

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
November 18, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Carmen Olazabal

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Acting Assistant City Manager Cindy Birdsill

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-1 [Start: 2:54:46 p.m.]

Discussion regarding the Parks and Recreation Youth Advisory Board
Commissioner Lago

Mayor Cason: We are going to move to Item F-1.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you Mayor. This should be a simple quick discussion. I wanted to bring it to the attention of the Commission because I know that we discussed it before in regards to the 30 Boards that we have here in the City, 31, excuse me, thank you Mayor. One of them is obviously the Parks and Recreation Youth Advisory Board. I've been contacted by a very nice lady who says that her son was appointed to the Board. Currently the Board has six vacancies, they haven't held a meeting, I think in close to three years, and I wanted to see what the opinion of the Board was, of the Commission, to see if we wanted to continue to have this Board or not,

because it's very difficult to find a youth who would be interested in, not only having the time, but also be interested in the parks.

Mayor Cason: I think the problem is that they've been taking juniors and seniors and a lot of them, I think, want to be on these Boards to have it on their resume, and they don't show up. To make this viable you might have to take kids at freshman or sophomore that would stay around, but in general if a Board doesn't meet for three years and nobody has put anybody except for one person, you have to consider whether it's worth keeping.

Commissioner Lago: My point is this again, because obviously due to the Sunshine we can't have these discussions, and we want to be as effective as possible. I think this Board hasn't met in several years, we only have one person out of seven appointments, we only have one person on the Board right now and this individual wants to get involved, but I don't think anybody else has any other appointments.

Mayor Cason: We have a Parks and Recreation Board, maybe the thing is take somebody young and put them on the Board and that takes care of it, because this is Parks and Recreation Youth Advisory Board.

Commissioner Keon: Well, I think you know the benefit of having the youth involved in it is that the end-user of the recreational programs that you have there and they may view it, they may find it a little different than the adults. I don't know. There was a Board, I appointed someone, and I didn't realize they have never met.

Commissioner Quesada: How about we do it a little differently. How about we request from the Youth Center, is Fred here?

Interim City Manager Olazabal: Yes, Fred is here.

Commissioner Quesada: How about we have – so obviously your staff knows these kids better than anyone else. The ones who are involved in sports or other activities, whatever it is, maybe yearly that you guys come up with recommendations and instead of serving a two-year term or a four-year term, it's a yearly term, based on the recommendation that you guys provide to us at a certain time every year, maybe at the beginning of the school year to make sure that we know we are going to have those students for the remainder of the year, so maybe every August, September, October, because I would love to continue having this Board be active.

Commissioner Keon: Maybe they don't have to meet every month, maybe they can meet every other month or in the school year.

Mayor Cason: Do we need a Board from your perspective?

Mr. Couceyro: One thing, I think the purpose of the Board, which is to provide us kind of that perspective from that age group, I'm not sure that it needs to be in this formalized as other advisory boards, it could be a group, a youth group that reports to our Youth Center staff and it's almost like an advisory group, but not formalized, not appointed, just a group of children that meet the different areas. You know we have someone that participates in our athletic program, we have someone who is participating in our recreational, our camp people, our teams, and put together a group like that, that might work as well. The big difficulty that we had on this Board was the attendance and the Mayor did refer to that. Then we had a few when they would be seniors they'd graduate out and then all of a sudden it would be hard to get a quorum, and right now...

Commissioner Lago: Currently you have one, which is the appointment of Commissioner Keon.

Mr. Couceyro: Correct. But from 2011 to 2013 when we had people appointed it was tough to get them there, and obviously we only have one now.

Commissioner Lago: Fred, what is your opinion of what the Mayor said in reference to having, for example Commissioner Keon's appointment transfer her/him over to the main Parks Board and have them involved...

Commissioner Keon: I believe they meet during the day when kids are in school.

Mr. Couceyro: Yes, they meet Friday morning, at 8 in the morning.

Commissioner Lago: They meet at 8 o'clock in the morning?

Mr. Couceyro: Yes – Fridays at 8 in the morning.

Mayor Cason: Back to your question or to your suggestion, a more informal Board. What we want is ideas, suggestions of things that we might do, fund from the perspective of young people, so if you can find, you could get together a representative group.

