

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C-1
August 28, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Ed Santamaria
Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item C-1 [9:21:58 a.m.]
Mayor's Comments

Traffic Calming Status

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mayor's Comments. My first comment has to do with traffic calming status and I met with the Mayor of Miami-Dade County on Monday of last week to discuss many issues facing us, including our traffic calming possibilities and realities. Madam City Manager would you say a few comments on that meeting.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Absolutely. I think that it was direct and deliberate. You first challenged them on the timing that it takes for City to be approved to conduct the local traffic engineering that is necessary to add peace and quiet to our residential homes. We do have a Memorandum of Understanding; there had been significant back and forth and between you and Mayor Gimenez, you committed to having that MOU finalized, to have the traffic calming in place and for us to be preapproved for standard designs so that we did not have to have every individual project approved by the County; and Mayor Gimenez gave that commitment and we

are finalizing that agreement and we are confident that our residents will see the kind of traffic calming they have long been waiting for to come to fruition. You also challenged the idea of diverters, those big plastic poles surrounded around the Cartagena Circle and saying that such a beautiful circle, such a real operating circle, why do further harm by adding these diverters that are not only ugly, but they will hurt the function of the circle. There was good agreement there in terms of those improvements. You continued the challenge by saying the LeJeune Road Bridge – 60,000 cars on a very regular basis coming through; they cannot haphazardly rip that bridge out, close that traffic and think that it will not be a significant impact, not only on the drivers that use that bridge, but also throughout the surrounding neighborhood. So it was good open dialogue. Mayor Gimenez instructed the traffic team to work closer and better with our Public Works staff. Alice Bravo who has been tremendously supportive through this whole process was home sick, but we look forward to continuing to work with her to bring the traffic calming into those neighborhoods that your residents have been demanding and you have expected. So with that Mr. Mayor, we also briefed you on all of the traffic calming that has been done to date, all of the traffic calming that is in the pipeline in design, physical design now and also other traffic calming that is in discussions. You were interested in us presenting that to your colleagues as well as to the public, so if you would like I can call Ed Santamaria to do that. As they are setting up, one of the things that is really important for your public to understand is, we have millions of dollars set aside, earmarked for traffic calming. So this has not been a budget issue, this has not been an issue of us delaying because we didn't have the resources. You all asked for those resources upfront. What is happening was the ability – so all of the Dade County traffic calming responsibilities do not rest with the City issues of stop signs, speed tables, the traffic circles, they rest with the County and through this very positive MOU, we now will have local authority of making many of the changes that you have long awaited for. With our new High Definition television, we are going to ask our CGTV to focus on this. We will also make it available online, so if anybody wants to follow up with it. One of the charts is, what has been done already citywide and the other focuses on what is in the pipeline, what is in the design, and there is more to come. So with that...

Commissioner Lago: May I ask you a quick question Madam City Manager just in reference to this issue, because I've been working on this probably two and-a-half years and this is an item that I view as incredibly important to the future of the City of Coral Gables, especially with having hundreds of thousands of cars that are driving through our City every day and the amount of people that are using...Is this MOU signed already? Do we have the MOU signed?- is it signed, sealed and delivered?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's not signed. It was delivered to us and Peter Iglesias has it and is looking at it and its going to be finalized today or tomorrow and it's going to come before us before it's signed.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: With respect we were ready to sign it...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I know.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark:...and the County had an additional look at it. With that additional look came additional conversation, as you can imagine and so, both Assistant City Manager Iglesias and Director Santamaria reached out directly to Alice Bravo and they are committed, both sides, to get that resolved and signed. But we are moving forward. We've got the designs -- that we know the designs that they need, we are moving forward.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Here's the one that we have looked at forever with modifications, etc., it's the last that was submitted to them and...

