

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-12
August 24, 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 City Attorney, Naomi Levi-Garcia
Deputy Fire Chief, Gilberto Hernandez
Police Chief, Ed Hudak**

Public Speaker(s)

**Brian Mullins
Maria Cruz
William McAllister
Luciana Gonzalez
Karen Shane
Christina Villamil
Ricardo Lopez
Gustavo Madrigal
Marianne Aleman Madrigal
Gladys Saenz
Roberto Sequeira
Lynne Blustein
David Cook**

City Commission Meeting
August 24, 2022

Agenda Item G-12 - Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager and City Attorney to reinitiate the annexation process for Little Gables.

Larry Schwartz

Agenda Item G-12 [9:39 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager and City Attorney to reinstate the annexation process for Little Gables.

(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving on to Item G-12, annexation discussion. Alright.

City Attorney Ramos: Mayor, G-12 is a resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager and City Attorney to reinstate the annexation process for Little Gables.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Very briefly, before we get started, Naomi, Mr. Clerk, how many individuals do we have that will be interested in having...

City Clerk Urquia: At this time, only one card has been received, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: So, we're going to have -- we're going to limit the conversation to -- because we have a very long agenda, and I know people want to get to work. Everybody here works. So we will have the conversation. We will talk -- hopefully, whoever wants to speak -- for a minute. Be brief, give us your opinion, and we move on from there. Ma'am.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Good morning. Naomi Levi-Garcia, Assistant City Attorney, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager. Mayor, thank you for this resolution. It basically reinstates the annexation process for Little Gables. It also sets forth the budget for professional consulting services. It's important to keep in mind that there are some changes being considered by the BCC...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: At the moment. There's been an ordinance on first reading that would expand the mailed notice requirements for pretty much every phase of annexation. There's also a new survey requirement that would require 60 percent of property owners to be favorable on the annexation, otherwise a super majority of BCC members would be required to advance the applications and to effectuate the annexation itself.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect. Before we move forward, before we move forward on this discussion between the Commission and we hear public comment, I want to read something into the record. This is an affidavit that will be signed by the Mayor of Coral Gables, myself. Before me, the undersigned authority personally appeared, Mayor Vince Lago, who after first being duly sworn and under penalty of perjury deposes and states as follows: Number one, I am Vince Lago. I am the Mayor of the City of Coral Gables. The facts set forth herein are within my personal knowledge and are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I am over the age of majority. Number two, neither I nor any member of my immediate family have any property or business interest in any property or business located within the boundaries of the area commonly referred to as Little Gables. Further affiant sayeth not. Mr. City Clerk, the document, signing the document. The City Clerk will notarize it. This will be a public record. Thank you, sir. Let me explain to you very briefly why I'm doing that. People have made very strong allegations that I own property in Little Gables, that I have a business interest in Little Gables, that I have accepted money from lobbyists from Little Gables to bring this back. I'm putting it on the record that that is furthest from the truth and those type of allegations will not stand. The reason why I'm bringing this up is because this is a public safety matter. This is an issue about finances, and all we're doing is having a discussion in preparation for a new County Commission for the first time in decades will turn over completely. So, this is worth having just preliminary discussions about Little Gables, and that's why I'm putting everything on the record. I'm being as transparent as possible, that there is no hidden agenda, that there is no other benefit on my part of why I'm bringing this

back up, that there isn't any gifts or considerations within our own property or businesses in the area, and I want to be very, very clear on that point. Very clear on that point when people start talking about that, okay? So, without anything else to say on my part for the moment, I have other things that we can discuss about property values, if they're required, or issues of public safety. I have all the documentation here. Will my colleagues like to mention or discuss this issue or are they willing to move forward?

Vice Mayor Mena: Discuss which issue?

Mayor Lago: The issue here, or would you like to hear public comment first?

Vice Mayor Mena: Whatever you'd like to do.

Mayor Lago: No, no, I'm asking you.

Commissioner Menendez: Let's have public comment.

Mayor Lago: Let's hear public comment. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker is Brian Mullins.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir. Thank you for being here.

Brian Mullins: Thank you for having me. So, I got the email late, so I would have dressed...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Mr. Mullins: A little bit nicer.

Mayor Lago: No worries.

Mr. Mullins: My name is Brian Mullins. I live at 4105 Southwest 14th, which is just off of Le Jeune. I'll keep it quick. And my thing is really about public safety, and my -- I live with my sister-in-law. She's diabetic, Type 1. Often -- not often anymore, but you know, we have to call the ambulance. You know, in the morning, her blood sugar's down in the 20s. You know, this -- you know, she could die. Call 911, tell them the address. They say, "This is Coral Gables. You called the wrong place." I called 911. I didn't call the wrong place. They transfer to Dade County. The Dade County ambulance comes from Northwest 7th off of Le Jeune. So, ambulance response time, 12, 15, 18 minutes to get to my house to help. Two years ago, my elderly neighbor next door, her daughter came running over that the woman had fell. My wife went over to try and help, do CPR. Twenty minutes later when the ambulance got there, she was dead. Don't know if that was because it took 20 minutes or she was elderly, but we live five blocks from a beautiful Class 1 fire department that can -- I could walk there faster than I can get an ambulance to come to my house. So, you know, I love the neighborhood. I love Coral Gables. But really for me, the lack of County services speaks volumes. I've seen in 15 years, maybe 10 times a cop has come down my block to do a patrol in 15 years. Coral Gables police pull people over for actually running the stop sign at the corner. You know, like they do more on my block than the County does. And every time I say something, it just falls on deaf ears with the County. So, that's my two cents. I'm all for it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, my friend. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Mullins: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: By the way, no clapping please, just out of respect. Thank you. Ms. Cruz, good morning.

Maria Cruz: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Mrs. Cruz, excuse me, or Madam Cruz, correct?

Ms. Cruz: Oh, that's fine.

Mayor Lago: You prefer that.

Ms. Cruz: Madam Cruz is appropriate for that area.

Mayor Lago: I apologize, I apologize. You're going to...

Ms. Cruz: Alright.

Mayor Lago: This is just the first time I've been corrected.

Ms. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Let me make it clear. Do not own property there. Do not plan to own property there. Do not live there. Do not know anybody who lives there, okay? Make it very clear. The only reason that I signed up to speak is because I want a commitment from this elected group that we will not have the debacle that we had the other time. When -- I expect when I'm a part of a team, of a group, of a board of some organization that when we take a

vote, while we're taking the vote, while we're discussing, we disagree as much as we want. But when the group takes a vote, the group sticks together with that vote. I do not -- and this is why I'm here because last time we had a glitch and that cannot happen again. These people deserve to know that this whole group of elected officials, whatever way you go -- if you vote for it, fine; if you vote against, fine. They need to know that you are a cohesive group and that no one from here will show up at County and say, "Oh, wait a second. I'm here, but I don't agree with the vote," because that would be a tragedy for these people. Alright, that's all I have to say. Please, whatever you decide -- I think you should go for it -- but whatever you decide, make sure that everybody's in and that nobody will try to undermine whatever you decide. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Madam Cruz, thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: William McAllister.

Mayor Lago: Sir, good morning.

William McAllister: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: It's great to have you.

Mr. McAllister: Good to see you again. My name is William McAllister. I'm the president of the Metro Dade Firefighters Local 1403. I'm here today representing those 2,400 firefighters and speaking out of genuine concern as it relates to the impact of annexation upon the Coral Gables firefighters that we work closely with in the South Florida Council of Firefighters. Mr. Mayor, we discussed the idea of annexation before in passing, yet here we are. I have to ask you rhetorically, is public safety a priority for you? I'm not sure if it is. When I'm questioning someone's motives, I look at what they're working on, and I reason back from there. If public safety were your number one priority, we wouldn't be here right now. Across town, 10,000 elected officials, law

enforcement officers and firefighters are laying to rest and paying their proper respects to an officer that died in the line of duty, yet here we are. Sorry. If public safety were truly your priority, we wouldn't be talking about annexation today. We would be talking about the fire that occurred on Sunday, August 14th, in the morning in a high-rise in the City of Coral Gables. It was a dumpster fire inside of a high-rise. Your fire department responded and did their best. They called for the County's assistance twice. We sent 19 firefighters and seven units. They were cancelled the first time only to be recalled a second time. When fires are burning, when hearts have stopped beating, when people are no longer breathing, every second matters. Those delays will result at some point in a tragedy that could have been prevented. The reason now I'm speaking is because if your focus were on public safety, it would be upon the fact that, since 2020, your firefighters have not had a collective bargaining agreement. And in my view, that is -- squelches their voice and cause them not to speak as outspoken as I will to you. I think it's unfair. I think your priorities need to be shuffled. I don't think public safety is your highest priority. So, let's talk about the issue of annexation.

Mayor Lago: Sir, if I may. I don't mean to be disrespectful, but you've been speaking for two minutes and 30 seconds. I asked for two minutes.

Commissioner Fors: Well, we regularly, in all fairness, Mayor, allow people to speak as long as they want here.

Mayor Lago: We have a lot of people.

Mr. McAllister: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: We have a -- excuse me. We have a long agenda. My person, again, here was attacked saying that I'm not in favor of public safety, saying that we did not -- that we shouldn't be hosting today's Commission meeting as a result of a horrific death that occurred to a police

officer, which we held a moment of silence for, and I would like to educate this gentleman here. The reason why we moved this meeting to today -- it would have been held yesterday, like we always do on Tuesdays -- is because there was an election yesterday and somebody on this Commission was running for County, and out of respect, we moved it so everybody could attend. So, I don't have a problem if you want to continue speaking, but please don't make assumptions about whether I'm invested in public safety when we've renovated, and we have the best fire stations in Miami-Dade County. We just purchased another piece of property through the leadership of the Vice Mayor, and we're about to spend \$8 million building a fire station to increase response times for the residents that live right off Sunset. Please, please do not politicize what we're doing here today. I come with good intentions. I know that you have an interest in ensuring that you don't lose the money from Little Gables.

Mr. McAllister: No.

Mayor Lago: And I had many conversations with you and I'm trying to stay professional, but please don't make me put on the record intimidation efforts that have happened here. I will speak it on the record if I have to. Just let's be very careful and very thoughtful because the words that we're speaking today are in the public, so don't attack whether I'm invested in this community in regards to public safety. Because when I walked in here eight years ago, we didn't have a Public Safety Building. We didn't have new vehicles. We didn't have a renovated fire station on US 1 that we spent -- Mr. Manager -- how much on?

City Manager Iglesias: That project was almost \$20 million.

Mayor Lago: Twenty million. How much did we spend on the renovation of Old Cutler?

City Manager Iglesias: Old Cutler, about 10 million.

Mayor Lago: How much did we spend on the Public Safety Building?

City Manager Iglesias: Sixty-four million.

Mayor Lago: Do the numbers. We spent \$100 million in between three fire stations and we're going to spend another 8 million, if you include the acquisition, another 1.5. We're over \$100 million in regards to fire and police investments through the leadership of this Commission, so please don't call into question whether I'm committed to ensuring that our residents are safe. So, please be brief and let's stick to the facts.

