

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-5
January 22, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-5 [10:37:18 a.m.]

Status updates on the Enrique "Henry" Cepero Memorial Park, Blue Road and Biltmore Drive Open Space.

(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

(Sponsored by Commissioner Mena)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, next is status update on the Enrique "Henry" Cepero Memorial Park, Blue Road and Biltmore Drive.

Commissioner Mena: I'll let you go first on this one.

City Commission Meeting

January 22, 2019

Agenda Item H-5 - Status updates on the Enrique "Henry" Cepero Memorial Park, Blue Road and the Biltmore Drive Open Space.

Vice Mayor Lago: No. I think it's pretty simple. We're just trying to find out what's going on in regards to all these open spaces, especially the Blue Road -- the Blue Road open space, which has been a discussion for a few years now.

Commissioner Mena: Yep.

Vice Mayor Lago: Beautiful piece of property. Either we do something with it or we sell it and we use those funds to acquire an open space that's more appealing or we could even expand that open space.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Or maybe a beautiful park.

Vice Mayor Lago: It would be...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: But we have...

Vice Mayor Lago: A beautiful park.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We do have -- it is a great space. It's an open space. Right now, it's closed per police order, and it's due to the drop-off to the waterway, which is a risk issue. We have put in a funding request for that park and it's \$400,000, which would allow us to do some sort of border. I've had a couple of advisory board meetings with the Waterway Advisory Board and also the Parks Advisory Board to see what type of border -- you can do the decorative fencing that we do at others. You can do some sort of boardwalk, but it'd have to be a certain kind of boardwalk that would fit within that budget. And you also have to do some sort of border along the neighbors because it's open to the neighbors because it's open to the neighbors' house. And then you'd have to do some sort of accessible walkway into the area. So, it's \$400,000. It's in the

capital project now -- in the budget. It's just not funded until 2021. So, as we look at -- if we want to look at moving it up, we can within the next budget cycle for that park...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'll make it a priority.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Lago: One of the...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So we can...

Vice Mayor Lago: One of the Commissioners will make it a priority. Can you give me a little update in regards to Henry Cepero Park?

Commissioner Mena: Really quick...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: Just before you move on to that one. And just...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: Confirm for us that \$400,000 is enough to get you what you need.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Mena: I don't want to hear afterward, well, we couldn't do the walk here because...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, no, absolutely. We'll have to look at it because if we're going to move it up -- we're going to move it up now when we do our capital funding request, we'll relook at it. Our CIP folks will look at it and see to make sure, and then we'll have to move it around. It'll be in that matrix that we set up for parks and rec, which is about \$1.4 million.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And we're constantly moving things around to make sure we hit the funding because even on projects -- lately, the projects have been coming in over than what the estimates are.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And once we get to bidding...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Then we have to find money. And we've been able to because that matrix allows me to move money within that project and push projects back if we need to just to get the ones that are priority done.

Commissioner Mena: But I want to -- you know, I hear you and I think that's great and you guys work...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right, right.

Commissioner Mena: Hard to make those things happen.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Mena: I've said this before; I'll say it again. I want you to have enough money to do the caliber of park that our city can and should have and we've all been willing to push these things and put money on the table for these types of things. I view parks as something very fundamental to what local government does. And so, I don't want you, you know, trying to find pennies under the cushion...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No problem.

Commissioner Mena: To be able to have a wall for safety or...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Mena: Or playground or an appropriate fence. Tell us what you need and we'll talk about it. And if we can get it for you, we will.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay, we will.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We make the requests and we'll continue to do so, absolutely.

Commissioner Keon: Can I ask a question on a park? I remember the discussion when it first came forward and they -- it was listed as Henry Cepero Memorial Park, that it wasn't intended to be a playground. Is that right?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, we're talking...

Commissioner Keon: It's not a playground?

Vice Mayor Lago: We're talking about a different park.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We're talking about two different areas.

