

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-6
May 10, 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 Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Karelia Carbonell

Agenda Item F-6 [1:35 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code by amending Article 14, "Process," Section 14-103.2, "Membership; Terms; Vacancies; Removal," to allow a certain percentage of the Board of Architects members to not be residents or have their principal place of business in the City of Coral Gables; providing for severability, repealer, codification, and an effective date.

City Attorney Ramos: F-6 is an ordinance of the City Commission providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code by amending Article 14, "Process," Section 14-103.2, "Membership; Terms; Vacancies; Removal," to allow a certain percentage of the Board of Architects members to not be residents or have their principal place of business in the City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Trias.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: So, Mayor, the proposal is to have 50 percent of the board continue to be members -- residents of the City and allow for more flexibility on the other half. What I would say is that there's nothing more important in terms of the aesthetics of the City than the Board of Architects. But if you look at the history of the Board of Architects, it has taken several formats. For example, in 1937, at the beginning, the City Manager would appoint a supervising architect and an associate supervising architect; in other words, two staff people, so it wasn't a board. Then in 1946, the City Manager appointed five supervising architects. In 1963, the City Manager appointed a board of architects, and the members were paid. And then it was in 1993, 1993 is when the City Manager got to appoint a board of architects of volunteers, which is the format that we have right now. So, as you can see, the format has evolved, and through the years, it has always been a group of professionals who have assisted the City Manager and staff to implement the aesthetics for the City. So, at this point, that's the request.

Mayor Lago: So, I imagine, Mr. Manager, you want to say a few things in regards to the issue.

City Manager Iglesias: And just, Mayor, that when a member for the board is selected, we -- I select that person in consultation with the Development Services Director, with the Assistant Planning Director, and with the City Architect to make sure that we select the right member with the credentials and with the experience to serve on that board. It's a board that's reviewing work of other licensed architects, so it needs to be at a high level.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, I have -- I understand the need and I know that we've had inability to find individuals to serve on that board. We're blessed to have this board in the City of Coral Gables, and I think it's one of the most important boards -- if not the most important board -- that we currently have. And it's gotten so bad that we've had to extend beyond the time period to allow people to continue to serve on that board because we haven't been able to find individuals. For example, my Planning and Zoning Board appointment was Commissioner Anderson when she decided to run for office. I was privileged enough to find a pretty well-respected architect who's serving on the Planning and Zoning Board, Mr. Revuelta. He has extensive experience not only in residential, but also in the commercial markets. He's a person that I would love to share on the BOA, you know, if he had the time, because it's a lot more intensive in regards to time than say the Planning and Zoning Board. I'm not saying the Planning and Zoning Board is a cakewalk. It's not. No boards are a cakewalk. But the BOA meets every week. So, I understand what you're requesting, but I have a little bit of reservations, and I'll tell you what they are. My reservations are, you know, the City has a certain flavor and has a certain appeal, has a certain look. And I want to be very careful when we're entrusting that feel and that look in someone who does not either work for the City, live in the City, or have their business in the City. So, that's a concern, and I need to kind of have that conversation here on the dais with my colleagues and along with staff to understand what are the negatives and what are the positives of making that decision.

Vice Mayor Mena: I had a similar reaction, and I had a discussion with the Manager yesterday. One of my thoughts was, one, to maybe have a lower percentage, so maybe it's not 50 percent, maybe it's -- you know, whatever we're comfortable with. The other one, though, was could you have a component that is experienced as a professional architect doing projects in the City, you know, some -- because I don't think it's about -- I don't think -- obviously, being a resident is great, but if you're an architect, and you've done a lot of projects in the City of Coral Gables, but you, you know, live in Coconut Grove or whatever, I think you have a familiarity with the Code and the aesthetic of the City based on your experience. So, I wonder if there's also -- we could tie in

like an experience component, you know, some prior experience in working in the City that might, you know, bridge the gap. But I also kind of wanted to hear what everybody had to say because it is a tricky subject.

City Manager Iglesias: You have to have your -- you can have your office in Coral Gables also, which means that you may not necessarily be doing work in Coral Gables just because your office is in Coral Gables.

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed.

City Manager Iglesias: So, there's a -- you know, there's a number of different components here. But I thought maybe reducing it from 50 to one-third where the vast majority of the board would still be from Coral Gables, but we would have that one-third component that may bring in something interesting and kind of diverse experience that would really help the board in that respect.