Commissioner Lago: The reason why I bring it up is because I'm not a big fan of being at the mercy of anyone, especially the County and I think that the Mayor, I don't speak for the Mayor, but the Mayor has used some pretty harsh words to describe the County and their inability to deliver for this community. The Mayor of Miami-Dade County with me personally has cancelled five meetings and the last meeting that I was supposed to attend on Monday, I was told that the meeting had been cancelled and I planned my trip from out of town to be at that meeting, but then I just found out that that meeting still occurred. My number goal is to deliver this MOU for the residents and citizens of Coral Gables. I don't play politics, it's not my interest -- we have a major issue here in the City of Coral Gables, but there are certain people and why beat around the bush, the Mayor of Miami-Dade County has to step up and understand that we serve at the pleasure of the residents of this community. By cancelling meetings with elected officials who have been working for two-three years to deliver something as important as traffic calming, you are only hurting one person, you are not hurting Vince Lago. You are hurting the residents of this community. So, I hope that after years of trying to deliver on this, the County steps up to the plate and gets this expedited, because how many meetings have we had, how many times have the County Mayor supposed to show up before the Commission and cancels at the last minute or cancels meetings when he doesn't want to show up. Commissioner Suarez hasn't done that, Commissioner Sosa hasn't done that, they've been team players in trying to deliver this MOU. So, let's put politics aside and my personal views on certain issues and let's deliver traffic calming for the residents of this community.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner it was a very positive meeting, the MOU is there. He is committed to helping us and the things she told...whoever she was Alice Bravo's number two, let me finish -- number two person, I don't want to hear any more we have to fix this, we had to

whatever. I want it done then and we got the MOU last Friday. So Peter is looking at it and Jessica, I guess too, and it will be delivered by today or tomorrow, the day after.

Commissioner Lago: How many times have we been promised that?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I met with the Mayor and I believe that it will be done this time. I'm not going to go back into history. It will be done this time and it was a very positive meeting.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So Commissioner, one of the things that we've talked with staff about late last night was, let's set a signing, let's set a date, let's finalize the issues. We agree what a speed table should look like, we agree on so many of the components. Let's go ahead, let's set that time, let's sign it, because we are ready to move forward, but we do have very deliberate specific discussions to fine tune and finalize that agreement, but we are ready to move forward.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It will be done today or tomorrow.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Sir, I'm not saying it's today or tomorrow, but I will say that we'll have a signing at the end of this week.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Alright. Anything else?

Public Works Director Santamaria: If you wish we can go and do a short presentation on traffic calming citywide.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes please of course.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Good morning members of the Commission, Mr. Mayor, Ed Santamaria, Director of Public Works. So, we are happy to present to you today a couple of maps and I think that these maps are very important in understanding what traffic calming is in the City of Coral Gables and is going to be eventually in progress. So we start by showing this map right here, which is existing traffic calming previously barricaded street ends.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We didn't bring copies for Commission, correct?- so we'll have copies made for them, extra copies because their residents will also be asking for it. So we'll have it sized, we'll have it reduced.

Public Works Director Santamaria: My apologies. So, this inherently shows what traffic calming exists in the City at this time. It involves traffic circles, it involves medians, it involves treatment

of pavements, it involves barricaded street ends, which at one point were considered a form of traffic calming available to cities and no longer is the case.

Commissioner Lago: Can I touch on that barricaded street ends for a second.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: There are certain – I mean I don't know if we're in charge of maintaining those, but there are some that look pretty rough, they are in dilapidated shape. The actual arm gate is barely hanging on to the post. You see a lot of stuff with lamination that has occurred. Is there anything that we can do to beautify that or is that the County's responsibility?

Public Works Director Santamaria: No, that's our responsibility; and typically in some of the cases it was actually our responsibility of the abutting residents. But, through the course of time that maintenance didn't happen. So, what we are going to do and actually I think it's in this budget...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: It is.

Public Works Director Santamaria:...is to assess – we've already had a preliminary assessment done and start working on them one by one, working our way through the City. I believe there is over 30, maybe close to 40 of them citywide that we'd have to look at.

Commissioner Lago: The ones in front of Merrick Park, behind the restaurant, are in rough shape.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Um huh.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Way back when and we don't do this anymore with street closures, there was a signature commitment of the then property owners to maintain the traffic ends. Many of those have moved away three times since and so the reality is it is so visible and we need to be able to just recognize that we will have to make those improvements. You allowed us to include the assessment and monies to improve, but we are going to go in an orderly way to approach it, because traffic calming has to happen and can't be distracted by those conditions, but money is in place for both the assessment and the repair and upgrade of those entrances.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So, I think that this map shows is that we already do have some significant traffic calming in the City and its functioning. The other issue is that transpired is that this traffic calming has sometimes diverted traffic to other streets. So, we are looking at it

now in a comprehensive level whereby we are looking at other streets that as they come up from residents' complaints and concerns, analyzing and following the process of traffic calming, which right now moving forward is going to be governed under the new MOU. I'd like to say that the current comments from the County will not delay their schedule in any way, as we are going to be moving forward with two particular projects right now, which is the Blue/Bird area and also the section there on Aragon and Giralda just west of LeJeune Road. So those two projects are moving forward.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Excuse me Ed, I think you are the only one that knows what a Blue/Bird area is, if you can identify.