Mr. Couceyro: We could, we could do that. One of the other things that we do is we try to come up with our first few years of this Board, we came up with some service projects, they became a good volunteer force for us, they helped us in our special events, they actually ran a teen dance, this was the first Board. The first Board that we started we had a lot of gung-ho 2007-2009, we

did a lot of stuff with them, so it's kind of fallen off a little bit, but I think if you want to have a formalized Board what would be helpful is, as you said, have nobody further along than tenth grade when they go onto the Board, so you will get two full years of commitment to them; second of all, go into it saying, we already have a set day, let's say third Wednesday in a month at 6 p.m. and before we even appoint these students, we say, "you have to be available that day" so you know going in that's going to be the commitment, and then maybe we can get there that way, because it was really hard to just nail down dates to get everybody with their busy schedules, because children are very scheduled now a days.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Well you have the information for the young man that I appointed, can we reach out to him and talk to him about what you are going to do and include him in whatever it is as long as he is...

Mr. Couceyro: We can. Absolutely.

Commissioner Keon: I think it will be a good thing to have something come back for kids.

Mayor Cason: Yes. My suggestion is we go the informal route, include that person, see if you can get people, come up with some ideas for us and then later on if it looks like it's working we can always formalize it.

Mr. Couceyro: And also, I'm not sure if the person who contacted you, if their child is still a student age or has graduated.

Commissioner Lago: Speak with Danette. The person that contacted me is Ms. Perez, her son was appointed by the previous City Manager, and his term expired in 2013, and they want to know why they haven't met or if they can continue to get involved in some capacity; and I have another individual who I can appoint, but I don't think it's three, I was told one short.

Mr. Couceyro: OK. We can find someone.

Commissioner Keon: They can come up with somebody, give them your names, whatever. Do we have many music programs at the Youth Center?

Mr. Couceyro: Only for younger children. We have "Music Together" and a Spanish, "Canto....", it's called.

Commissioner Keon: Yes – right, but we don't have any sort of music lessons of any sort?

Mr. Couceyro: We do. We have a theater group that does some repertory stuff, but their classes, it all depends on participation. They've offered them and they don't get a lot of people that participate, so it's on and off.

Commissioner Keon: Do we still have an art program, like the one that Christina ran at the Youth Center?

Mr. Couceyro: That has been on and off. We had a contractor that did some art camps and did some art classes, but not dedicated where it we had one person doing it. That was part of our – when we started doing our budget reductions, we couldn't have a dedicated full time person just to do art programs.

Commissioner Keon: Really?

Mr. Couceyro: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: We should look at our budget.

Mr. Couceyro: Christina now does summer camps. She does the entire summer camp program.

Commissioner Keon: She is absolutely amazing, absolutely amazing.

Mr. Couceyro: Fantastic – yes.

Commissioner Keon:...absolutely amazing the art programming that she did and has done for so many years with kids. Children are not getting art and music in school anymore, the curriculum just doesn't include them and I know there are lots of parents that would like that opportunity for their children to experience some art and music, rather than just – I wouldn't like to see us only become sports facility. I would like us to be able to serve all of the recreational needs of children, including art and music, so maybe we can talk about that.

Mr. Couceyro: Fantastic – that would be great.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Remind me we'll talk about that.

Mr. Couceyro: I will.

Commissioner Keon: Cindy, I think you have some particular interest in art or whatever, even in young children, can you remind me we'll talk about that?- in our recreational programming.

Ms. Birdsill: I'm very opinionated about this. Obviously, I think art and music is essential for our education and I would love to try to bring in here, if we can work on it.

Commissioner Keon: So we can talk about it and I know we are looking for a recreational, somebody else?

Ms. Birdsill: The Community Recreation Director?

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Ms. Birdsill: Yes. We discussed – Fred's group is doing a master plan this year for all Parks and Rec and so we should look at it in that master planning process, and also a master plan for the Youth Center.

Mayor Cason: And the budget process is going to start again in January, February, or March so it's fine.

Mr. Couceyro: We can make that request – absolutely. I would welcome it.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Thank you.

[End: 3:03:57 p.m.]