Commissioner Anderson: The major component here with that is detracting from folks wanting to serve on the Board of Architects is the number of hours. But we haven't increased the number of members on the board to be able to divide the work up more, you know. Residential houses, a lot of people have been doing changes. If we had more panels of architects handling that, I think we could maintain the integrity of our board to have the high quality and standards that we want for Coral Gables properties. So, before we lead to include individuals who are not residents or not accountable to individuals that are in our City, we need to look at expanding the board. We don't have any vacancies on the board right now as we sit. We have particular standards that we want to continue to maintain. And I'm glad you put this on because this is something I think that's been overdue for some discussion for some time, and perhaps too it would help if -- because we're the ones out talking to the residents -- we, meaning members of Commission -- and having more of that interaction to be able to, you know, discuss with architects their level of interest and then put

them through a vetting process if they're indeed practicing, you know, in our City, good architecture. We can spot them as well and...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: If I could.

Commissioner Anderson: Procure them to be part of our City Board of Architects. I mean, this was the only option that was put before the Planning and Zoning Board. I doubt -- you know, I don't see that it ever was even presented before the Board of Architects. But the architects that I've talked to about their level of interest of serving, their main component of complaint was the number of hours.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: So, if you have more people in the serving line handling, you know, whatever's got to be done in the way of work, the faster you get it done. I mean, I'll use the mangrove project as an example. We had 100 volunteers. We got done in two hours which took -- what took me weeks to get done. And I think we can deliver better quality by just, you know, expanding the board and keeping our standards high.

City Manager Iglesias: I under...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: May I point out something? In addition to this, as a separate qualification, is that a person has to have five years of experience with projects in the City. That's a separate qualification.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's in there?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes, that's in there already.

Vice Mayor Mena: Good.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: So, that's one thing. You need to have experience with projects in the City. And then the second one was you have to have an office in the City or live in the City. So, what the City Manager is saying, just waive slightly the second one. You know, continue with the fact that you need to have...

Vice Mayor Mena: You're saying that's in the current requirements.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes, yes, it's in the current.

Vice Mayor Mena: Got you.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah. If you read the...

Vice Mayor Mena: So, even if you eliminate the residency requirement, you'd still have that requirement...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: That's correct.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is what you're saying.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: So, I think, to me that makes it a little bit better as a proposal. And I have to say that I agree completely with you. The experience in Coral Gables essential. Every time I have to deal with an architect with no experience in Coral Gables, it's a challenge. I mean, it really is because they don't understand the standards and so on, so that's okay if you look at the...

Vice Mayor Mena: Is there --? The other thing I -- and I was just -- this is just like a brainstorming idea.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: I brought it up to the Manager yesterday. I don't necessarily think he loved it, to be honest, but that's okay. We can still talk about it. But -- because I agree with you, Commissioner Anderson, that the time commitment is the biggest problem.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: And they meet once a week.

Commissioner Anderson: It is heavy.

Unidentified Speaker: Three times.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I almost wonder if there's a way to like do different panels --for lack of a better word -- and I'm just, again, just brainstorming.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: But like if you had a Panel A and a Panel B, it could be every other week. Or if, you know, or Panel A, you're on call the first week of every month, and Panel B, you're on call for those meetings, you know, that kind of thing, just a different -- I -- the main point I'm suggesting is, is there a different way structurally to manage how much of their time you use so that it's not as taxing on their time, and therefore, becomes more attractive to other...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: People to do it. Because I recognize that doing it every week is a big ask. It's a big commitment.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: What has happened is that the City Architect -- the current City Architect has streamlined the process and reviews a lot of things that he's able to review under the authority of the Code, and then the actual meeting has that two-part component, which is the full board and then the panels.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: So, that's working, I think, fairly well, and we can keep making it better through time.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know, I think that...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think from a -- I think, organizationally, I think that works -- seems to work fine. I agree. I'm not a professional architect, and I don't really deal in that process, but it seems like that makes sense on that level, but it doesn't necessarily alleviate the weekly obligation, right? You know, and that -- so that's why I'm saying, is there a way to structure things so that, again, maybe the obligation is every other week, or you know, not for all -- not that we only have a meeting every two weeks, but that you kind of impanel members of the board to only be on call certain weeks so that you will alleviate that concern. Again, I don't know what your thoughts are on that, and we could talk about it. I'm just trying to come up with a way...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because I had the same concern as Commissioner Anderson to make it less taxing on people so that you get more people willing to do it.