Vice Mayor Lago: We're switching now.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: There's Blue Road.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's a good transition.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, I'm sorry.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's a good transition.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And the Cepero, but we can talk about the...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Cepero. The Cepero Park, the only part that's left of that -- there's two items that still need to be done there. One was -- there wasn't supposed to be a sign, like a park sign, traditional park sign. It's going to be a plaque that we put on a wood pedestal, like we have at certain other parks. And I had been in conversation with the family. We need to follow up. I was waiting on information from them. That one's kind of been on the backburner, but we'll contact them and make sure we get that done. That can be done within our operational budget, so we'll have that done as soon as we get the information.

Commissioner Keon: But the -- like at Ingraham Park, there is -- it's just a coral rock pedestal...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, like a pedestal...

Commissioner Keon: And it's...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: With a plaque on top.

Commissioner Keon: And the plaque is imbedded into it. So, it's not wooden. I mean, it's lasting and it will stay a long time...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, it's a bronze plaque.

Commissioner Keon: Which is lovely. Right. But with the Henry Cepero Park, it's my understanding that is a memorial park. It's not a playground. Is that right?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It's not. It will be...

Commissioner Keon: It's not.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Completely passive.

Commissioner Keon: So, we have gotten a number of requests. I know after Commissioner Barker died and his family wanted to have, you know, something in his memorial. I know we recently had a request about a memorial for a pastor of a church recently. Was there any more -- at the time that we did this and set aside this land and I think that we had that discussion about that being a place where, you know, people could be remembered, whether it's, you know, by -- you know, I'm sure there'll be a walkway through that park of some sort whether it's tiles or whatever else. Is -- it was part of the discussion at the time. And I don't know that it was ever sort of formalized

because I know when the family spoke about it, they said it wasn't -- you know, they -- not just a place, you know, for them to remember, you know, their son, their husband whatever, but also a place to remember in memoriam of, you know, other people in the community whatever. So, I don't remember ever seeing anything formalized on that. So, as we go forward, I'm -- and I think -- I'm not into renaming streets because our streets have names. And I'm not into renaming parks and those sorts of things. But you know, if there is a place that we can honor and memorialize people within the community, I think it is a nice opportunity and a good thing for us to do. So, could we -- if you talk to everyone and decide if that's...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Keon: And the family -- if that's appropriate. And if it is, then have a plan to do that or a way to do that. And if it's not, don't.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We do have a mechanism...

Commissioner Quesada: Wait, wait, hold on a second. Hold on a second.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Sorry.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm confused with what you're asking for. are you saying to re-designate this park? Is that what you're saying?

Commissioner Keon: No, no, no.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No.

Commissioner Keon: The park is...

Commissioner Quesada: To add additional people to this park?

Commissioner Keon: No. The name is -- the name doesn't change. The park is the park. The name doesn't change. But you know that in a lot of parks or places, you know, on walkways through there, you can buy a tile in memoriam of -- in -- you know, in someone's...

Commissioner Quesada: Of course.

Commissioner Keon: In memorial...

Commissioner Quesada: Or a bench or...

Commissioner Keon: Or a bench.

Commissioner Quesada: Something of the like.

Commissioner Keon: Or something.

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: It will be -- it never changes the name of the park.

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: It never changes the use of the park. It only provides you with an opportunity to memorialize people within the city. And it may be, you know, someone who has a child that dies young and they want a place to go. They can go to that park. They can sit in the park. They can put a, you know, a tile in that park and it's a place that memorializes people within the city. Now...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We do that currently. Just -- we have a program that we're in partnership with the Coral Gables Community Foundation.

Commissioner Keon: With the benches.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: To do the memorial benches.

Commissioner Keon: Right. But there's only so many benches you can put in.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, there is.

Commissioner Keon: But there's a lot of...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: You're correct.

Commissioner Keon: But there's a lot of walk -- usually, there's a lot of like kind of walkway space that you can put in. So, if that's acceptable to people and if -- when you go back and speak to the family -- because I know that was part of the discussion when we -- when the park was designated with this name. And you would never change the name of the park, but it would become an expanded memorial park named after Henry Cepero, you know, if we could consider that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We will talk to the family...

Commissioner Keon: You can talk to everybody in -- I mean, talk to the Commissioners.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah. We will talk to the family too and...