Mr. McAllister: So, I'll pivot as I was about to to the discussion of annexation. This represents the most serious degradation of service that can be provided in the unincorporated areas. Although we've heard the stories here, there's technical explanations why there's response time issues. It is not what's being inferred. If this were to move forward, not only would it result in a degradation of service in the areas currently served by the County, it would also further dilute the quality of the response in Coral Gables. The County Charter says that there shall be a uniform level of fire protection offered throughout Dade County. Standards such as the NFPA inform what those staffing levels should be. Upon dispatch to a high-rise, for example, you're supposed to dispatch 42 or 43 firefighters to the report of a fire in a high-rise. This city has 32. Through mutual aid agreements, we supplement that by providing resources from the County. Coral Gables continues to densify and grow skyward, and now they're looking to reach across a border. And that's where I have to speak up and say that this is a dilution of public safety to a point that I'm compelled to speak. I implore you, Mr. Mayor, reconsider your priorities. Look less at building new stations and buying pretty trucks and putting the proper number of firefighters on the streets so that you provide a proper level of uniform fire protection. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can I for a moment? I voted against annexation when it -- last time it came around. Let me be clear about that up front. And I'll explain the reasons why when I comment in

a moment. And I have friends here in the audience who live in the area who I had very honest conversations about. The comments you just made are probably the most asinine, disgraceful comments that I have had here since I was elected in 2017. For you to come here for the first time and openly question whether the Mayor of the city prioritizes public safety, I don't even know where to start with that. The reason -- and again, whatever people's substantive reasons are for pro or against annexation, we have people in the crowd on both sides of the issue, and they all have very reasonable comments to make and an interest in the outcome of this. But for you to say what you just said and for you to imply that our firefighters and our fire union voice has been quelled when the president of our fire union, Mr. Perez, has stood here and made the exact same comments you just made, I'm pretty sure he provided the information to you because literally it was verbatim what he says, and I can show you text messages from him that he sends me all the time with his opinions on every issue, including at our budget hearings. And I like Mr. Perez. I don't have a problem with Mr. Perez. But for you to suggest that he doesn't have a voice because there's no CBA in place -- with all due respect, you haven't been part of that process. You don't know what you're talking about. He has, we have. We sit there and make really tough decisions on these issues. And if there's not an agreement in place, as a lawyer, it's because both sides just haven't reached an agreement and they're negotiating. And we've had recent -- meetings as recently as the last two weeks. So, the last thing I'll say, again, if you're going to come here and question people's motives, you should at least be honest about what your motives are. For you to come here and pretend that you're here altruistically on behalf of these residents of this neighborhood because you have this concern for public safety, with all due respect, is -- everybody knows why you're here and it ain't about their safety. It's about money. So -- and it's about your job with your union. And you're doing a job, and I don't have a problem with you doing your job. You have an important job to do, and you represent your union. That's an important job. But stick to substance. You had some substantive comments you made, which you made, and we hear them, and I respect those substantive comments. I respect substantive comments from anybody. But to come here, and you know, personalize attacks directed at the Mayor about prioritizing public safety, put up our public safety statistics and record against whoever you want. The number one

comment we get from our residents is that whenever they call Police and Fire, they get the support they need. And I know this little mutual aid game you guys like to play, you know, and -- and by the way, the last thing we should be honest about -- whatever my vote was or wasn't last time, the City of Coral Gables approved annexation. It then went to the County. The County's the one who tanked the annexation. And at the forefront of that was the fire union. Mr. Blanco, I believe, who was running for Congress at the time wrote an op-ed about a fire that occurred in Cocoplum I believe it was at the time, so I remember that vividly. And I think it's important for the residents here -- and one of the comments I was going to make later, the yes buttons and the no buttons, all the impassioned comments you guys have today, I just want to encourage all of you, you need to make those to the County Commission as well because, at the end of the day, whatever -- whoever voted or didn't vote on this issue in the City of Coral Gables, it passed. There was -- there were - - there was polling done of the residents in both Little Gables and Ponce Davis. The numbers were there. The fact that there's an ongoing item at the county level to raise the percentage needed for this kind of tells you where the County is with this or at least some people are. You know, and I think people are smart enough to realize that. So, I'm not one to make the kind of comments I just made to somebody who comes up here and speaks, but I really felt compelled to because, just like you felt compelled, I find your comments really out of line and not productive to really -- I'm not sure what point you're trying to make here other than taking political shots at somebody. I can't imagine how you thought what the first part of your statement just now was going to help your side of this issue as it relates to this city.

Mr. McAllister: As it relates to this issue, the conversations have gone on for decades about the substantive issues.

Vice Mayor Mena: Absolutely.

Mr. McAllister: And somehow, every few years, we return to another attempt to grow a city without respect to concerns related to public safety. The simple fact of the matter is, if you have a fire in a high-rise, you need 45 people to show up pursuant to the county standard upon dispatch.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can you point to an example recently of a Coral Gables high-rise fire where the response time from either City of Coral Gables, or even if it was a mutual aid situation...?

Mr. McAllister: Sunday, August 14th in the morning.

Vice Mayor Mena: Uh-huh. Yeah, what happened?

Mr. McAllister: (INAUDIBLE) smoke in a high-rise.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Mr. McAllister: Every unit in Coral Gables was dispatched. Mutual aid was requested twice.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Mr. McAllister: Because the entire Coral Gables Department was on scene of that, Miami-Dade County provided medical services to the rest of the city. We transported two life-threatening calls to the hospital.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay, thank you.

Mr. McAllister: This happens routinely.

Vice Mayor Mena: Thank you.

Mr. McAllister: My biggest concern is, as I've started to now look at this issue because it's now something I must pay attention to...

Mayor Lago: Excuse me. Did you say this happens routinely?

Mr. McAllister: Yes, it does.

Mayor Lago: What is the definition of routinely? Because I'd like to know that because we don't have our...

Mr. McAllister: So, the...

Mayor Lago: We don't have our chief here. I don't know where our chief is at.

Mr. McAllister: I'm actually concerned with that...

Mayor Lago: But routinely...

Mr. McAllister: Too because...

Mayor Lago: Routinely is -- well (INAUDIBLE)...

Mr. McAllister: Their CFAI documentation fails to represent that...

Mayor Lago: Excuse me one second.

Mr. McAllister: Mutual aid is...

Mayor Lago: Will you de --? This gentleman...

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, our chief is in a fire conference.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: And our deputy chief is here.

Mayor Lago: Chief, how are you? Will you --? This gentleman said that routinely Miami-Dade County steps into the City of Coral Gables and handles our business. Is that the case?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: That would not be the case.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: What might be the case is it's possible that we may provide more mutual aid to Miami-Dade than they do to us. I understand what he's saying as far as a high-rise fire situation.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: That's an isolated fire. The fire that he's referring to this past -- I don't know the date exactly -- two weeks ago, it was -- mutual aid was called, and most of -- or all of Coral Gables resources were dealing with that fire at -- on US 1. It was a smoke event. It was a dumpster fire, but the battalion chief on duty was investigating. He sees smoke was increasing throughout the building, and while he was investigating, they did call for mutual aid. And they determined that it was a dumpster fire and mutual aid was cancelled.

Mayor Lago: So, first off, thank you for clarifying that, and that's on the record. This is an example of where words are said, and these things are perpetuated. That's why in the beginning of the meeting, I signed a document on the record because there are people saying, for example, that I have investment interest in Little Gables. I had a meeting with this gentleman. This gentleman told me to my face -- there's other people in this room that were there also, but not anybody who was elected because that would be a Sunshine violation. We said, "Listen, we'll let you annex Little Gables and High Pines and Ponce Davis. We'll get out of the way but let us absorb your entire fire department." I laughed. I laughed. This is what he told me.

Mr. McAllister: That was not said. We'll correct the record.

Mayor Lago: You're lying. So...

Mr. McAllister: When we had a dis...

Mayor Lago: I'm running this meeting, you're not.

Mr. McAllister: Okay.

Mayor Lago: I'm running this meeting.

Mr. McAllister: On the record, it's a lie.

Mayor Lago: I'm running this meeting. I can call somebody up here right now who'll say that it was on the record.

Mr. McAllister: Call your lobbyist.

Mayor Lago: It's not a lobbyist.

Mr. McAllister: Go ahead.

Mayor Lago: It's a fact.

Mr. McAllister: Call him.

Mayor Lago: You're calling me a liar, and at the end of day, you are the liar. And I'm going to take it a step further because I'm going to give you names of people, names of people who you called to make sure they sent an intimidating message to me about not bringing...

Mr. McAllister: I did no such...

Mayor Lago: This forward. I'm going to give you names, okay.

Mr. McAllister: Okay.

Mayor Lago: So, let me -- you're going to listen. This is not the union. This is the City of Coral Gables Commission, and by the charter, I run this meeting, not you. Number one, you work on intimidation. You work on endorsements and pushing people and giving endorsements to people, so they do your bidding.

Mr. McAllister: That's not true.

Mayor Lago: Let me tell you something on the record. Let me be very, very clear. I'm running for Mayor again in April. I didn't need you to win last time. You supported my opponent. I

support the fire employees. I support the police. I back the blue. I'm here and I will do whatever it takes to make sure that our firefighters and the police have every resources. But for you to say that we have bad response times that are better than the County, it is disrespectful, disrespectful to say that on the record. And it is a lie. And yes, you did tell me that you wanted the fire -- our fire department to be absorbed. And number two, you told multiple people two weeks ago, you called them and said, "Send a message to the Mayor. He can either have an easy reelection or can have a tough reelection."

Mr. McAllister: No.

Mayor Lago: And it's very simple. If he backs away from annexation -- you told that to the Mayor of Miami. You told that to the Mayor of West Miami, and you told that to...

Mr. McAllister: I've never spoken to the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Another individual who's in this room here. And the...

Mr. McAllister: I said relationship.

Mayor Lago: Bottom line is this.

Mr. McAllister: Let's be respectful here.

Mayor Lago: The bottom -- no, I'm not.

Mr. McAllister: Don't...

Mayor Lago: Listen, you lost...

Mr. McAllister: If you're not going to be respectful, I'm not.

Mayor Lago: You lost re -- listen, this is an issue...

Mr. McAllister: Now, we're going to lie.

Mayor Lago: This is my meeting.

Mr. McAllister: Okay.

Mayor Lago: This is -- the Commission is going to conduct it. You're not going to run this meeting.

Mr. McAllister: Shouldn't truth...

Mayor Lago: And I've given you more than enough time.

Mr. McAllister: Prevail in this conversation.

Mayor Lago: The bottom line is simple.

Mr. McAllister: Okay.

Mayor Lago: The bottom line is simple. We're having a discussion here. You have your interest that you're addressing. I don't have a problem with it. You want to speak your interest, but don't lie and don't mislead.

Mr. McAllister: Do the same.

Mayor Lago: And that is -- you just said that it happens constantly here in the City we have to call for backup.

Mr. McAllister: Can I speak for a moment on that...

Mayor Lago: No, you're not.

Mr. McAllister: So you can stop saying...

Mayor Lago: You're done.

Mr. McAllister: The wrong thing?

Mayor Lago: It's done. It's done. It's done.

Mr. McAllister: There is no...

Mayor Lago: Sir, sir.

Mr. McAllister: Documentation...

Mayor Lago: Sir, I'm telling you...

Commissioner Fors: Time out, time out...

Mayor Lago: It's done.

City Commission Meeting

August 24, 2022

Agenda Item G-12 - Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager and City Attorney to reinstate the annexation process for Little Gables.

Commissioner Fors: Time out.

Mayor Lago: It's done.

Commissioner Fors: Mayor, can I say...?

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Anderson asked to speak first.

Commissioner Fors: Commissioner Anderson, can you yield to me for one moment? I just want to put this in focus. We're relaxed. I've seen this before. There's no need for anybody here to get antagonistic with each other on either side of it. Let's focus on what we're really here to talk about, which is...