City Manager Iglesias: And...

Commissioner Anderson: Do we have numbers that we can work with? You know, how many applications are handled per number of members?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: We could do that. But based on experience, I don't think there's that many people who want to serve on the board. There's a few, obviously, certainly, but it's not a very easy thing. Every time I tried to -- for example, at some point, I thought maybe professors at the School of Architecture, they have an office in Coral Gables...

Vice Mayor Mena: True.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: That didn't go anywhere. So, those kinds of things are easier said than done but...

City Manager Iglesias: We currently have projects, as we discussed, Vice Mayor, where the projects are large and it's a full board. And we have smaller projects, additions, windows, and things like that, that our -- that the partial board looks at so they can be more productive. The question is, can we use different architects at different times for let's say, the first week, one architect -- one architectural team. Second week, the -- that would be a logistical issue to look at -- to track what architectural team reviewed what and try to get back the same reviewers on a second review so that you have consistency, which is not...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: Easy to track and not easy to do. And so, you would take the possibility of -- if you wanted to come the following week, you could -- you may not be able to because one person is not on that board, and we would have to track the approval process for every plan also so...

Commissioner Fors: I think everybody here agrees that, in a perfect world, we would have ample able architects who live in the Coral Gables to fill the board. I think we can all agree on that. In my view, it's clear that that's a challenge, and I think that you can have able architects who are professionals, trained professionals with extensive experience in Coral Gables -- working in Coral Gables who are able to apply our standards and capture our flavor and character with -- despite the fact that they don't live in the City limits or have an office in the City limits. And I think that given the burdensome commitment -- and I don't think it makes that big of a difference if we go and tell folks that they only have to come every other week -- apart from the logistical issues that it will delay review, I don't -- my personal opinion is I don't think it'll generate that many additional people, and I think that's what you just alluded to, Ramon.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Fors: So, I don't want a -- you know, I think this type of stuff breeds a situation where we're going to have a very capable, willing architect that lives or works in South Miami, who's willing to serve on our board, and at the end of the day, we're going to have a less capable, less diligent architect that takes his place just because he happens to meet the geographical requirement. Keeping it at 50 percent, it just doesn't bother me that much. I think that in various

different areas of business and governance, you don't unnecessarily put handcuffs on yourself in terms of getting the best people with geographical limits. I think you're kind of creating a handicap for yourself by doing that. So, I think the aim for me is always to get the best people and the most capable people, and I just prioritize over that -- I prioritize that over strict geographic requirements, especially if we're only talking about 50 percent of the seats. So, that's my general position on it, understanding that in a perfect world, if we had a huge pool of people that were willing to do it, then by all means, I'd want all them to be -- to either live or work in Coral Gables.

Vice Mayor Mena: How do you assess the experience? You said five years, but like what does that mean? Like...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: You know, we do look at the resume, and we look at the projects and discuss it with the City Manager.

City Manager Iglesias: It's also, Vice Mayor, ten years as a registered architect.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no, no. I appreciate that. What I'm talking about is from the perspective of familiarity with Coral Gables, its Code.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: We look at the portfolio, which is their resume in architecture, which has the project...

Vice Mayor Mena: Of the individual architects...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: As opposed to the firm...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right? Because if you're -- you know, there might be a firm, but maybe that...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: No, no. We've been very lucky that we've been able to talk to people who are really qualified...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And -- certainly. But like I said, it's not hundreds. It's only a handful.

Vice Mayor Mena: A handful.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: So, I want to take it back a little. So, based on what I heard, we currently have no vacancies on that board.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: We don't have a maximum number of board members, so we could have more if we thought that was a good -- if the City Manager thought that was a good idea.

Commissioner Menendez: So, we have the capacity to add more...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: To the current board. But we don't have -- do -- at any point did we ever have -- once we reached capacity, did we ever consider creating a list of vetted architects that if the -- somebody resigns, somebody steps away, that we can go quickly to that list of vetted, ready to serve architects? Because that's another thought I have, always having, you know, a list of back-ups. And my question is, what Commissioner Anderson mentioned of adding -- increasing the numbers. Would that help in the day-to-day or the week-to-week work that the architects do if we expanded the size of the Board of Architects, I mean, and maintaining quorum in a reasonable amount?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It may. And the way that the Code reads right now is at least seven members -- so we could have more members. We wrote it like that to give the flexibility to the City Manager if there was a lot of work during a boom period, a few could be appointed and then maybe that would help. The practical reality is that I haven't seen a lot of people trying to -- I don't know if it's...

