

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C – Public Comment
September 13, 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 (On Zoom)

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Jessica Keller

Agenda Item C [9:35 a.m.]

Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Moving onto Public Comment, Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, good morning.

Ms. Cruz: Good morning. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I have two comments, but first of all, I would like all of you, including the audience to Google National Police Woman Day, National Police Woman Day. If you Google that, you will see that there are lots of comments. Lots of, I guess, messages from the Coral Gables Police, from Miami Beach, from Miami-Dade County, from Fresno, from everywhere in the world, including Canada, and yet, we don't have anything on the agenda. And you know when it was, yesterday, National Police Woman Day. And guess

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what, it's not important. You know why I'm saying that, because last Commission meeting or the one before, I forget, you know I'm getting old, I reminded you all of something that happened over five years ago; and some police officers that happen to be women that are still waiting to see what's going to happen about all the abuse, all the bullying, all the harassment, all the disrespect that they and their families went through. I was promised mid-September. Well, today is the 13th of September. There is no meeting closer to mid-September than today. And I thought in my innocence, I guess sometimes I'm naive when I saw those postings, I said, that's the day, that's why he said September, because he knew it was a good day to do it. Guess what, its not on the agenda, it hasn't happened. I'm at the point where, if I have to out of my pocket hire an attorney, I'm going to cover those women. They should sue the city and you know what, at least they'll get \$100,000 each. Forget about the respect, forget about the honor, forget about the sorries, you know what, they'll get as much money as other people get, because you know five years is a long time, and we have failed. We have really, really failed. And you know what, not a goo day. Then I have a second comment. I was going to speak on G-22, but it has been deferred. But since I'm here, and I don't know what the Lord has planned for me next time, maybe I will take the time to say something. I think its about time that our city sits down and reflects as to what the plan was for Coral Gables. This city was not founded to be a business hub. This city was not founded for a whole bunch of stuff that we are doing nowadays. This city was supposed to be a suburb, a place where people would come and live a nice life and enjoy life till the day they died. Well, you know what, in order to do that, we need to come through and do what's right. And I'm very tired, and today you can sense that I'm a little angry that we continue dealing with stuff that shouldn't have to deal with. There are rules. We just did a rewrite of the zoning. It says what the zoning is for. It says what it is. We do have zoning rules. We write covenants. We have development agreements. We have a lot of stuff, and then what happens, this Commission, the elected officials are under pressure, and we bend. Well, the citizens, the residents are tired of the bending. Okay. If anybody comes into the city and buys a property that's labeled low-rise, it should be low-rise. They shouldn't buy it. They should not pretend that, oh, I didn't know that I couldn't make money, so I'm going to go and get it changed. Whatever it is, is, that's what we want. Enough is enough. But so, you can see the happy side of Maria Cruz, I have a proposal for you. I live across from my church, Father Oscar was here, I live half a block from the University of Miami, our area is in trouble for parking. We have student parking in front of our homes. We have people that can't come to church unless they park blocks away. I am willing to, I guess my daughters will kill me, but maybe we could agree to change the zoning on my side, on my property that we could build a little residence for me on the bottom and do parking three or four stories parking, simple, that the church would get parking and the university students wouldn't have to park on the street, and it would not be a money-maker, I don't want to make money, I just want to be a good citizen and allow people to have something good. And all it would require is a change of the Comp Plan. I don't know if it would apply, I don't think its big enough for, what do you call it, a PAD, I don't think its big enough for that, but I could get TDR's, I could get Mediterranean Bonuses and I could get at least three floors above my residence. I wouldn't mind hearing the cars. We could even have bike racks. We would be very agreeable to everything, but you would have to agree to all those changes and I'm sure my neighbors will be very happy, but who cares about the neighbors. When the developers come here, who cares about the neighbors, the neighbors don't have a say in it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.
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Ms. Cruz: You're welcome.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Jessica...

Mayor Lago: Before we move on Mr. Clerk. Mr. Manager, when the Chief comes back, can we get an update in regard to...

Vice Mayor Mena: [Inaudible]

Mayor Lago: I know, but we were supposed to have something in the middle of September, I'd like to see if maybe we can have something for the end, the last meeting of this month, if possible.

Commissioner Anderson: Please.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes Mayor. I will talk to the Chief for the next meeting.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you very much. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Jessica Keller.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Keller, good morning.

Ms. Keller: Good morning, everyone. My name is Jessica Keller, and my 12-year-old son and I had been members of this community for over ten years. Today, I decided to come here last minute, on my way back from another meeting I had at my son's school at GW Carver Middle where I'm part of the Green Committee. No surprise, I'm leading sustainable transportation initiatives there. I'm proud to announce that the parents concerned about congestion and sustainability have organized 71 families into carpools. This is significant at a school of about 950 students. We are currently organizing a bike to school day event at the school, the support from organizations, like Bike-Walk Coral Gables, Bike Safe, and other private organizations. Its timely I come today, because of two items on the agenda that run counter to our efforts at the school. Today, on the agenda, you will review Alhambra sidewalks where you'll be installing wide sidewalks a narrow roadway, along admittedly a small segment of Alhambra Circle. It's a hauntingly familiar project that was initiated a few years ago. The difference is residents would have not funded it a couple of years ago. Now, it seems that residents do have to fund sidewalks in front of their homes. The other item on the agenda is related to bike lanes on South Alhambra Circle. This initiative started years ago, and I personally facilitated the first meeting from the interested residents in their homes. They've had to jump through hoop after hoop to get to a point where they still have to go to ballot. Streets are for all people, not just for the people that live there, and these people have demonstrated over and over again they support this infrastructure. We don't have a bunch of people wearing T-shirts today, saying we don't want a ballot, because they are pretty darn, I would say they feel fairly optimistic that this will pass through ballot, but it sets a terrible precedent moving forward. Concurrency is problematic, not just for bike infrastructure, but traffic calming and other forms of traffic mitigation under ballot is, to make public safety suffer at the hands of the many who

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currently create the safety risk behind the wheel if you chose to only drive. I can't help but wonder if the Manager's personal bias against safe walking and biking is behind the barrier after barrier placed in front of families, where March 11th of this year he stated, if you want to do bikes, go to Seattle. He said that during a recorded public meeting. I really hope the city will support the school and the families in their efforts to make streets safe enough to bike to school and lead healthy, sustainable lifestyles. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: If you wait, I'm going to be listening to G-4, as the first item, in regard to sidewalks, which is my item.

Ms. Keller: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Anyone else would like to speak? Okay. Perfect. Then we'll move on with the agenda.