Mayor Lago: You can take a seat.

Commissioner Fors: The substantive points on annexation, alright.

Mayor Lago: I'm asking you to take a seat. Your two minutes are up.

Commissioner Fors: So, I might have a question.

Mr. McAllister: (INAUDIBLE) make one final comment.

Mayor Lago: You see, I run this meeting. Please take a seat.

Mr. McAllister: Okay.

Commissioner Fors: Now, wait, wait, wait. So...

Mr. McAllister: Do I wait or I...?

Mayor Lago: Please take a seat.

Commissioner Fors: You can have a seat.

Mayor Lago: He's not the Mayor just yet.

Commissioner Fors: You'll have a seat. I want to -- the -- our firefighter, can you please come back up here? As Vice Mayor Mena alluded to, you know, the annexation question is -- or involves various different considerations. One of them is public safety, like you said, Vice Mayor. There is other considerations as well. And what I'd hope to do today was at least preliminary start to discuss them and plans for getting the information we need to be able to review them or talk about them again. Now, sir, is -- because it's a valid question. I mean, annexation is expansion of the city limits. It's making the city bigger. There's no -- we can't argue with that. So, is it an indication if we have to call mutual aid because there's a fire or a dumpster fire at a building, and we have to call mutual aid because all our -- first of all, is it true that all of our units were there, all of our engines?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: For this high-rise fire, yes. All of the units were attached to this particular incident until they discovered the cause of the fire.

Commissioner Fors: Right. And I'm not asking this to try to prove a point at all. I'm asking you, is that an indication that we don't have enough personnel in the Fire if one fire takes up all our personnel?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: This is a unique incident. This is a high-rise fire. High-rise firefighting is something that doesn't happen often. You know, if it does happen, we do need resources. And if it's the legitimate working fire, we would need mutual aid to help backfill or to support our department. That's the only instance that we would need the mutual aid so...

Vice Mayor Mena: The mutual, right?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: Mutual.

Vice Mayor Mena: Mutual, back and forth.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: It's mutual aid.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, both sides need aid.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: It's mutual aid, absolutely, but...

Mayor Lago: How long have you been at the City of Coral Gables?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: Thirty years.

Mayor Lago: Thirty years.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: Thirty years.

Mayor Lago: Would you say that we provide more mutual aid to Miami-Dade County -- on the record, on the record -- would you say we provide more mutual aid to Miami-Dade County than they provide to us?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: My belief, on the record, is that we would provide more mutual aid to them for EMS type calls.

Mayor Lago: Right.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: For a Type 1 high-rise fire in a high-rise building, yes, they -- we would need...

Mayor Lago: All hands on deck.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: Yeah, all hands on deck.

Vice Mayor Mena: Do you expect to see high-rise fires in Little Gables or EMS calls?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: I'm not aware of any high-rises in Little Gables.

Vice Mayor Mena: Thank you.

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: What I...

Commissioner Fors: But I mean, if there's...

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: What I want to add though is...

Commissioner Fors: A high-rise fire in downtown Coral Gables, then there...

Mayor Lago: But we're not asking...

Commissioner Fors: Would be no units available to go to Little Gables, right?

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: In that situation, we would rely on mutual aid.

Commissioner Fors: And then...

Deputy Fire Chief Hernandez: That's why the mutual aid agreement is there.

Commissioner Fors: So, I mean, I'm just saying, we can't pretend that it's a nonissue. Now, we can hear anecdotes about response time, but I just want to make clear that we need to consider the effect of public safety and maybe there's a negative effect, maybe there's not. But we can't just sit up here and say that it doesn't pose public issue concerns or, at the very least, merit an analysis of the public safety issues. Now, what I want to stay away from -- not with respect -- not only with respect to this factor but every factor of the annexation analysis, is this anecdotal, you know, questioning of routine. What does routine mean? You know, what is --? How many units do we have? Who requires mutual aid more? We need to be clear that the public safety factor in that analysis must be considered very carefully along with the other ones. And it is a distraction to get into politics. I completely agree with you, Mayor. It is a distraction, but let's not let that distraction distract us from the fact that it is a real factor to consider very carefully, and perhaps one of the, if not the most important factor.

Vice Mayor Mena: But let's not -- let's also not lose sight of the fact that it was at the forefront of what we did consider when it came through last time. And we talked about what -- how many more officers, how many more firefighters it would take. We looked at the revenue that it would generate from a tax perspective, whether that could be used to hire more people that were necessary. Of course, we're going to have to add, you know, additional resources if we add more homes to the City. Nobody's denying that. That's the exact analysis that we went through and

would go through again. Again, this is somebody who voted no last time, just to be clear. I have no bias here. I don't have a -- you know, I'm trying to be objective. And I'll -- again, I'll get to the reasons why I voted no later, but that's the...

Commissioner Anderson: Mayor.

Vice Mayor Mena: Process we're talking about.

Mayor Lago: I just want to -- before -- if I may -- Commissioner, I apologize. We're discussing facts, not intimidation, not whether the union's going to support me, whether they're going to send 500 people in April when you go to vote, and they're going to say horrific things. They've called me a racist. They've called me horrific things. They've sent letters to my house telling my wife I'm having an affair. They've said that I'm a steroid dealer out of City Hall. They sent me -- I'm just telling you -- like to the point where it -- nothing you could...

Vice Mayor Mena: He's not lying. He's not lying.

Mayor Lago: Do -- I'm not lying.

Unidentified Speaker: No, yeah. (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: I'm not lying because I share this with my colleagues.

Commissioner Fors: But we need to clarify that.

Mayor Lago: But no, no. But hold on a minute.

Commissioner Fors: Do we know who sent that though? I mean, because it sounds like you're saying the firemen...

Mayor Lago: Listen, listen to me.

Commissioner Fors: Sent that.

Mayor Lago: Listen to me. Commissioner, I know...

Commissioner Fors: I think we need to clarify that for the record.

Mayor Lago: That you're -- I know that you want to be very clear on certain things, but let's -- let me carry this conversation please. I'm asking you, okay. There has been here -- you're not going to intimidate me because I'm not here -- and then, you know, as the Fire looks -- as the Fire Union Chief looks over here and says, "Yes, I am." You know, it's the funniest thing I've even seen. Literally, and he laughs in the background. It's the oddest thing when we're here talking about life safety, about the opportunity of truly addressing a community that is the doughnut hole on a line. We talk about public safety. Public safety is clear. The Police Chief is here also. Mr. Chief, what is your opinion in regards to public safety? How will it benefit the current residents that we have? What do you think is the opportunity of annexation? Do you think it's a good idea, or you think it's a bad idea on the record?

Police Chief Hudak: From the City of Coral Gables Police Department, in its police department, I believe that, as I've said before on several other attempts through the 34 years I've been here, is we need to square off the boundaries of the city as far as our patrolling standpoints. As far as mutual aid, which is effected a little bit differently on the police side than it is, the mutual aid in this situation has become weaponized and that's a problem for me. There's five fire departments throughout Miami-Dade County. There's 37 police departments and the County Police

Department. Right now, we have county-wide jurisdiction. When there's a sheriff in 2025, when we don't have the description of what that's going to be, our MOUs with the County are going to change as they exist from the police side. So, really, the MOU is meant to save lives, that's it. That's with the police department. If that's the case, every time we ask for a Fire-Rescue helicopter to transport our officers or our residents, regardless of where they're at, it's an MOU. It's something that everybody in this room pays for for County services. Our response times and things, yes, if the residents and this body decides that they want to expand what our budgetary reasons are to help patrol that area to protect both the current Coral Gables boundary and anything we bring in, that's what I'm in favor of. If not, as a County taxpayer, as long as it pays for itself, I'm fine. I believe the conversation that has been switched to the MOU versus not is, as you know, every major emergency, if it's a hurricane, it doesn't make a difference what jurisdiction because it doesn't make a difference if your house is on fire or you are the victim of a crime, do you really care who gets there first? You just want us there, and I say us in the totality of public safety. In the police department, if there's a crime going on and the County units, police units are tied up, we're going to respond. The same way if fire units are tied up for Miami-Dade, our fire department has been called out there. It's called mutual aid. It doesn't acquiesce what our abilities are. That's the specific situations. What we're here to discuss, I believe, the annexation is how are we going to handle the day-to-day things and what does that mean for our residents and the annex group? That's why we're looking at it. So...

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Chief. I appreciate your guidance and your experience of 34 years along with your experience in regards to where you believe, as Coral Gables employees, we stand and how we would benefit as a community to having -- even considering this opportunity. Commissioner Anderson, you wanted to speak. I apologize for not recognizing you earlier.

Commissioner Anderson: Last, but not maybe least, I won't repeat the comments that were already made, but I want to be clear that the hiring of firefighters is something that I have spoken to the Chief about, and he has made a commitment to do. The building of the station down on Sunset is

a top priority. Why? It'll reduce the strain and the time that it takes staff to reach the Sunset area due to traffic concerns and improve response times in the northern area because we're not wasting time driving to a location down south. The negotiation process on the collective bargaining agreement, you know, it takes two to tango, you know. The Union needs to be able to aggressively move forward on their negotiation process, but if they choose to sit back and wait until after the police department does their negotiations first and completes their agreement first, why is it then the City's fault that these negotiations aren't completed with the fire union? So, we have new buildings that are tall. They also come with some of the best fire suppression equipment in them. It's not like a historic building. It's not like a house fire. You have sprinklers in there. So, while I agree with the Chief that we need to bring in new firefighters, and he has agreed to bring them in as soon as that second station is built, okay, so we have beds to put the firefighters in. We have to have beds for them to sleep in. I'm not as concerned as if it was a tall building built in 1930 or 1940 or 1950 that doesn't have the degree of fire suppression equipment that the new ones do. I've lived in the County. I experienced their response times. I think the people in the Little Gables need the opportunity to vote.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Fors: I -- Can I add something, Mayor? A couple of things. First, I need to address -- it's been alluded to that endorsements and politics may have something to do with positions on annexation, which by the way, I've not yet taken one with respect to this particular issue. So, I need to address it because I'm the only one running for office at the moment, so I can only assume that...

Mayor Lago: I'm running for reelection.

Commissioner Fors: Running for reelection, that's right.

Mayor Lago: If the Fire Union doesn't derail it.