City Manager Iglesias: The practical thing is that we don't have, I think, the right applicant -- or not applicants, but we -- the right architects that are willing to do this at this time. And I do think that if you're an excellent architect -- and Commissioner Fors made a very good point that if you're an excellent architect, you can come in and you can capture what we're doing.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: I mean...

Commissioner Menendez: I agree.

Commissioner Anderson: But we haven't advertised this stuff.

City Manager Iglesias: I think that is what we want.

Commissioner Menendez: Well, I mean, I look at this way. We had created an advisory board of doctors, you know, a doctor from Pinecrest and a doctor from Miami Shores to come in here and be -- serve on the board. They basically know the procedures of serving in terms of medical capacity. I would imagine architecture is not that far off. I mean, there's some basic elements that all architects know, and it's a matter of picking up the nuances of Coral Gables, which are very important. But one thing I've observed in the last year or two years of the Board of Architects -- and I think it's finally settled down -- but there was a time that the Board of Architects seemed to be taking on more than it was opposed to in terms of responsibilities and in terms of opining, in terms of giving guidance. It sort of started going into the areas of other boards instead of perhaps staying narrowly focused on what the Code says their role is. And I think it would help if they, you know -- I'm sure now it's, you know, been managed well but...

City Manager Iglesias: Well, it's being managed. Yes, it is. It's being managed well now.

Commissioner Menendez: So, my -- you know, I'm open to the suggestion that's before us. I do think that if we may want to look at the Commissioner Anderson's idea as well.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. We can run...

City Manager Iglesias: But this is...

Commissioner Anderson: We can run shifts to try to reduce the burden. We haven't even tried expanding the board yet.

Mayor Lago: But I wanted to -- yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: And advertised, but we can run shifts.

City Manager Iglesias: But this is not...

Commissioner Anderson: 9 to 12 is such and such type projects. And 12 to 3 is another. I mean , before we take this radical measure...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: But this is not -- we don't look at this board as saying, "You were a registered architect for 10 years; check." That is -- we look at the portfolio. We look at the quality...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It's...

City Manager Iglesias: Of the architect. We have to look at what that architect is bringing to this board, so it's not a checklist that we use.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It's 10 years and...

City Manager Iglesias: We have many professionals in many -- in all professions who may not be the professionals we might want on that board. You have that in attorneys. You have that in medical doctors.

Vice Mayor Mena: Sure.

City Manager Iglesias: You have that in architects. You have it in engineers. And so, we try to get -- if we're going to have an architectural board, it needs to be at a high level, so it works as it's supposed to work.

Vice Mayor Mena: I do kind of come back...

Mayor Lago: By the way...

Vice Mayor Mena: To the experience, you what I mean? Because...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Five years of experience in Coral Gables and ten years total...

Mayor Lago: But this is what I wanted to like...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Still remains.

Mayor Lago: There was a few points that have been made here that I think really, I'm latching on to. Number one, I think it was Commissioner Menendez made the point about the issue that I think the board in the past was, you know, taking a little bit more responsibility than the aesthetic review, and that needed to be reined in, with all due respect to the board. I'm very grateful for their time, always, always grateful. But they were talking about other issues that I think are outside of, you know, the aesthetic purview of the board. Number two, the board is currently full. I know that we're having tough times potentially finding other people, but I just went off the -- I went off, you know, my brain right now, off the head. And I ran off people who I don't know if they're on the board or not. Great architects. Maybe they have served on the board. They got tired of being on the board, you know. You serve on a board -- I recently got off a board that I served on for 15 years, and I needed to -- you know, I served in La Liga for 15 years. I served on Locust projects for 10 years. I didn't get off the board for any reason. I just got off the board because I have other

commitments, and you know, I had to focus on those commitments. But I mean, we have great architects, like Pardo, Portuondo, Hamed, De Leon, this young...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Hamed is a member of the board.

Mayor Lago: Okay. He's a great architect who has a lot of...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And De Leon is -- was a member of the board so...

Mayor Lago: Okay, we got to drag him back in. These are great architects that have both residential and commercial experience, along with this gentleman who does a lot of residential work, tropical modern.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Portuondo and -- they weren't qualified for other reasons.