Public Works Director Santamaria: The Blue/Bird area is the area bounded by Bird Road, Alhambra, I'm sorry – Bird Road and Alhambra and Blue and Bird Roads. It's the area where the traffic diverters were removed by the County, that's what I call Blue/Bird. So, it's very important to note that we do have this traffic calming in place, but in the future this comprehensive approach is going to be something that's really going to pay off in dividends in terms of...and residential streets throughout the entire City in a comprehensive manner. We will never ever be able to reduce volume on our streets unless things change radically in the mode of public transportation, something which Commissioner Lago is working very hard on, but we can make that traffic that crosses our City civilized, and the only way we get there is through traffic calming. That is really the essence of traffic calming to civilize the volume of traffic that we are besieged by on a daily basis. So, to talk about the future of traffic calming as it stands right now, because this is an organic process, its growing on a daily basis. We just received a concern about Alfonso, which under the new criteria actually now qualifies; and so, we are going to be moving forward with that one. That might be one of our first projects in terms of having started before or after the MOU itself. So, for further explanation on future traffic calming I'll turn it over to Jessica Keller, Assistant Director of Public Works.

Ms. Keller: Good morning. This map over here, if you can zoom in on this map, you can see we have the existing traffic calming, the barricaded ends, but in green we have various locations that were collected through the citywide transportation planning process; and in previous Commission meetings we discussed how the old traffic calming guidelines got us very little. So of all of the data that we collected throughout the City, under the old traffic calming guidelines, Miami-Dade County's, only eight of our collection points qualified for traffic calming and here in the green areas, we have over 60 locations, well I'm sorry, 50 street qualified and 60 locations identified for traffic calming right now.

Vice Mayor Quesada: When you say they are qualified does that mean when we execute the MOU we will be able to implement traffic calming?

Ms. Keller: Yes.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Just want to make sure.

Commissioner Lago: We have it obviously in the budget this year and we have it for next year also.

Vice Mayor Quesada: And that's everything in green?

Ms. Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: And that will take care of the streets on 57th and Bird Road, that's our first priority?

Vice Mayor Quesada: Look, they have it pretty highlighted.

Commissioner Lago: I just want to reiterate that and put that on the record for the residents, because I know in a moment my phone will probably, along with my colleagues on this Commission, our phones will start blowing up about that.

Ms. Keller: For that particular area, we will have tentatively set community meeting...that we committed to, and to explain what everything will look like and then we will be balloting them for concurrency, but we've already put in process, we put a requisition in so we can get a purchase order, as soon as we get the concurrency we can begin construction.

Vice Mayor Quesada: So Coral Gables TV, if you can freeze right there, thank you, what's highlighted in green and yellow is that area that Commissioner Lago and we've been discussing with that neighborhood two, three, four years now, if not more, to try to control the traffic there.

Ms. Keller: I'd also once you give some time to Aragon and Giralda Avenue, if you can focus in on there, because we'll get subsequent phone calls, well what about us?

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes. If Coral Gables TV can you go up now, thank you.

Commissioner Lago: But, I understand what you are saying Jessica and we all agree with you, but everyone is a priority, but it's just that there's been a lot of publicity, because the residents that live in that neighborhood are basically sandwiched in between two major thoroughfares and basically there's no way out, when we talk about those streets.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The good news is you have part-time police officers that have managed and directed that activity so well that we don't have the dramatic unacceptable cut-through that we did have and off of Red Road. I think what Jessica is saying is, Aragon and Giralda west of LeJeune have also been in this process a long time.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A long time.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Yes. The first priority is life safety, second priority is the time in the process and we are continuing to add more comments. Can you also speak about concurrency and how that has changed – the MOU, the guidelines that we now have in place are much more conducive for Coral Gables traffic standards and not countywide, because we shouldn't be compared on our little neighborhood streets on the countywide traffic, but also the amount of concurrency for agreement so that residents that want to have traffic calming, how is that tallied and how is that considered beyond the life safety, because life safety trumps everything.

Public Works Director Santamaria: That's correct.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And also look at Obispo and look at Milan, the cross streets on the north side of Coral Gables and there's got to have significant traffic calming and we'll look at some other streets in the future.

Ms. Keller: One of the things I want to clarify about this map is that you see a small segment, that's where we collect the big data. So the whole corridor will be looked at, so I don't want anyone to take a look at the map and say, well what about in front of my house, this is just a locations where we collect the data.