Commissioner Fors: But you're not talking about yourself, or maybe you are. Point is, I feel the need to address it. I just want to remind everybody, and I'm always -- and regardless of the issue, I take applications, application by application. My analysis in 2019 may be different than it is in 2022 and vice versa because I'm going to analyze it from top to bottom every single time, brand new. But I want to make it clear that I have not made any commitment to oppose any particular issue in exchange for any particular endorsement in my County Commission race. Perhaps that's an allegation you could make if I was previously in favor of annexation and now in exchange for some -- or after some endorsement I become -- or -- yeah, I become against it. I've been critical of annexation for the entire tenure of mine in politics before I was elected and after, so there's been really no change in position for me that it can be correlated to any particular endorsement or any particular support. Speaking of which, one of the primary reasons in 2019 that I opposed annexation was because I believed that the majority of Coral Gables residents did not want it. That was my belief after speaking to them at that time. Again, that was three and half years ago -- actually four years ago at this time. And I always made the point to say that we are hired here or elected to represent the residents of Coral Gables and to carry out their will, the majority's will, and that nobody had asked the Coral Gables residents how they feel about it. And there's nothing wrong with asking them how they feel about it in 2019 and asking them again in 2022 to see if they've changed their mind. But when we talk about this issue, we tend to focus on the desires and the interests of folks in Little Gables, which is fine. They're entitled to have deference to those desires and wishes, but we cannot forget that we need to keep in mind and never forget that we're here to represent the residents of Coral Gables, and we need to determine whether they're in favor of it or not now. We all received a lot of emails about this over the course of the last few days, the majority for -- were from Little Gables, the jurisdiction where we were not elected that we don't represent. And I believe it's because it's natural that they are paying way more attention to this issue than the folks in Coral Gables because it's, you know, just not at the forefront of their mind. We've held -- I think we need to make efforts and continue this conversation in a manner

that brings in more Coral Gables residents and ascertains what they feel about it now in 2022. You know, we hold Sunshine meetings about a singular dog park. We hold Sunshine meetings about trash pits. We hold Sunshine meetings about very minor things. I really believe that annexation calls for -- annexation being expansion of our City limits -- calls for a Sunshine meeting so we can try to wrap our heads around the fact -- around what our residents want, the residents of Coral Gables. So, that's what I would suggest. I mean, I think it's a little bit overly ambitious to try to really confront this issue and conduct the analysis we need to at a regular Commission meeting and one with a very long agenda at that. That's my opinion on this annexation conversation.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, I'm always willing -- I lead the charge in regards to having Sunshine meetings, so whenever you want to have it, we'll have it. But my point is today is just about giving the Manager and the City Attorney the lead to be able to hire an attorney to review the County's ever-changing position in regards to annexation and allow us to, over the next few months as the County Commission changes, just to have discussions, see what angles fit, see what is the County's new annexation discussion actually going to result in. This is not a move where we're going to start polling residents and start preparing an actual annexation document for submission to the County. This is just giving the City Manager and City Attorney the leeway to hire the professional, the attorney who can give us their best advice in regards to whether this is even possible. You want to have a Sunshine meeting? We can do those together. I don't want to waste another meeting waiting to ratify this. This is a simple item that we're just voting on to give them the leeway.

Commissioner Fors: The item -- my concern is that the item -- doesn't it have a \$175,000 price tag?

Mayor Lago: No, that's -- we can do it by Commission meeting. Every Commission meeting, we can allow -- we can come back and say, "Look, the Mayor has spent" -- "the Manager," excuse me, "or the City Attorney has spent \$10,000. Do you want to continue spending that?" We give

leeway to the Manager to spend anything under \$50,000. The City Attorney has a higher threshold, so this is a courtesy bringing it forward. I could have brought -- gone to the City Attorney and the City Manager and said, "Let's hire an attorney to move forward and to look into the situation and see if this is even possible to understand the County's new interest in regards to annexation. What is the old legislation? What is the new proposed legislation? What is the temperature of the County Commission?" Which will be changing in November. There will be a new County Commissioner that will be representing Little Gables, and maybe that County Commissioner is in favor. Maybe that County Commissioner is not in favor. But at the end of day, we'll find out in November who that County Commissioner is going to be. And if they're not in favor, obviously, we won't proceed in even considering annexation because that will be futile. Because, as we know, the County Commission does not work the way that we work. We represent the entire city. They're divvied up into 13 districts where there's a lot of deference given to the district attorney -- excuse me, to the district County Commissioner. So, that's all I'm saying. I don't think it's a big ask. I think it's pretty simple, and I'm, you know, willing to make a motion on it if I have to.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, and I would just add -- and I don't know much more public comment we have, but just to kind of cut to the chase...

Mayor Lago: We have more.

Vice Mayor Mena: A little bit -- and I'm happy to hear from anybody. Again, I voted no the first time around. The main reasons for that was I had a lot of questions about the mobile home park in the area and how that would be handled. I did not have, in my estimation at the time, good answers for what the plan was for that so that was a big factor. We need to evaluate all of those things. I think the change from it being just Little Gables as opposed to Little Gables and Ponce Davis back at the time, there was a shortage on tax funds that would result from the Little Gables portion but a surplus on tax funds that would come from the Ponce Davis neighborhood. Obviously, property values have changed significantly over the last few years throughout South

Florida, so what the picture looks like today, I don't know. And so if the goal of today's item is to hire somebody to get more information so that we can make an informed decision down the line, I'm a yes for that, and I don't have a problem with that. That doesn't mean I'm going to ultimately be a yes vote or a no vote on annexation. It means if we're going to make a decision, and I'm here when that decision gets made, I want to have all the information that I can have. And so I don't have a problem with what you have on the agenda today.

Mayor Lago: You know, I think -- and I think, Vice Mayor, you know, I did some research, informal research from the last sales in Little Gables. This is no longer this little sleepy enclave where people move to buy a house for \$300,000. Houses this month sold for 2.2 million. I can give you the address. I just don't want to give anybody's public information out there. One point one six million, 1.2 million, 820, 875, 998, 1.299. I don't want to say later that I didn't give the right number, if I, you know, average it up to 1.3. Seven fifteen, 755. The square foot numbers are 900 to \$1,080 per square foot. The taxable values have gone up incredibly, and the turnover in that little area has happened so quickly that these are not just property values that have got up. These are actual sales, so they have new taxable value in regards to the County. So, I would like to get that concrete and represented to the City with this consultant and say, "Look, this is the last 50 sales." How many homes? What is the taxable value? If the money's not there, I'm not going to proceed. If my chief tells me it's not worth it -- and again, at the end of day, it's not going to help us in regards to public safety, I'm not going to proceed. I'm reasonable. I don't have my own personal agenda. I don't own property. I don't have a business there. I'm not being paid. I'm not a lobbyist. So -- and I won't be intimidated in April because the County Commission or anybody that works for a union, or our own union won't support me or is going to go out there and is going to go have people at the polls -- didn't work last time. You lost by 20 percent, and you called me every name in the book, and you did everything possible to tarnish my name, but that didn't happen. It won't happen this time. Because, at the end of the day, my life is not defined by being in this position. I have to do what I believe is right by the City. And I've never in my life - - and I have the utmost respect for everyone, every one of my colleges here -- I've never seen the

Vice Mayor ever speak like that to somebody, and it's shameful, and it's embarrassing to come up here and have our deputy chief refute your comments on the record. This is not hearsay. This is actual -- a person saying, "No, you're wrong. This is the actual information." So I'd like to hear from the public comment if possible. I know people have been waiting.

City Attorney Ramos: Mayor, can I make a clarification while...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Attorney Ramos: People come up?

Mayor Lago: Of course.

City Attorney Ramos: So, it's 170,000 not 175.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Attorney Ramos: That's for consulting fees, and then that does not include the hard costs as written today, so that would be postage, graphic design, petition.

Mayor Lago: Yep, okay.

City Attorney Ramos: Also, to the Vice Mayor's point, the resolution as written asks us to reinstate the process. So, if you want clarification about just -- you know, if you want to clarify that it's to conduct a preliminary study and come back, we should reflect that here because that's not what it says right now.

Commissioner Fors: And Mayor, I -- this was de -- this item was deferred once, I believe, and it was my impression that that 50 home analysis -- or I don't know if was maybe the 50-home analysis...

Mayor Lago: A hundred home, whatever it may be.

Commissioner Fors: Well, whatever it is, or just the increased tax revenue analysis, that that's what we were going to have today because I think that's also one of the bigger factors.

Mayor Lago: No, one of the -- what I said was I reviewed -- I reviewed informally -- this is not an actual study, but that's part of the package, and we shouldn't wait. I don't want to wait anymore. Stop kicking the can on the curb. Stop looking for a reason not to do this. Let's do this. If you don't want to vote for it, vote no. It's perfectly fine. You voted no before. You can vote no again. I'm just saying it's time to move forward. It's time to move forward.

Vice Mayor Mena: What's the...?

Mayor Lago: Take it for a vote.

Vice Mayor Mena: To the City Attorney's point, can we --? Should we clarify what the scope of what we're doing right now?

Mayor Lago: Yes. What I'd like to do is I'd like to hire an attorney. You know what, Commissioner Menendez has been waiting? I apologize, just...

Commissioner Menendez: And...

Mayor Lago: I apologize, my friend. Sorry about that.

Commissioner Menendez: I don't know.

Mayor Lago: Out of respect for you.

Commissioner Menendez: I just ordered coffee.

Mayor Lago: Should have ordered me (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Menendez: And it's the truth. And Mrs. Cruz, I'll good evening you coffee. Yes, I'm sorry. At this point, I'd love to hear the public talk, give us some -- let some air come into the room again, and let the folks that are here that want to speak speak, and then maybe we pick it up. I want to reserve my comments until after everyone speaks. I think at this point, it's a good time to pivot.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Chief. I appreciate it. What I was looking for very quickly before we hear public comment, as the person walks up, is very simple. Just do a simple analysis of the last hundred sales, 75 sales in Little Gables so we know concrete, from a realtor or appraiser, what their numbers are. That can be done cheap. It can be done probably a few months it'll take. Have a conversation in regards to what additional forces we would need if we were to annex this area. Have an attorney, a person like Miguel De Grandy, who I think is very well-versed, or I leave it up to the discretion of the City Attorney and the City Manager to look and meet with County officials, meet with the new incoming -- as I can tell -- the new incoming in November, so it's going to take time -- the new incoming Commissioner to measure if there's even an interest in doing this. Because if that person comes in and says we're not interested, we're not moving forward. That's it. There's no reason to spend money on that. But I want to be prepared. I don't want to be in December talking about preparing to do this in January, February, or March. I want to do it now.

Vice Mayor Mena: And let's commit -- and I don't mind adding this too, and I'm sure you won't have an issue either -- to address Commissioner Fors, let's add that at the culmination of that initial process, we will have a Sunshine meeting...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: With Coral Gables residents once we have that information and we're able to present it and have them evaluate it. I think before we fully commit to proceeding with the full-fledged annexation process, we should -- I agree with Commissioner Fors that absolutely is something that should happen, but let's get some information first so that we can make an informed decision.

Commissioner Fors: So, if you the price tag for the resolution as written, which is reinitiating the annexation process is 170, is what we're talking about here something that doesn't require a financial commitment?

Mayor Lago: Everything -- I mean, listen, my opinion -- and maybe if I can speak to the City Attorney or City Clerk and the City Manager, everything requires money. If you're going to hire an appraiser and you're going to hire a reputable attorney to go through the process and analyze this, host meetings at the County, host meetings with, you know, parties that are -- that have a vested interest in accepting annexation or not accepting annexation, it's going to take time. It's going to take money. We probably need to hire an accounting firm. We probably need to potentially hire some sort of consultant for our police chief to be able to give more tangible data than just, "Hey, I think it's a good idea because of X, Y and Z." It's going to cost money if we want to make an informed decision. And I'm willing to go down that route.

Commissioner Fors: I just think if it's going to cost that much money, we should have a Sunshine meeting before, and that's my personal opinion.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: I think I can wrap it up because I have some information I'd like to share with us that I think can put everything together in a nice little package. But I would like the people to talk first.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Luciana Gonzalez.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you for being here.