Mayor Lago: Okay, that's fine.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: But my point is that I want to make sure that we're exhausting every avenue before we open it up to either 33 percent...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Or 50 percent. And what I would recommend -- and this is all I'm asking as a courtesy -- because I've heard that there have been people who are interested, and they don't qualify. Let's prove they don't qualify. I would ask for just -- and to Commissioner Anderson's, you know, comments, let's advertise, and also, let's get in contact with the AIA.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Sure.

Mayor Lago: You know, I have spoken in front of the AIA, very qualified architects there. We could find out -- I imagine many of them -- not many of them, but maybe some -- at a minimum, some live in the City Beautiful. So, maybe we can ask them. "Hey, listen, why don't you engage before we open it up to either nonresidents and non-business owners here in the City?" That to me is something that I don't have a problem moving in that direction, but let's exhaust every avenue that we can. And that would be something as simple as either advertising or getting in contact with the AIA and saying, "Please, you know, we're looking for this. Is there an opportunity? Can we advertise in your magazine? Can you give us a courtesy advertisement? We're looking for qualified architects?" That's all I'm saying.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is the current requirement --? I know you read it, but you said it was residency. Is it "and experience with" or "or experience with"?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And, and. The experience is a separate...

Vice Mayor Mena: Is either way.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Alright.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And that's not changing. Five years' experience in the City and ten years overall since...

City Manager Iglesias: A registered architect.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Commissioner Fors: I wonder if -- if we speak to the AIA, I wonder if there's any guidance or opinion from the AIA on the composing of architectural boards and perhaps even geographical requirements. I think I know what they're going to say, which is just try to get the best architect.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, I mean...

Commissioner Fors: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Anderson: We had a recent experience of this with an architect from outside the state trying to design something and not familiar with our City Code. Now, I know that there's criteria requirements, but I also would like us to look at running shifts so...

City Manager Iglesias: The...

Commissioner Anderson: They can handle, you know, the morning crew and the afternoon crew so they're not having to spend their entire day here.

City Manager Iglesias: The Planning Director and I have been in this business for a long time, so we have an idea of who the members are, and who the people are, and who can bring in the design talent that we are looking for. And that's why we brought this up, to try to increase that design talent in that board. And just like you all are attorneys, and you know a lot of the attorneys in your profession, we know a lot of people in our profession. And so, that's why we brought this to try to inject, you know, a...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: Double -- a high level.

Vice Mayor Mena: Like I'm willing to go down this path and see, you know, what we garner from it.

Mayor Lago: You mean from advertising it?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah. And approaching the AIA and all that. Ultimately, though, you know, if you go that route, I would be supportive of something like this. The more I think about it, to me, it's about the experience in the City. I literally know architects that are born and raised in the City, lived here for 30 years. They're currently architects. They currently do work in the City regularly. They just don't live in the City, but they're very familiar with the City.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: And so, you know, I think you look at the quality of the individual and their familiarity and experience with the City as an architect more than anything. You know, so I don't want to be too myopic about the residential component.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, at the end of the day, I'm willing to support something like this. But again, with a tip of the hat to the point made by Commissioner Fors that, in an ideal world, if we could have everything we want and them be Gables residents, let's go down this path. Let's see what we find, and then let's get back...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And I want to stress that we look at the projects they've designed. We vet them at a very high level. And recently, for example, there was an architect who had a lot of opinions, and yet, his work was not reflective of those opinions, for example. That happens. So, we try find to find somebody who says the right thing, works with the experience, and has been in the City, and that's very difficult, as you can imagine.

Vice Mayor Mena: We also -- by the way, you know, to do the inverse, we also have lots of Coral Gables resident architects whose projects are routinely criticized...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: Fairly or unfairly, you know, as not being in the -- consistent with the thread of Coral Gables Mediterranean. So, you know, the fact that you're -- you know, the flip side is the fact that you're a resident and/or I have an office here doesn't necessarily mean -- you know, so this is a tricky thing to navigate. We're doing the best we can with it.

Mayor Lago: So, let's...

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm supportive of what the Mayor suggested as far as trying to, you know...

