mr. Mayor, it just makes logical sense for Little Gables, because we border it on three sides; on three sides you have police officers that are circling that area and many times they do go into that area just incidentally when they are stopping a car or passing through, so we are actually policing a portion of that area just by being present, not that we answer calls and that happens on both ends of the City, both in High Pines, but in particularly more frequently in the Little Gables area, because of the three covered areas that we have.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you. That's all I have on that issue.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, the eight positions are two...

Commissioner Mena: Two school resource officers and then three.

Vice Mayor Keon: Those are police officers, sworn officers?

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Yes ma'am, all police officers.

Vice Mayor Keon: They are all police officers.

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Yes and two Neighborhood Safety Aides; one for each neighborhood.

Commissioner Mena: Do we typically assign a school resource officer to every school?

Public Safety Director Fernandez: We do assign them; we have them assigned out to the public schools. In this particular case you don't have any schools in Little Gables, but in High Pines you do have Epiphany and Lourdes Academy, they are private schools, but they are large schools, so it's our recommendation that a school resource officer assigned there. Today Miami-Dade County does have an officer; he's assigned to that school, periodically I believe comes in and out. I don't know what particular operations at Miami-Dade, but I do understand having paid thousands of dollars in tuition to both of those schools that I see the school resource officers there. We also have Sunset Elementary.

Commissioner Mena: Wouldn't Sunset come in also?

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Sunset Elementary is another school, so we have Lourdes Academy and Epiphany as one, because they are back-to-back, and then Sunset Elementary is the other school. Again, one is private the other one is public. We believe that we should provide services to both.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Sunset is within Coral Gables as it is today anyway.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: If it's annexed it would become a part of Coral Gables, right now it is in the Ponce-Davis area.

Public Safety Director Fernandez: Across the street from Coral Gables.

Commissioner Lago: We just reap all the benefits of it.

Commissioner Mena: I have a video of that from this morning.

Commissioner Lago: We should call a Sunshine Meeting for that, you want to do it?

Commissioner Quesada: When you were discussing – OK, when Commissioner Mena was asking you about what officers, police officers basically stationed at schools, full-time with a private school, with an elementary school, how much of a need is there for that? Other than traffic and parking issues, it seems like a waste of – please correct me if I’m wrong, I have zero experience with this. Is it, is it not, does that officer shift to other locations all the time?

Public Safety Director Fernandez: It’s a very sensitive topic for the community. Do you need an officer fulltime at a school; you know Sandy Hook Elementary and what happened there, parents will tell you, yes, I want a police officer at the school fulltime. That’s a very sensitive topic. In some cases here we have redundancy, because we have Miami-Dade Schools Police that is also assigned to some of these public schools. So for example, Coral Gables High School, we have a Miami-Dade Schools police officer assigned there, but we also have a Coral Gables police officer, so there are two assigned to that school. That happens throughout all of Miami-Dade County.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Any other comments or questions? The next step I guess is for us to call a public hearing, a City hearing to all Little Gables property owners and those property owners that live 600 feet outside the boundaries.

Mr. Iler: The next step is to recommend to staff or to direct staff to advertise a public hearing, put together a resolution that’s necessary and any other papers and have that meeting in the near future.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would encourage all Commissioners to attend that meeting, because I attended the last one and I’ve attended all of them, as a matter of fact, and it’s very interesting, the concerns; it’s very, very interesting to see what they have to say and we learn a lot.

Commissioner Mena: Are we publishing those to our existing residents as well?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well we are publishing them out 600 feet outside.

Commissioner Lago: Is that the standard protocol?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

City Attorney Leen: Well Mr. Mayor, just so for the record, this will only be for Little Gables.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Little Gables – yes.

City Attorney Leen: ...with that annexation, that's proceeding now. You are also going to prepare the application.

Mr. Iler: Right.

City Attorney Leen: The 20 percent signatures.

Mr. Iler: We are a little further along in Little Gables, because we've done the survey there and we have petitions returned, over 24 percent returned from the voters, so we are a lot further along. As far as Ponce-Davis and High Pines we are ready, I think staff is ready within a week or two to actually send out a petition there and we've got that already approved by County staff who has been working on all that, but per your direction, we'd be ready to do...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And this will come before us for an official meeting for us to decide whether to proceed or not.