Luciana Gonzalez: Good morning. Luciana Gonzalez, 4605 Southwest 12th Street. I've been here before. I went to the County Commission a few years ago. I'm going to be very brief because a lot that I was planning to say has already been said. Mr. Mena, you said it correctly that the County, you know -- this Commission voted for -- to move forward. The County also recommended approval back in July 2019. The County staff, along with the Mayor at the time, on their report recommended approval of the annexation. So, I want to just remind everybody about that. Like the police chief said, it doesn't matter who gets there, as long as they get there, and that's our number one issue in this community. They don't get there. They don't get there on time. And no, we don't have high-rise fires, but we do have a lot of EMS calls. I had to call the police not too long ago, and it took them five hours to get there. But anecdotal aside, let's stick to the facts. Little Gables is an enclave; enclave meaning that it's surrounded by the City of Coral Gables by three sides, which is more than 80 percent, which is what the County calls for. We are in -- Miami-Dade County also took a position many years ago that enclaves should be dissolved

and absorbed by municipalities. It makes sense for Coral Gables to be the one. We are treated as second class citizens. I attend the Youth Center with my kids and their soccer programs. My kids go to Coral Gables Preparatory Academy. My daughter goes to Coral Gables Senior High. This is our community. We just want a voice in this community, and we need an opportunity to take a vote. We won't be able to take a vote until the County takes action. The County won't take action until Coral Gables takes action. So, we're here for you to please take action. This is not the first time. Hopefully, it will be the last time. And at the last County meeting back in July of 2019, there were several trailer park residents there. I wonder how they got there, and I'll give it at that. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you. By the way, just for the record, I think we can't forget that -- and I understand the anecdotal evidence or anecdotal story about the response times of police and there's nothing wrong with anecdotal, you know, evidence. That's what we all mainly use most of the time when we don't have experts in the room or data, which is most of the time. But in the case of fire, we have the president of the Miami-Dade Fire Union here, and we have a high-ranking officer or fireman from our department. But with respect to police, it doesn't mean you can't talk about police response time in Little Gables, but no representative from my Miami-Dade Police is here because they're at the funeral of a fallen officer, so let's just remember that too, that they're not getting an opportunity to respond to these anecdotal testimony...

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fors: On this particular issue.

City Clerk Urquia: Karen Shane.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Shane, good morning.

Karen Shane: Good morning. My name is Karen Shane. My address is 4375 Southwest 13th Street. I've lived in Little Gables for 28 years and have served as the president of the Little Gables Neighborhood Association for over 20 of those years. Public safety is our number one concern. We are an enclave disconnected from all other parts of Unincorporated Miami-Dade. Unfortunately, too many calls to 911 have typically been directed to Coral Gables, then redirected to the City of Miami, and then finally to the County, after which emergency response times have been dangerously slow. We are a very small, quiet community, only a half mile square, so we do not have that many emergencies and not very much crime, but we have an aging population, including myself. We have young families, and we have people with potential health problems, just like any other community. When a life is on the line, time is of the essence. For Melita Jaric, a 43-year-old FIU grad student, time was not on her side. She lost her life by a hit-and-run driver in front of her home on Southwest 11th Street a number of years ago. Had she had time on her side, her brain might have gotten the oxygen it needed to keep her alive. Had we been part of Coral Gables, she just might have made it. And if you could play the clip.

Mayor Lago: Give us one second.

Unidentified Speaker: We can't hear.

Ms. Shane: We need sound. Should I play it on my iPad? No sound.

City Clerk Urquia: They said it has no sound.

(BEGINNING OF AUDIOVISUAL PRESENTATION)

Natasha Jaric: (INAUDIBLE). There's no way back.

Narrator: Natasha Jaric confirms there was nothing else doctors could do for her sister, 43-year-old Melita Jaric. She's now off of life support and pronounced dead. The FIU grad student was hit right in front of her home as she crossed Southwest 11th Street to her car and left for dead. The family held out hope until yesterday.

Ms. Jaric: She did make a few breaths on her own, but yesterday they ran the last test, and she couldn't do that either.

Narrator: Police released the 911 call from Friday afternoon.

Unidentified Speaker: She's bleeding, yes.

911 Operator: No, ma'am. I need to know if she's breathing.

Unidentified Speaker: Yes, she's breathing, barely.

911 Operator: Okay, and the car that hit her is still there?

Unidentified Speaker: No, no, he left.

911 Operator: How long ago was this?

Unidentified Speaker: About ten minutes.

Narrator: Melita's roommate Rosana told her neighbor she sat there with Melita's bleeding body in her arms for half an hour while the 911 call was bounced around.

Unidentified Speaker: They were bounced around five to six different times on the 911 dispatch units to try to convince them that they (INAUDIBLE).

Ms. Jaric: My daughter and my sister.

Narrator: (INAUDIBLE) NBC 6. We didn't hear the call being transferred. I asked police point blank and was told, "If something like that did happen, it would definitely be part of the investigation, but it hasn't even come up."

Unidentified Speaker: We are interviewing witnesses in the area. We're interviewing neighbors. Obviously, investigators have done several canvases from that evening. They were in fact some cameras in the area. You can see one behind me.

Narrator: The family makes one last desperate public plea. Natasha flips through pictures.

Ms. Jaric: My daughter and my sister.

Narrator: In hopes someone who knows something and has a heart sees a beautiful life lost and comes forward.

Ms. Jaric: She was very light-hearted, real quick on her toes, real quick in her brain and she was a competitor.

(END OF AUDIOVISUAL PRESENTATION)

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Corey Cuthbertson.

Mayor Lago: Next person.

City Clerk Urquia: Christina...

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

City Clerk Urquia: Christina Villamil.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: No worries.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Christina Villamil: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Thank you for having us. Thank you, Commissioners. I think the -- at the end of the day, you'll hear from both sides of Little Gables residents as well as North Gables residents we all want a safe community. We have little children that live in the area, myself, and my husband, with two little ones. And the response time from police and firefighters is shocking. Both times I've had to call 911, it has taken over an hour to respond. Aside from the anecdotal evidence, we want to have a safe, secure order, which benefits the residents of the City of Coral Gables. It benefits all of us at the end of the day. And why we're here is to vote to say let's begin the process. Let's allow the residents their right to vote, which is why we are here to tell you all who are elected, elected by us, the people, and we're asking you to take that vote to allow the process, and let's have a fruitful conversation. We'll have it under the Sunshine, and we can debate the various points of annexation. But let's also keep in mind -- and

I want to put this on the record -- that the fire union continuously tries to intimidate the residents of Little Gables on election day. They drive up and down our streets to show that they are for the first time present in our neighborhoods, and I want that to be known that we will not be intimidated. We will not be stopped. We want a safe community for our children. And I ask each one of you, as you sit here on the City of Coral Gables -- and I will ask the same of our County Commissioners -- regardless of your endorsements, do what's right for the people. Do what's right for your community. Do what's right by the people that elected you and put you into your power, to your seat. And I thank you all for this opportunity, and I look forward to the fruitful conversations that will come out of this. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Ma'am, one quick question, if you don't mind, and I don't need your address.

Ms. Villamil: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: When did you move in? When did you move into Little Gables?

Ms. Villamil: My husband and I bought our first home in Little Gables in 2018, and we have since purchased our second home in Little Gables.

Mayor Lago: And have you seen a significant or less turnover in Little Gables in regards -- since you've moved in of residents, families moving in?

Ms. Villamil: Our Little Gables community has thrived with new families coming in. It is changing continuously. As you've mentioned, all the recent prices in the last 30 days, that they have gone from where you used to be able to buy a starter home for 350, 400,000, they're now well over a million. There are two homes that you have -- did not list on your site that are listed for over \$3 million and are pending sales.

Mayor Lago: Wow, wow. That's incredible.

Ms. Villamil: And also to note to that, the millage rate for the County is higher than the millage rate for Coral -- City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. Thank you for bringing that up. I forgot that. Thank you. We have the -- by the way, just so everybody knows, we have the second lowest millage rate for a full-service city in Miami-Dade County. It's pretty incredible, out of 34 municipalities, with a class -- and by the way, we're the only city in Miami-Dade County with a Class 1 fire, Class 1 police. We do our own recycling, and we do our own trash. It's pretty incredible what we do with very limited resources.

Ms. Villamil: And we could discuss all of that later in the Sunshine meeting, but I'm asking you guys to please vote...

Mayor Lago: Thank you for that.

Ms. Villamil: To continue this process. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you so much. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Ricardo Lopez.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Lopez.

Ricardo Lopez: Good morning, Mayor...

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Lopez: And Commissioners. Ricardo Lopez, 4291 Southwest 12th Street. It's a house that my grandparents bought back in 1972, 50 years ago. It's a house that, 30 years ago today, I left my parents' house in Pinecrest to go spend Hurricane Andrew at my grandparents' house. And when my wife and I outgrew our condo in downtown, we -- you know, after we had our second child, we said we need more space. We need better schools. We moved to Little Gables, and we've been there for a bunch of years now. I'm here today as an active citizen without a city. I teach at the University of Miami School of Architecture. I've been there over 15 years. I've documented with my students many of Coral Gables' best historic buildings, the Fink building. We're doing the Coral Gables Congregational Church now, City Hall, filed in the Library of Congress. I have an architecture practice in downtown. I'm the current chair of the Preservation Board at City of Miami Beach. I'm an active citizen without a city. The response times, I've unfortunately experienced those challenges too. But I'm hoping that I can tap into what the City has to offer and show my kids, you know, what it's like to be a good citizen. You know, we have them over at St. Theresa School, where I'm the cubmaster of the Pack 16, and we talk about citizenship. And thank you for coming by last year to talk to us.

Vice Mayor Mena: A pleasure.

Mr. Lopez: So I'm here to encourage the board to move forward with this. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Gustavo Madrigal.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Madrigal, the floor is yours.

Gustavo Madrigal: Good morning, Mayor...

Mayor Lago: Morning, sir.

Mr. Madrigal: And Commissioners. Thank you very much. I've been a resident of Little Gables since 2015, 1625 Southwest 40th Avenue. I am all for having this conversation and seeing where it leads. I support it. Personally, I don't have any anecdotes, just facts of the issue that we have, which is flooding in our street that has been -- we've reached out to Ms. Sosa and never gotten a response, and it's an issue that I see where you guys are getting grants here for septic and stuff like that, and we would like to participate in that also because our house is literally surrounded by Coral Gables, on the back, on the side, or on the next street, and our whole life is here. So, we just want a chance, an opportunity to take it to a vote and go from there. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can I say one thing really quick?

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because as we keep talking -- it's not specific to what you said, but -- no, I just wanted to make the point. I don't want -- the reason why the annexation rules are the way they are when you talk about enclaves and all these things, the County does a terrific job on a lot of things for a lot of residents of Miami-Dade County, and I don't want to lose sight of that. I don't want this to turn into a "who does it better" debate. The issue is, because this is an enclave, just like Ponce Davis is an enclave, it's somewhat isolated from other parts of the County, and therefore, some of the services and the quality of services is impacted. That's the, I think, operating theory behind why the parameters for when annexation is appropriate are what they are. So, again, as we talk about these issues, you know, I have a lot of respect for our County Commission and for the various people at the County who do a really good job from across the board, but when you

have an enclave like this and like others, that's where, you know, you have challenges. And so that's really what we're talking about, and I just want to make that clarification because, you know, I think it's important to keep that perspective as we talk about this.

Mayor Lago: Well said, Vice Mayor.

City Clerk Urquia: Marianne Aleman Madrigal.

Commissioner Fors: Quick question for clarification, two seconds. If the residents of Little Gables -- will their taxes go up if annexed? Yes, right, or no? In other words, will they pay more taxes?

Commissioner Menendez: City taxes.

Commissioner Fors: They'll pay City -- but in other words, will their taxes be higher?