Mayor Lago: So, why don't we move in the direction -- before we bring this back to make a decision today, why don't we advertise in maybe two or three different publications.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Put it in the City website. I know that there's been certain architects. If they qualify, they qualify. If they don't, they don't qualify. But I think there's been some -- there was two of them that were sent to me yesterday by email that had applied in the last month, but they hadn't

heard back yet as an opportunity to serve on the BOA. And let's contact the AIA and ask them to give us a list of architects or potentially reach out to those architects on our behalf, or maybe we can have a meet and greet. I've gone to meet and greets that deal with construction and engineering and architecture at the AIA, and I have also spoken at the AIA. So, one of the last events they have -- the AIA had was at the Coral Gables Library, and Gensler was a sponsor, and they asked me to come and speak in regards to a project that I had built for Gensler. So, you know, it was probably 150 architects were in the room at the museum, so it could be an opportunity just to at least, number one, at the worst case scenario, we get the word out about what is the BOA and what are our standards. And then, hopefully, it'll trickle in. But I think we also have to respond to the ones that have already submitted.

Vice Mayor Mena: And one last point on that is -- because sometimes the most obvious answer is like right in front of you, but you don't tap into it, and maybe you've done this. Have a conversation with the existing board.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, do you know anybody.

Vice Mayor Mena: If -- not just...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: Not just do you know anyone, that too.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: But...

Mayor Lago: What's your opinion?

Vice Mayor Mena: What -- is there a --? Could we do this differently so that it's less burdensome for you? What do you think, you know? And -- because they're the ones in it. They're the ones living it.

Commissioner Anderson: I think that's an excellent point.

Vice Mayor Mena: And maybe they have thoughts about how to structure it that, you know, maybe we're not thinking about.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah. Because they're the one -- and that was part of the comments I got back. It's just too many hours, so where I came up with the idea of doing shift work on it. Are they willing to serve, but willing to do three or four hours per week so they can get back to their business for the rest of the day?

City Manager Iglesias: I just want to say...

Commissioner Anderson: That might be the answer. I don't know.

City Manager Iglesias: Well, I just want to say one final thing, that this is a board of architects that reviews the work of other professional architects. And when you're doing that, you should be at a very high level.

Vice Mayor Mena: Absolutely.

City Manager Iglesias: This should not be a mediocre board that reviews work of other people. If we're going to have a government -- if in government we're going to review work of other people, then you need to be at a high level so that can be a productive board and that can get us to the next

level as far as architecture. So, it's very important that we just don't say "architect, check." It's not quite that easy. We want a board...

Commissioner Anderson: No question.

City Manager Iglesias: We want a board at a very high level, and that requires a lot of work on us to make sure that we bring in the right people and not someone who's done really mediocre work and that's not someone that should be in our Board of Architects.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I don't want you to take away from this that anybody up here is asking you to compromise...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: No, no.

Vice Mayor Mena: On the quality.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's not -- you know, we're just trying to see if there's other ways to skin this cat. And if there's not, we can revisit this approach or some iteration of it. But you know...

City Manager Iglesias: It's not simply getting bodies. It's getting the...

Vice Mayor Mena: No.

City Manager Iglesias: Right people on this very important board.

Vice Mayor Mena: Absolutely.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: We could do some research and bring it back to you and tell you what we found if that's okay.

Commissioner Anderson: I'd be...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Real interested in hearing your input as to how many hours they can afford to spend because maybe that's the impediment.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Sure.

Commissioner Anderson: Assuming they satisfy the qualifications. You know, that comes first.

City Manager Iglesias: Understood.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have two members of the public requesting to speak on this item.

Mayor Lago: Please.