City Attorney Leen: And Mr. Mayor, the Mayor has been very clear and the Commission has supported this that we move forward with Little Gables as quickly as possible, so they are going to go forward independently.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: Do we then give direction to staff to send out the surveys for High Pines Ponce-Davis?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. I think they are in the process of doing it.

Vice Mayor Keon: I thought you just said that we have to give direction for that?

City Attorney Leen: There could be unanimous consent.

Vice Mayor Keon: Give them the consent; I think they need that procedurally.

City Attorney Leen: I would like the Commission to direct staff in a vote to proceed with setting the public hearing and to send out the notice, if it's acceptable to you Mr. Mayor.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, I'll make the motion to proceed with Little Gables.

Commissioner Lago: Second the motion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: All those in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Opposed – likewise. OK.

Mr. Collar: Just on that public hearing there will be an action item, which is the resolution which if you adopt gets submitted along with the petition to the County.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Mena: I said this every time this topic has come up in the past and I'm going to say it every time it comes up in the future. We just talked about an item previously where maybe the procedure wasn't what our residents would have liked for it to be. We need to be mindful of making sure that for these Town Hall meetings we are having for the areas that are being potentially annexed, we should try to include our current residents as well, I think it's important for them. I went to the last meeting as well, Mr. Mayor, and it's very informative. Staff did a great job of letting everybody know what would be involved. I think it's important to let our current residents know how this would work as well, because I think there are people out there who maybe are concerned about whether this is a good thing for the City that they are currently residents of.

Commissioner Lago: One of the issues that have been brought up, not a lot, but by maybe one or two people that have come up to me, is the issue of our existing services are going to suffer because of this. I try to calm them down and explain to them we are going to be addressing that with additional support. But again, I agree with you, I support you. What do you want to do about that?

Commissioner Mena: Obviously there is a significant cost associated with the public notices, but at least through our E-NEWS and anything like that, once we have a date set for one of those meetings, we should absolutely be broadcasting it to all of our residents, so if anybody wants to attend.

Commissioner Quesada: I feel like forever we've missed out on certain opportunity which is the homeowners associations; I know we do homeowner association meetings every now and again, and we attend them, we get invited, but it's almost like the Presidents and Vice Presidents, they

almost need to have their own board, not that they have to meet, but when we want to push information around and get feedback, if we just let them know, those are the people most involved in their neighborhoods. It just makes a lot of sense just to communicate effectively with them.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think Martha just went through all of them for me and some of them, we don't have all the right names for the Presidents of the homeowners associations and some of them only meet informally, they don't meet on a regular basis...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have to be careful with this. I'm all for giving notice, I'm all for that, but we also have to be conscious or careful of what we do, this will be like the Paseo issue having Little Gables opine on what's happening there. Let's keep in mind what we are talking about.

Commissioner Mena: I think it's a little different than that, respectfully, because it's not just the neighborhoods that abut these neighborhoods, this is a major commitment on the part of the City in terms of services, revenue, everything, police officers, and if you live in North Gables and you are concerned about crime in your area and you feel like, well are you going to have enough police officers to patrol High Pines and Ponce-Davis or is that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They are going to be given notice.

Commissioner Mena: I think they have to have input on that as well, so I think it's a little bit different than – I think it's something that has citywide implications.

Vice Mayor Keon: But the notice, the formal notice that is required is the residents of the area to be annexed and anyone within 600 feet of the annexed area?

Mr. Collar: 600 feet outside the boundary.

Vice Mayor Keon: OK. So, that's the ones that are required under the code under the County's rules, to notice individually. To notice everyone else is it sufficient to notice it in E-NEWS or do you think everyone in the City should get a notice personally?

Commissioner Mena: We would have to know the cost associated with that.

Vice Mayor Keon: Its huge, it's huge.

Commissioner Mena: It's huge, exactly.

Vice Mayor Keon: Not everybody is....the E-NEWS either, so I think if we do – and people come back and say not everybody reads the Miami Herald. We have an ad in the Miami Herald on Sunday, we can use it for that purpose and you could put it in E-NEWS, if you feel like that's sufficient?

Commissioner Mena: I think if we don't just stick it in E-NEWS one day, but really make a focused effort to push it on E-NEWS, social media, ourselves among the people that we have contact with regularly.

Commissioner Lago: In the Sunday Neighbors section.

Vice Mayor Keon: But, you are not asking for everyone in the City to be noticed.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, that would be prohibitive. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you gentlemen, appreciate it.

[End: 12:31:32 p.m.]