Marianne Aleman Madrigal: Not so much if you're homesteaded, I'm assuming.

Commissioner Fors: But they will be higher than they are now?

Ms. Madrigal: Yeah.

Commissioner Fors: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: The millage rate is lower in the City, so we'll have a Sunshine meeting to get into this at a future point.

Ms. Madrigal: Hi, good morning.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Madrigal: Thank you for having me.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here.

Ms. Madrigal: I wasn't prepared to speak today, but I -- first off, Mayor, I want to say you're doing a phenomenal job regardless of...

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Madrigal: What...

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Madrigal: That guy says. No, but -- and also...

Mayor Lago: Make sure you show up on April. I know you can't vote but I'd love...

Ms. Madrigal: I know.

Mayor Lago: I'd love for you to support me because the guy giggling in the back says that, you know, he's coming after me, so I need your support.

Ms. Madrigal: Well, I mean, just speaking about that issue, I would love the opportunity to vote in the City of Coral Gables, and we actually live and breathe City of Coral Gables, our little golf cart driving around, or our daughters -- Commissioner Fors -- are in the same class together at school. And we really like just thrive in the community. We just want our voice to be heard, so I

appreciate you guys bringing this topic of conversation that's probably gone on for decades again, and I'm looking forward to the discussion. And hopefully -- my goal is to hopefully change your minds. My goal, and Commissioners, versus your last vote. But hopefully, we can just have a positive conversation about this. But thank you for bringing this up, Mayor, because this is important to us just because I want my daughter to actually go to Cookies with Santa in December, and she's not allowed because our folio is like -- I don't know -- 0-1 or 1-0, whatever. Just anyway, so thank you.

Mayor Lago: It's the small things. It's the small things, right? It's the small things. Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Gladys Saenz.

Commissioner Fors: By the way, for the record, I didn't vote on -- I didn't vote against it last time. I wasn't on the Commission.

Ms. Madrigal: Oh, no? Oh, sorry. (INAUDIBLE).

City Clerk Urquia: Gladys Saenz.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. How are you?

Gladys Saenz: Good. How are you?

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here.

Ms. Saenz: Yes. My name is Gladys Saenz. I live at 4331 Southwest 15th Street, and I've been living there for 22 years now, so it's been a while. One of the things that I wanted to bring up

about Miami-Dade Police Department is, yes, it takes them longer to get there maybe, but our crime rate is very low. I have been keeping statistics since 2013, and it doesn't just happen. It happens because we have police patrol, and I have Rebecca Sosa to thank for that. And I did go to her office, and she was responsive to me. So these things don't just happen. We have low crime because we have a good police department there. One of the other reasons that I don't want annexation -- I'm obviously against annexation. One of the other reasons I don't want annexation is the high density that goes on in Coral Gables is outrageous to me. It brings more crime. It brings more traffic, and there's buildings that's going to be in -- I believe it's Menores. I've seen them quarter it off already. That's on that side of Le Jeune. I'm on the other side of Le Jeune. I do not want high density in my area. And you know, that's one of the things that was discussed before of creating higher density on Le Jeune between 15 and 16, and that's my area, and I would like that not to happen. I'm not that happy -- on the smaller items, I'm not unhappy about garbage pits either.

Mayor Lago: That makes two of us, two of us.

Ms. Saenz: Ugliest thing I ever saw.

Mayor Lago: Three.

Ms. Saenz: And of course, I don't want higher taxes or higher fees for garbage pickup, and I don't want to be fined when my house is not up to Coral Gables standards, which it will be, whether it's grandfathered in for one year or not, eventually it will be. So, those are my points of why I don't want to be part of Coral Gables. I -- we love Coral Gables. We're in Coral Gables. We walk across Coral Gables, but that's -- I still want to be part of Little Gables.

Mayor Lago: Two quick points. First off, thank you for being here and putting your points on the record, it's important. One day, hopefully, I'll be able to sit down with you with some of our

members of our team and explain item by item your concerns. Maybe we agree, maybe we disagree. That's fine. And number two, for the record, Commissioner Sosa has served with distinction for many years in this community. What we have agreed or disagreed -- we agreed a lot more than we disagreed, to be honest with you, a lot more. She has given and dedicated her life to service.

Ms. Saenz: She has.

Mayor Lago: So, I'm the person -- listen, sometimes I miss a phone call, sometimes I miss an email. I try to answer as many as I can. So, I agree -- I appreciate you bringing her up and...

Ms. Saenz: She...

Mayor Lago: Acknowledging her commitment...

Ms. Saenz: She has the...

Mayor Lago: To this community. We're all far from perfect.

Ms. Saenz: Yes, she had the courtesy...

Mayor Lago: But she's done a great job serving this community.

Ms. Saenz: She had the courtesy to listen, and I showed her the statistics, and she -- you know, it was a budget situation where we didn't have patrol for a while, but then she initiated having police in our area again and crime went down.

Mayor Lago: I'm grateful that you're here. Thank you.

Ms. Saenz: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Roberto Sequeira.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Sequeira, good morning.

Roberto Sequeira: Good morning. Roberto Sequeira. I live in 4327 Southwest 10 Street. I basically just came in here -- everything have been said in here. I appreciate what Commissioner Mena just said. I'm not going to come here about putting numbers or saying this or saying the other. I think that the idea that we are a small enclave and for no bad reasons of the Miami-Dade County, it happens, and sometimes this happens. We are in a situation where we're having such a problem that being just surrounded by a major city that will be, in my humble opinion, better served if we go there. In my case, I used to leave him in Coral Gables. I love Coral Gables. They didn't throw me out of there. I didn't be bumped out or anything. In the process of downsizing, I had this property there where I'm living right now, and I opted to go there. And not only that, I improved the property. I just did a major improvement in it, and I'm very happy too living there as a resident in there, but I realize all of the things I'm seeing here. Younger generation -- younger than me that are coming in there, houses start going up in value. And I understand all of the things where people have children. I have now granddaughters that I also want to enjoy in my house and in my -- I could have very easily afforded an apartment in Coral Gables. I decided to go there. And for those reasons, I believe that the annexation and the fact of going to Coral Gables will be a very good thing. Unfortunately -- and I don't want to go into politics -- last time around, it was not good what happened. It was not fair. That's my opinion. But I hope that in order to let people -- let the people vote their mind. I think that's the great thing that we have in this great country of ours that sometimes we don't appreciate that. Thank you for allowing me to talk.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Maria Sequeira.

Vice Mayor Mena: She'd like to pass. She's going to pass.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mr. Sequeira: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Lynne Blustein.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Blustein, thank you for being here.

Lynne Blustein: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Please the floor is yours.

Ms. Blustein: Good morning.

Vice Mayor Mena: Morning.

Ms. Blustein: Hi, I'm Lynne Blustein, 4330 Southwest 15th Street, Miami, Florida, born at Doctors Hospital a very long time ago, Class of '71 at Coral Gables High School. I've been around here forever, and I never left. So I have a quick yes or no question, and then I have a couple of comments. Here's the question. If annexation were to happen -- and I sincerely hope it does not -- will all the homes be required to change their addresses from numbered streets to named streets?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Ms. Blustein: Driver's licenses, marriage licenses, passports, deeds to your home, Social Security, your mail, all of those things. I used to deliver mail also. I was one of the first women delivering mail in Miami in the early '70s. How long does it take you to get your forwarded mail? You think you're ever going to get your mail or anything again if you change our addresses?

Vice Mayor Mena: I moved into a new house in -- a year ago, and I did everything you just described, and it was easier than ever because actually, with the post office, you can...

Ms. Blustein: Well, you're very lucky.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, I just want you to have comfort...

Ms. Blustein: So, you're saying...

Vice Mayor Mena: Of that part about it.

Ms. Blustein: That somebody that lives on 15th Street or 13th Street is going to become Affluenza Avenue because they're in Coral Gables?

Vice Mayor Mena: That's a good one.

Ms. Blustein: Is that what you're forcing upon us?

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't know -- I don't -- well, two things.

Ms. Blustein: So, your answer was yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Two things.

Ms. Blustein: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, but let me answer you correctly. I don't think it would be Affluenza, although that's good.

Ms. Blustein: Well, that's what they want.

Vice Mayor Mena: But whatever it would end up being, it won't be forced upon you because it'll go through the rules and regulations and the...

Ms. Blustein: It will be the biggest nightmare...

Vice Mayor Mena: The democratic pro...

Ms. Blustein: That ever occurred...

Vice Mayor Mena: Then as somebody...

Ms. Blustein: For any...

Vice Mayor Mena: As somebody...

Ms. Blustein: Body that has...

Vice Mayor Mena: As somebody...

Ms. Blustein: An address.

Vice Mayor Mena: As somebody that voted...

Ms. Blustein: You know it.

Vice Mayor Mena: As somebody...

Ms. Blustein: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: As somebody that voted no a few years ago when you were here -- I remember you being here -- I just want you to know that that part of it...

Ms. Blustein: Thank you for your...

Vice Mayor Mena: (INAUDIBLE) to that.

Ms. Blustein: Courageous answer. Okay, here are my...

Vice Mayor Mena: It's an honest answer (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Menendez: By the way, I want to chime in. The last Commission meeting or two Commission meetings ago, we had the same situation with South Gables regarding an area that was I think annexed...

Mayor Lago: Enclave -- the little enclave.

Commissioner Menendez: Enclave...

Mayor Lago: That was annexed years ago.

Commissioner Menendez: And we switched it over, but we gave them a year to transition. It's not like something that will happen...

Ms. Blustein: Nightmare.

Commissioner Menendez: For overnight.

Ms. Blustein: Nightmare, nightmare.

Commissioner Menendez: By the way, Affluenza -- I just checked -- is taken. Influenza is available.

(LAUGHTER)

Ms. Blustein: Influenza, I'm sure, is available in this very room at this very moment. So...

Mayor Lago: Please proceed, please proceed.

Vice Mayor Mena: Now, we're finally having some fun.

Ms. Blustein: Okay, I'm going to proceed.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Ms. Blustein: So, there is a saying that says you don't know what you don't know until you know it. I predict there will be an ocean of regret by those who vote for this and those that don't vote at all. There's a saying -- oh, I said that already. Okay, bah, bah, bah, bah, bah.

Mayor Lago: Take your time. Take your time.

Ms. Blustein: Okay. I also predict that within 10 years, Le Jeune Road, from 8th Street to Alhambra, will become a concrete corridor. I'm concerned for myself and other people who are on fixed incomes. We all know the cost -- that the cost will be a great burden to many. They just don't know it yet. My current water bill for the past 30 years has been \$10 a month. What will it be if I am forced to live in Coral Gables? Will it still be \$10 a month?

Mayor Lago: Ten dollars a month.

Vice Mayor Mena: Same.

Mayor Lago: Same.

Ms. Blustein: Oh, okay, we'll see.

Mayor Lago: And your electricity bill will be the same also.

Vice Mayor Mena: Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer will still have...

Ms. Blustein: And I'm appalled...

Mayor Lago: And as a matter of fact, if I may, since you mentioned that, if you stick around for the rest of the Commission meeting, you'll see something that we as a Commission have been working on for five years. I've been working on it for a long time. We're actually going to give the green light to commence undergrounding a majority of our city of all the power lines. We've been working with FP&L. We've been having meetings -- correct, Mr. Manager? -- the undergrounding of FP&L. It's something that we're going to be voting on today to approve that, so we're one of the first cities in the state of Florida that has -- that's going to be taking advantage of the program, and we've been working hand in hand with FP&L, and you would get potentially some of that benefit also.