City Clerk Urquia: First one is Ms. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Hello. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, the floor is yours.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. I'm a little confused again. This is not a mathematics issue, but I'm confused. Have we --? Where did we ascertain that there is a challenge working on this board? This is one of the few boards that there's very rarely anyone absent. I mean, I watch them, and most of the time, they have not only quorum, they have every single one of them there. There are no vacancies. We're trying to fix something that doesn't seem to be broken. That's number one. Number two, I took the time to go to the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation website. And I just say, you know, architects near Coral Gables. And I came up with seven pages of fifty names. Let's say that some were not living in Coral Gables, so we would have a list, 200 architects. Now, most architects that I've spoken to, some ex-students of mine, they have told me that they have never been asked, that you know, the people are there, and they have never been asked. Has anybody, any of the people sitting there said, you know what? I'm going to quit because I don't want to give the time, or I cannot give the time. You know, we're making assumptions, and this is where the problem is, okay? As far as I'm concerned, it's not broken. I mean, if they came back to you and said, you know, we're having trouble getting a quorum, I could understand. But that hasn't been said. You have architects galore in the City of Coral Gables that either live here or have their practices here. And really, this is getting me a little super confused because, you know what, we have seen what has happened when we have hired people to work in our city that had no clue what the culture -- and you know what I mean. I don't mean education. I mean the culture of this city is, okay? Being an architect and being an engineer are two different things, okay, and there are different rules. Architecture is not a black and white, add numbers and you're okay. Architecture has to do with their eyes, okay, with the aesthetic, and we certainly -- I don't even see why we need to consider bringing people from other places if we haven't -- and we haven't tried the ones that are available here, okay. Maybe that what Lago said is a good idea. Let's go to AIA and see if you can come up with a list of all the architects that either live or practice or both in the City of Coral Gables. Meet with them. Tell them what we're looking for if we need to because if you don't have vacancies, and the people that are there have experience doing what they're doing are not complaining, why are we trying to fix this?

Vice Mayor Mena: Mrs. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Something is wrong with the picture.

Vice Mayor Mena: Mrs. Cruz, this is -- to answer your question, or at least from my perspective, it's not just about having a quorum. I understand your point on that. We get -- I'm sure my colleagues do -- I routinely get complaints about certain aspects of the process of going through the board, whether it's the amount of time it takes because it creates a backlog of projects, and the amount of time that it takes for a project to go through our process is impacted, whether it's about the implementation of the board's opinions. We routinely get complaints, for example -- again, I'm sure my colleagues have gotten these complaints from people that say...

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Hey, I went in front of the Board of Architects. They told me I had these two issues. I took care of the two issues. I came back, and then I had three more issues that were not mentioned the first time.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Vice Mayor Mena: And then I came back, and then I had -- you know, and this is -- that -- I don't want anybody on the Board of Architects to take this as criticism. It's not. I'm just saying these are things that we hear from people who are actually -- residents who are going through the process to do whatever it is they want to do to their home. And so, you know, we're just trying to make it a better process for the users. It's not just -- having a quorum is the bare minimum. That's not the only standard that we want to satisfy. So, yes, we have a quorum, but...

Ms. Cruz: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: We always want to improve it.

Mayor Lago: Well...

Ms. Cruz: No, but we're saying that it could be a burden on them. That's what I was saying, when have they said it was a burden, number one. Number two, today, for example, a lot of the people in the Building Department were out, okay, so it happens. You know what, let me tell you something. You need to take what you hear with a grain of salt.

Vice Mayor Mena: Trust me, we do.

Ms. Cruz: I sit on a board.

Vice Mayor Mena: Ditto.

Ms. Cruz: I sit on a board -- listen, I sit on a board where they come in and say, "Oh, my God. You know, I've been sitting waiting for the plans to be approved." And guess what? Then when Suramy, other people in that department come up, they say, "You just turned it in 10 days ago." "Oh, I thought it was longer." You know, the people color their comments based on what they expect, not necessarily the facts, number one.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Ms. Cruz: Number two -- number two, this is -- I think you need to first, before you want to throw out the -- what is it, the baby with the bathwater? -- you need to look at the people that live here, have offices here, qualify with the years and are very good architects before you start bringing somebody that has to learn...

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Ms. Cruz: The cultural (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz.

Vice Mayor Mena: We just agreed with that, Mrs. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: And number three, okay -- and number three, okay -- and number three, I -- since I became interested in this issue -- I sat at the beginning of this year -- I believe it must have been September, whatever, when the Mediterranean issue was being discussed. And I was there when -- I don't remember whether it was Ramon -- somebody said to them, you know, this is what you're supposed to be doing. And the lady who is the chairperson said, "Wait a second. You're telling us now that we can do what we wanted to do, and you told us not to?" So, you know, you need to talk to them because there's undue pressure coming from many sides, and you may not necessarily be getting the real facts, okay. That's all I'm saying. I'm not an architect, but I've talked to several of them, and the first thing they said -- and they're well-known architects in the City of Coral Gables -- and they told me, "Maria, I have never -- nobody has ever told me that I could do that."

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Cruz: I said, "Would you be interested?" They said, "Of course we would be interested." So, let's look in-house first. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: The next speaker, Mr. Mayor, is Ms. Karelia Carbonell.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell, the floor is yours. Good afternoon.