Commissioner Lago: Commissioner Keon go ahead.

Commissioner Keon: What is the yellow indicate on the legend?

Ms. Keller: The yellow are actual projects we have in the pipeline that are getting ready to go into construction.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Thank you. You know we've gotten a lot of requests from Alberka...

Ms. Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Keon:...to deal with their traffic. I know we transmitted their request for closure to the County waiting for whatever that response is to tell them the response from the County, whenever you get it, we'll just transfer it onto them, but do we have that?

Ms. Keller: So one of the things that I communicated to the residents, because they've always been a part of this process. We had received their concerns quite some time ago, and if you can see here, they've been included this whole time and they do qualify for traffic calming.

Commissioner Keon: I have to really congratulate you, Ed Santamaria and all of your staff for your due diligence in this effort. You know working on an agreement like that with the County, who we need to partner with and who we need to work with, and your patience and your persistence has truly paid off. You've done a great job.

Ms. Keller: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you – you have.

Vice Mayor Quesada: This is great, Mr. Mayor thank you for putting this on. Can we make sure we have this on the website somewhere, if it's not already?

Ms. Keller: Sure.

Commissioner Lago: And I wanted to mention to the Manager, if the Commission would indulge me. Once we do have this MOU signed, which God willing it would be Friday, if the Mayor of the County allows the City of Coral Gables to have traffic calming. I would like to put this in our ad, I'd like to send something out to the residents, because this has been part of the most hot-button issue for the last two years; and staff, like Commissioner Keon has mentioned has worked incredibly hard along with this Commission to really deliver on this, and we've been waiting for two or three years. So, I'd like for people to know that there is light at the end of the tunnel, the MOU has been signed, and we are moving forward with these projects. So I think it's critical that we start disseminating that information, because I know that we are all getting a lot of phone calls and e-mails in regards to this.

Commissioner Mena: One last quick point, just because it came up yesterday in conversation that I just want to highlight and I know that Ed and Jessica and staff are on board, which is, to be mindful of the signage associated with this.

Commissioner Lago: Yes – yes.

Commissioner Mena: That it's not speed bump coming in ten feet, in five feet, and four feet, here it is.

Commissioner Lago: Get ready, get ready, get ready...

Commissioner Mena: When appropriate we need to know what you need from us to empower you guys to implement a signage that is appropriate for what, I think we've communicated to you that we'd be satisfied with.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I've talked to Assistant City Manager this morning on signage and sign pollution and they are going to do something about it, the drive in front of the tennis courts or the Coral Gables Country Club and Granada...crosswalk ahead, and then 75 feet; crosswalk approaching and then 50 feet; crosswalk getting near and then crosswalk and then you just passed the crosswalk, it's ridiculous, it's really ridiculous and we are going to do something about it.

Public Works Director Santamaria: We are all on the same page as it pertains to reducing the visual clutter arising from traffic control signs. We just have to thread the needle as to how we get to a point where we can reduce that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We will do that.

Public Works Director Santamaria: And your support, needless to say, would be greatly appreciated. I'd like to add further on Commissioner Quesada's request about the map. We will be placing it on the website, and not only that, we are going to be making it something that's updated in real time. So as most streets come on, the map will be updated. As streets are constructed and finished, the map will be updated, so it would be a nice way to kind of visually understand how we are involved in the process.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Isn't that a little bit of overkill, Mr. Mayor...think about it? We'll put one of these boards like downstairs when people walk in, because I get so many calls about traffic calming, I don't know about everyone else, but it's always the number one topic and your facial expression tells me you don't like that idea.

Ms. Keller: No – means I have to put it in the trunk of my car, I'm happy to leave it downstairs.

Vice Mayor Quesada: If you could just have it somewhere available, I don't know, maybe not yet, maybe after the MOU.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's a good idea.

Public Works Director Santamaria: We can also mount some for your offices.

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes, I'll take one, for real.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes. Thank you. This is great.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Now there are some meetings coming up that the public can continue to comment on, and so, do you have those meetings handy. We have also put it out on E-NEWS, we'll continue to push that out; and then Commissioner Lago will begin now designing that great traffic calming ad that we'll place, not only in Neighbors, but we'll also place it in community newspaper, which is a good new partner of ours. We'll push that out as soon as it's signed we'll get it locked in and placed in ads, but we'll have to get it signed first, but we'll design the work now.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you very much everybody.

Commissioner Lago: Great work.

[End: 9:47:07 a.m.]