Commissioner Anderson: With zero cost, right?

Mayor Lago: With zero cost, zero cost. Zero cost to the resident, zero cost to the resident.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Ms. Blustein: Okay, may I finish? And I'm...

City Manager Iglesias: They already -- it even includes the service.

Ms. Blustein: I'm going to finish.

City Manager Iglesias: It even includes the residential service.

Mayor Lago: It even includes the residential service too to your backyard.

Ms. Blustein: I'm going to finish, okay?

Mayor Lago: No, please. Take your time.

Ms. Blustein: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Take your time.

Ms. Blustein: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: I want to make sure we give you enough time.

Ms. Blustein: Thank you. And I'm appalled and heartbroken for the hundreds of people that will be uprooted, displaced and become homeless because of your actions. And that will be your legacy, that you created hundreds of homeless people and in the worst of times. There's another saying that says just because you can doesn't mean you should. And I knew somebody was going to bring up the buses of the last meeting, so only to that, I want to say if somebody were about to force me from my home, I'd put on a T-shirt and get on a bus also. And so my last thought is this. I sent a text to one of my clients who's very involved in Coral Gables -- I'm not going to say who she is, of course -- very -- you know her, she knows you. And I said, "What is your thought on this annexation?" And I'm going to leave you with her thought. For the annex, what makes our city beautiful is the consistency throughout the City, something citizens support through our actions and taxes. They should focus on supporting our downtown area and not adding additional stress to our resources. They need to do more for our existing city, which is involved in growth and expansion that are already challenging for traffic and infrastructure. These high-rise buildings and density are not being handled, and they want to add more. Take care of our city and

infrastructure first. Get permits through quicker. Monitor code violations. Spend more for our first responders. Please leave Little Gables alone. I love Dade County. I love their services. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: They're the best. Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: And the last speaker, Mr. Mayor, is David Cook, and it's through Zoom.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Cook, the floor is yours. Thank you for joining us.

City Clerk Urquia: Give him one second. He's on Zoom.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Cook, good morning.

David Cook: Good morning. Can you guys hear me?

Mayor Lago: The floor is yours. Thank you.

Mr. Cook: Thank each of you for allowing me to appear remotely. And thank you for your efforts over the past three years to improve Little Gables. I spoke with Mr. Fors. I spoke with Mr. Mean back in 2019 and pointed out that, as residents of Little Gables, we're consumers of Coral Gables. We use your parks. Your police officers direct traffic at our children's schools. You provide summer programs to our kids through the War Memorial, and we thoroughly appreciate all that you already do for us. We just would like to pay our fair share and be able to contribute to the City of Coral Gables in return for everything you already do. Hopefully, with the private renovations, the turnover of houses, it's financially making sense for you to annex us now. I appreciate that concern. I appreciate Mr. Fors saying the residents of Gables should vote on this.

This is a Coral Gables issue, not a Little Gables issue. But we consume your resources. Please let us contribute. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Cook, thank you for being here.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we -- right now, we have one more speaker, Larry Schwartz.

Mayor Lago: Okay, after Mr. Schwartz, we'll close the public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, but please. The floor is yours.

Larry Schwartz: Thank you. Good morning. I have just been here for a year.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Mr. Schwartz: I'm originally from the Beach, but I've been living up north for about 60 years for work. One of the things that I'm very concerned about is this response time thing. The Gables -- the Little Gables people are being kind of cut short on that. I have a lot of experience with short response time. My wife was a diabetic, had a lot of problems. Where I've been living, the average response time was less than five minutes, and three times they had to come and save her life. I think that although their comments about we'll dilute our resources by adding Little Gables, every one of these high-rises that goes up adds more people than live in Little Gables and taxes the resources more. So, I think that's something that should be considered as we can help the people who live there. I don't think it's going to dilute the resources for the Coral Gables area quite that much. And the other thing is the concern about mutual aid. I realize that it's a necessary kind of thing, but it generally happens only when there's a crisis, like the building fire or there's a lot of

things going on. Question is, how often does that happen that it reduces the needs for the Coral Gables Fire Department or Police Department to help our own residents? Those are my concerns.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, and welcome to the neighborhood.

Mr. Schwartz: Thank you, and I really appreciate the way you guys have been handling the meeting. I think it's very professional, and I appreciate it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Vice Mayor Mena: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, can we close the public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you, Mayor. I just want to comment -- I know a few -- probably most of my colleagues know someone who lives in Little Gables. I have a former work colleague, someone that I coached back in the day at the Youth Center, St. Theresa families, Youth Center family, so you know, a great many of you are an extension of my life. And I totally understand for many of you wanting to be part of Coral Gables. I mean, it's a natural concept, a natural idea, if you just look at the map. And today it's been a very interesting item, a lot of discussion, a lot of heated discussion, and I think I can perhaps help guide us down a path that's fair and that hopefully the process can be transparent, and people have the opportunity to express their ideas and maybe we come to some unanimous agreement at some point in time. So, I'd like to do research so -- and thank God I still have somewhat of a good memory. And I remembered -- and

I looked it up -- June 8th of last year, we had an item, Commission Item G-4, and it had to do with the annexation or potential annexation of High Pines and Ponce Davis. And I even pulled up the transcript just to see what our discussion was about, and the good news is we're pretty consistent one year later. Same concerns, same things in favor, same things that we worry about, but we're consistent. And some of the comments were that we would like to have feedback from Coral Gables residents in a community workshop. That was discussed. There was a desire for some form of commitment from the County on the front end, which is logical, reasonable. That's something I think we all -- I looked it up. We pretty much all agreed on that. A colleague of mine mentioned concerned about staffing issues, something that we discussed today. At the end of the discussion, the one thing that was -- came up was someone said, "I'm asking for the Commission to approve to start having conversations and meetings with the County." And another comment was, "It's an important distinction between having initial discussions, which we support without a full-fledged commitment to the process until we have a better sense as to where this is headed." You don't jump in a car on a road trip without having an idea that the road continues. It just doesn't fall off a cliff. We ended up with a resolution, and it passed unanimously, 5-0. And I have the resolution here and I'd love to just pass it along to my colleagues as a reference, and maybe this is something that we can discuss and maybe agree to like we did a year ago. So, basically, it's the resolution of the City Commission designating Mayor Lago as the Commission's representative to meet with Miami-Dade County regarding the possibility of the City annexing at that time High Pines and Ponce Davis. And it goes through a whole bunch of issues and concerns. And if we incorporate the thing about workshops, having resident input, discussing all the issues that were discussed today on one hand, and at the same time, we engage the County, I think that's the path forward. And I'd love to hear from my colleagues, but I think we've heard from folks that are opposed to it, and obviously, a lot of folks that are in favor of it, and there are a lot of issues to resolve, but I don't think we should just stop. We should move forward and see how far this goes. So, if...

Mayor Lago: So...

Commissioner Menendez: You're comfortable with something similar to this, I...

Mayor Lago: So, again, I don't have an issue going to speak to the County, but the issue is that this needs to be done by a professional attorney.

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah, exactly.

Mayor Lago: This needs to be done by a professional. There's a reason why this was done a year ago and nothing happened. We're going on almost two years, and why it stagnated. You need to have a team. You need to hire so there's data, so there isn't contrary statements, you know. Yes, you give us mutual aid. No, we give you mutual aid. Yes, your response times are slow. No, our response times are better than yours. Like actual data, so you can say, "Look, let me explain to you why these numbers, why financially this makes sense for the City, why we're not going into debt," when a resident asks us. Because some residents, none of those concerns matter to them. What matters is, is this going to be a resource -- excuse me, a stress on our resources financially. You need to have documents that are certified by accountants, by appraisers, by individuals who do, for example, studies for police and monitor the cases that have been called. Okay, are there higher calls in a certain area? How would we address it? I think passing the same resolution and going to the County is just basically saying, "Look, we're kicking it down the curb. We're not interested in really taking this seriously."

Commissioner Menendez: Could you elaborate, or could the City Attorney elaborate on what kind of professional? I mean, there are all kinds of attorneys. There are lobbyists. What are we talking about in terms of who we would need, the type of person we would need to...

City Manager Iglesias: Well...

Commissioner Menendez: Get answers?

City Attorney Ramos: So, we've spoken to an initial individual who specializes in annexation, who's given us a flat rate for what he would charge for the whole process, which is not what we're talking about right now, and then additional consultants that would be necessary, which is how we came up with the approximate number of 170. Again, that does not include postage, printing, graphic design, petitions, public meetings, all of those hard costs.

City Manager Iglesias: Well, I think that we would have to look at this a little bit differently. If we're looking at -- we've got the financial side and the public safety side, so there's a lot of issues that we would need a consultant on. For instance, what are our potential tax revenues? What are our potential expenses? We're in flux right now. We're dealing with very high tax revenues, but we're also dealing with very high expenses. So, we have had various meetings with Finance on that, and it's very difficult to actually determine all these things. We have the public safety issue. We have the potential taxation issue. So, I think there's a lot of issues that we need to look at this. And in order to do that professionally, I think we need to -- we need some outside consulting help to get that done. I think -- and that's something that we can initiate before if the Commission -- at the Commission's pleasure if we do that before we initiate something from -- and then, of course, let me not leave out the fact that there may be some changes in the annexation rules by the County. We need to address all those issues, and we can certainly do that and advise the Commission on all those issues prior to making that determination whether to move forward.

Commissioner Menendez: Well, there seem to be a lot of obviously moving parts, and I want to make sure we address all the moving parts, so we don't have to come back here time and time again to just then add more layers to whatever we're going to sort of decide on. You mentioned finance, you mentioned taxes. We've mentioned the annexation process. Obviously, we want to have workshops with the Coral Gables residents, but also Little Gables residents can chime in. So, what can -- how we -- how can we present a resolution, a motion in some form that we address all

these issues? I want it fair and transparent. At the end of the day, I'm going to listen to the people, and I want to do what's right, and I know there's a need and there's a demand, but everybody has to participate in the process. So...

Commissioner Fors: Mayor, I'll say a final point, and I'll leave it at this. I know the Mayor and I always spar about annexation. And I think it goes back to when we first met each other, and that's perfectly fine. When we agree, we agree. When we disagree, we disagree. I have no problem what whatsoever going forward with more careful analysis of annexation of Little Gables. For me, I would be interested at this stage in doing as much of that as we can internally without authorizing \$170,000. I'd like to do as much of it -- this is my position -- as much of it as we can to get to as informed of a place as we can internally, have the Sunshine meeting to bring in more Coral Gables residents and not cross that point where we authorize 170. If we're authorizing 170, I think that should be done -- it's taxpayer money from Coral Gables, and I think we should do it after a Sunshine meeting with Coral Gables residents, although I have no problem with a resolution directing staff to do as much of that as we can internally.