Karelia Carbonell: Hi, everyone.

Mayor Lago: Hello.

Ms. Carbonell: Hi, everyone. This is Karelia. (INAUDIBLE) came to the (INAUDIBLE) and I have just, you know, a few things. I do (INAUDIBLE) understand for...

Vice Mayor Mena: We can't hear you.

Ms. Carbonell: You know, they're thinking (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Mena: We can't hear you, Ms. Carbonell. It's coming in and out.

Ms. Carbonell: Okay. Can you hear me now? I'm sorry. I'm on the phone so...

City Clerk Urquia: Go ahead, ma'am.

Ms. Carbonell: Can you hear me now?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Ms. Carbonell: Okay. I just want to mention, you know, just a few things that I've sort of taken -
- I've heard and read through these boards. And you know, we're going to go down a slippery

slope if we start tinkering with our residency situation. And also, because BOA is a quasi-judicial board, so they -- you know, our members there, you know, need to really be part of the City. They need to be part of our municipality as part of either a resident or, you know, whatever those requirements are. But the other thing is that the Commission can waive -- I mean, if we get a prominent architect who wants to serve on this board, who is qualified and is vetted, it can always come to the Commission. And the Commission can waive anything because that's what -- you know, the experience I've had with (INAUDIBLE). So, you know, I agree -- somebody was just telling me yesterday that (INAUDIBLE). There's one architect who had submitted their (INAUDIBLE) back. Now, I don't know who's vetting, you know, these candidates, but it seems that at least an acknowledgement of (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Okay. I think we're losing her.

Ms. Carbonell: (INAUDIBLE) I think...

Mayor Lago: Go ahead, Commissioner.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a quick question for the law. Does our Code allow for a waiver on an individual basis of the residency requirement?

Vice Mayor Mena: Of course.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Menendez: And what -- is it a four-fifths vote, or is it a majority?

City Attorney Ramos: I don't remember, but we've done it before. We've did it for Pension Board, for example.

Commissioner Menendez: So...

City Clerk Urquia: It is a four-fifths vote, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. No, so the -- we could have...

City Attorney Ramos: Case by case, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Case by case and have nonresidents who qualify, and then we could make a decision on the spot.

Mayor Lago: Okay, so let's move on from this issue because we've got a long agenda. We've been talking about this for a long time. What I would like to see is, in the next Commission meeting, for staff, through the Manager, to come back, having a detailed plan on how they reached out to the AIA, spoke -- like Vice Mayor said -- to the members of the BOA, got their input, got their advice, spoke to -- I know that there's several individuals that have applied to be on the BOA. Maybe they don't qualify. It's perfectly fine. Maybe they don't meet the five-year standard. But I'd like for those individuals to show that we, obviously, accepted those applications, and either they were approved, or they were disapproved, what was the reasoning behind it, before I'm willing to move to lowering it to 33 percent or 50 percent.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, I think we need a little more time. Let us look at this issue again and bring it back at...

Mayor Lago: But I am...

City Manager Iglesias: A later date.

Mayor Lago: But I'm going to tell you, Mr. Manager, I am willing -- just like the Vice Mayor said -- willing to move in that direction once we've exhausted all opportunities.

City Manager Iglesias: Okay.

Mayor Lago: If you can tell me, "Look, Vince. We went to the AIA. We had a symposium at the AIA. We invited all the architects. We couldn't get people to come." We advertised, let's say, in the Coral Gables Magazine, maybe -- please do not advertise in The Herald. Any -- you know, Community Newspapers, Miami Today is a great resource for businesses and for professionals, maybe some AIA architecture magazines, or AIA website. Once we've exhausted those opportunities -- and again, also, prominently displayed it on our website, spoken to the BOA, asked their input -- how can we make your job easier? Because we really appreciate you, and we're grateful to have you on the board. Then I'm willing to move in this direction. I just want to make sure we exhaust all opportunities and all avenues, okay?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: As a member of the AIA and a long-time architect, I'll be happy to do that for you, sir.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Ramon.

City Manager Iglesias: Understood, Mayor. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Thank you. But I understand -- by the way, I don't want you to think this falls on deaf ears. This -- I know this is important, and I know this has been an issue for a long time, and I'm glad that you brought it up. I think that was mentioned by the Vice Mayor also.