Commissioner Anderson: I would hope to have valid and good information at a Sunshine meeting for the residents to receive. We can't do that in a vacuum. Both sides need to hear the information., The educational process takes time, it takes materials, and this happens on every issue, whether it be annexation or septic to sewer conversion. You need accurate information to make a decision upon. So, I'm in favor of moving forward and ask the City Manager what is necessary at this stage monetarily wise to take the necessary steps to get the information we need to have a good Sunshine meeting.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, I couldn't have said it any better. You do not want to get yourself into a situation where you're having a Sunshine meeting where I've had dozens of them, dozens of them, and you're discussing information and one party's refuting information. Perfect example, the mutual aid agreement issue. This is simple. Let's give the Manager and the City Attorney the

necessary resources to hire the best attorney addressing the issue of annexation, the potential of annexation, an accountant, a consultant in regards to addressing life safety concerns, safety concerns, and a litany of other things that I imagine that will probably come up as a result of the Manager and the City Clerk and the City Attorney diving deeper and my colleagues working with each one of them. Mr. De Grandy has -- is the authority in this community when it comes to annexation. Like the Manager mentioned, this is evolving. Naomi has been tracking it for some time and doing a very good job on that front. But I think it's time that we understand that this Commission's going to turn over in November, give the -- give our leadership the necessary tools to move forward so we can make a decision once this County Commission turns over. We're ready, we have all the information, and we could present it, the property values, what's going to be the impact financially for the City, so we can move forward with a brand-new County Commission.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah. You know, I would say if it doesn't already read this way, Madam City Attorney, just maybe I would say up to \$170,000, right?

City Attorney Ramos: You can say up to.

Vice Mayor Mena: That way you guys can use your discretion on, you know -- as the Mayor said earlier, in terms of...

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, we will try to keep it as low as possible, but I think we need to have accurate information.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, absolutely. Look, I -- at the last meeting that Commissioner Menendez referenced, I'm one of the people that thinks -- I want to know what the County Commissioners

are thinking about this, right. And I think part of this is also to get a read on that after November where you have a lot of new Commissioners and really get a sense of where they stand. Because at the end of the day, and contrary to what some of the comments were, it's not our decision.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's our decision whether we're willing to accept this neighborhood into the City of Coral Gables, but it's the County's decision. Those are your current elected representatives, not us. So, that's why I started earlier today with -- because I went through -- I lived this process a few years ago, and I felt like we got the most of the, you know, feedback from the residents in your neighborhood, comments pro or against, which is great, but I didn't feel like the County Commission got as much of it, and it's their decision. And when things came to a head last time towards the end, after we went through the process, you guys were polled, we got a sense of who was for or who was against, it wasn't just that it was ultimately a no. They also came back asking for basically what amounts to consideration in exchange for the annexation. They wanted a piece of land that we own out on 72nd Avenue, which is extremely valuable. And by the way, they didn't say this at the beginning. They didn't say, "Hey, before we start this process, just FYI, if we get to the end, we're going to want X, Y, and Z." It was like, "Hey, now that we're at the end of this process and have invested all this money, we'd like this property that's worth like \$10 million." Oh, okay. So, you know, I don't want to be there again. I don't want this Commission to be there again, where you commit the money, resources, effort, waste all of your time in a process to only find out at the end that it's not exactly what we thought at the beginning. So, I think from my perspective -- and I said this at that meeting -- I think this is an effort to hire consultants that will go in early, talk to the folks at the County, get a sense for what it's going to take, what it's not going to take, whether it's even possible, and if it's a non-starter, if it's like it's not going to happen, well, then let's not waste everybody's time. That's kind of where I am with it. And so that's why I'm in favor of this and I'm in favor of having some resources allocated to it as is proposed because I think we need that to be able to get a real beat on what would be involved

here and be able to make a decision. So, I'm a yes today to the item as proposed, and I'm happy to make a motion in favor of the item as proposed with the addition that, at some point to be determined, there will be an appropriate Sunshine meeting once we feel like it's the appropriate time.

Commissioner Fors: And quick question...

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Fors: How much did we spend on consultants and lawyers in 2019?

City Attorney Ramos: Naomi has those numbers. And so you know, the breakdown is \$90,000 for the lawyers/lobbyist, and then \$45,000 for land use county expertise, and \$35,000 for the planner/consultant. That's how we got to 170.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: So, last time around, we spent about 270,000, not including the hard costs. That was on consulting services.

Commissioner Fors: For the whole process.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: We had a land use...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Yes. We had a land use...

Commissioner Fors: Two seventy for the whole process.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Attorney and we had a planning consultant.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: And the rest we handled in-house.

Commissioner Fors: So, we're authorizing over 50 percent in this resolution of last time's investment is all I'm saying. It's a lot of money.

Vice Mayor Mena: Well, but my -- I guess the point I'm trying to make to you is...

Mayor Lago: We've got to make an informed decision.

Vice Mayor Mena: That was a failed investment in part last time because we didn't get enough information at the beginning from my perspective, or at least it -- not that we didn't get enough information. We ultimately got all the information, and we went through the whole process...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Right, because...

Vice Mayor Mena: But we didn't know where the people who...

Mayor Lago: Stood.

Vice Mayor Mena: Were ultimately going to make the decision really stood, and we should know that. Again, if the County Commissioners say, "Guys, it's not going to happen." Then let's not waste our time.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: I think too...

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, and that is a...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: We had certain representations going into...

City Manager Iglesias: I think that is a good way to handle it.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: It and when we got to the meeting, things...

Vice Mayor Mena: It was a surprise.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: It went the other way.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, exactly.

Mayor Lago: We were also caught off guard. We were caught off guard at that meeting, and if anybody would like to see, you can watch it. I have a tape of it. We were thinking that this was heading in a different direction. We were led to believe that this was going in a different direction. And obviously, the intent, like the Vice Mayor said, is to do all the legwork upfront now and move in a direction where, again, we will never step on the floor of the BCC if we don't have for sure an understanding that the Commissioner of the district at a minimum is going to be pushing forward and that we have a level of respect and understanding from the other members of the Commission. If you notice, we are not going after High Pines and Ponce Davis in this request. This is Little Gables, so it's a significant reduction in the ask. And when you look at the legislation that's in place that was passed by the County Commission, we are the city that should be annexing this piece of property. There's nobody else that should be annexing this piece of property. Commissioner Menendez, and then we'll take a vote, or I'll look for a motion, excuse me.

Commissioner Menendez: A couple quick things. I asked in a whereas to the City Attorney if we can make it very clear that the action that the legislation addresses is non-binding on the City Commission. Simply because we're going down that step, it doesn't quite necessarily mean that we're going to go -- I want to make it very clear that by starting this process, we're not necessarily committing to going all the way to the finish line. Because if we come across...

Mayor Lago: Look, I have a...

Vice Mayor Mena: That's a given because...

Commissioner Menendez: I know but if we could...

Vice Mayor Mena: We would ultimately have to vote.

Mayor Lago: But I'm going to give you -- I'm going to give you something -- I'm going to give you something better. I'm going to give you something better.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, please.

Mayor Lago: And I -- and if anybody else is willing to do this, I welcome it. On multiple occasions, I've stroked checks here, \$5,000 the latest one for the Girl Scouts. I'll give up my entire salary and put it towards this issue to bring down the cost. I'll give up my entire salary as Mayor for an entire year to push this forward. I welcome anyone else who's willing to do that if you're willing to do it. So, if there's a concern here with money, you can take my salary, okay?

Commissioner Menendez: And my issue isn't the money.

Mayor Lago: I don't think the issue...

Commissioner Menendez: It's just...

Mayor Lago: I don't think the issue here is the money.

Commissioner Menendez: No, my issue...

Mayor Lago: I think the issue here is the politics.

Commissioner Menendez: I don't want someone who's not here today know that we passed this and automatically assume the annexation's going to happen.

Mayor Lago: Of course not.

Commissioner Menendez: I want it -- I know, but folks hear things second-hand, third hand, fourth hand and it spirals out of control. I just want to make sure that that's not the situation. Someone mentioned about capping at 175. If it goes above 175, City -- Madam City Attorney, I guess you or the Manager have certain discretion.

Mayor Lago: They have to come back to the Commission.

City Manager Iglesias: It's 170. It's 170.

City Attorney Ramos: One seventy, so we'd bring it back to you.

Mayor Lago: They have to come back to the Commission.

Commissioner Menendez: One seventy, okay. Before we finish, I'd love to know more or less a timeline of when things will be set into motion, when we'll get a report, just so that the folks here can understand. Otherwise, another year goes by, and we don't know what's happening.

City Attorney Ramos: I think the Commission should ask when you want us to come back so that we have a deadline to work from.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think you need to speak to the professionals first.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: For consideration too -- for consideration too, if part of the...

City Manager Iglesias: I think we need to...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Idea is that we're going to test the temperature of the County elected officials, we need that election. We need to know how the...

Commissioner Menendez: So, we're...

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Election gets resolved, right? So, that -- we're looking at past November.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: So maybe January.

Commissioner Menendez: That's what I needed to hear, past November.

Mayor Lago: So...

Commissioner Menendez: So...

Mayor Lago: With that, unless you have anything else, Commissioner...

Commissioner Menendez: Last thing is for the folks that live in High Pines and Ponce Davis, is there a reason why we're not -- why they're not in the discussion? Because I'm sure there's some folks living in that area that perhaps -- or you know, have family and I just...

Mayor Lago: You know what...

Commissioner Menendez: I think that's a...

Mayor Lago: Would you like to know why? Would you like -- want to put it on the record?

Commissioner Menendez: Just asking.

Mayor Lago: Because it's so politicized and the firefighters, the conversations I've had with the County have basically told me, "Don't even go after High Pines and Ponce Davis. There's too much money for us there. This is a much easier route." So, I -- this is going to be a very difficult lift. We're going to have a lot of politics against us, as you've heard here. It's going to be incredibly difficult. We need to be prepared for every time that we go before the BCC. That's why you need to hire the best professionals. You need to be clear and you to be united, as Madam Cruz said, if we're going to embark in this effort. I'm ready to move forward. We have a long agenda. We have items at 10, 10:30. Is anybody willing to make a motion or are we moving forward?

Vice Mayor Mena: I think...

City Attorney Ramos: It would be helpful to add the things we've talked about to be...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Attorney Ramos: Up to, analysis of the last hundred sales, compute additional resources necessary if annexed, hire the consultant, meet with the new Commissioners in November, report back to you January?

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Menendez: January.

Vice Mayor Mena: Report back to us at the appropriate time.

City Attorney Ramos: And have a Sunshine meeting after.

Mayor Lago: Appropriate time.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, once you have the conversations with the professionals.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll move it.

City Manager Iglesias: I think -- just to clarify, I think we have three issues. And one is -- that somebody clarified is that we will be meeting back with item one with the issues of -- the new

issues -- any potential new issues of the County, and then we can get into the financial and public safety issues if the Commission is fine with that.

Mayor Lago: Yes. So, we have a motion by the Vice Mayor.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Mayor Lago: And a second by Commissioner Anderson.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: No, only because of the price tag.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 4-1)

Mayor Lago: Moving on, we're going to take a three-minute -- oh, excuse me. We have another item we got to take on this, correct, or no?

City Attorney Ramos: On annexation?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Attorney Ramos: No.

Mayor Lago: Is there anybody that needs to go to the bathroom?

City Commission Meeting

August 24, 2022

Agenda Item G-12 - Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager and City Attorney to reinstate the annexation process for Little Gables.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll second that.

Mayor Lago: Second one. We have another annexation going?

City Attorney Ramos: We don't have another annexation.

Mayor Lago: Do the firefighters need to go to the bathroom or no?

Vice Mayor Mena: There's an annexation?

Mayor Lago: Because the firefighters -- I want to make sure the firefighters don't...

Vice Mayor Mena: Is there another annexation issue?

Commissioner Menendez: Collectively or individually?

Commissioner Anderson: I can last for what one more vote if we don't have long.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Well, is there another annexation issue we need to take care of?

City Attorney Ramos: I don't think so.

Mayor Lago: Okay. We're going to take a five minute break and then we'll be right back.