Commissioner Keon: You don't have to do it here.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes. We'll talk to the family...

Commissioner Keon: Alright and talk to them...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And talk to...

Commissioner Keon: And talk to everybody. And if it is, make that plan.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: So that when you put in a walkway that it can accommodate that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Keon: So you don't have to go back and tear it out...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, no, of course.

Commissioner Keon: And do it over or if it's a wall, that it can be a memorial on a plaque placed on a wall, whatever...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Keon: It is.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I had mentioned that there were two items.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE) dangerous proposition.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Sorry.

Commissioner Keon: Well...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That is a very complicated proposition.

Commissioner Keon: Well...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Having a memorial wall for everybody who dies and who gets on it, who doesn't get on it.

Commissioner Keon: But it's not -- but then do it as a walkway. I mean, I don't -- you know...

Vice Mayor Lago: I agree with you.

Commissioner Keon: Or do it as a walkway.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's the same thing.

Commissioner Keon: Do it in some way and let people do it. I mean, when you run out of space, you run out of space.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's the same thing.

Commissioner Mena: My thing with the bench program is...

Commissioner Keon: They can come and go.

Commissioner Mena: Well, no. You have to go -- reach out to the foundation. You have to pay...

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: Purchase.

Commissioner Mena: For the bench.

Commissioner Keon: We could do it the same way.

Commissioner Mena: Not just the -- yeah.

Commissioner Keon: You could do it through the foundation.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, right.

Commissioner Keon: I mean, it's not -- we wouldn't do it. I wouldn't expect the City to do it.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Commissioner Keon: I think the City would accommodate it being done and then, you know...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're off the subject.

Commissioner Keon: They can reach out to somebody else.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I...

Commissioner Keon: But if you can...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: There was one other item...

Commissioner Keon: Think of that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: On Cepero. Just...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Just to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Give you the information. The original design called for a trellis that would be on that southwest corner. That was not in the funding for the initial design. We don't have it funded currently. We can ask for the funding depending on the priorities and it will be within the matrix, but it's not in there currently. I just wanted to...

Commissioner Mena: Why?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Why wasn't it put in to begin with? Initially, there wasn't...

Commissioner Mena: Are you saying that there was...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Budgeting.

Commissioner Mena: It was never budgeted.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It was never budgeted.

Commissioner Mena: Oh, okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That's what it was.

Commissioner Keon: But it's on the plan.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It's on the plan, but it was never budgeted.

Commissioner Keon: Why don't you budget the whole plan?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Oh, I wasn't part of the budgeting for that particular project, but it wasn't part of it.

Vice Mayor Lago: Let me...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Because it was done as like three different projects together.

Vice Mayor Lago: Fred, I'm not coming down on you, okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, no.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm not coming down on you, but I just want to...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Agree with Commissioner Mena's comment. Okay, let me just -- let's just deal with this one issue. This is for the Manager. We purchased these pieces of property. Let's take full advantage and let's finish them because my goal is to continue to buy as much open space as we can. I think every great city is defined by as much open space as they possibly have. If you live next to a park, your property values are higher, you know. It's great. I enjoy the University of Miami, the arboretum. I enjoy Betsy Adams Park on a weekly basis. So, let's get these parks completed. And if you tell me that you're short on funding or there isn't funding to get this done, we'll make it a priority. We'll make it a priority for this year. For this year we'll find the funds to get it for next year, obviously, and the funding. But I just don't want to -- I want to get it addressed in the budget so that we can potentially start engaging consultants and architects and engineers so we -- once we have that funding in construction, we can go off and running. I don't want to wait for the next budget cycle to say, okay, now we're going to start planning. Now, we're going to start designing. I'd like to do that over the next six or seven months so that once we have it done, we can put a shovel in the ground.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, the problem with some of these parks is that they came in at 8, \$900,000 and that was -- probably that's too much. So, we need to look at a reasonable budget.

Vice Mayor Lago: I agree.

City Manager Iglesias: And then proceed under that and maintain our construction costs within that budget.

Commissioner Mena: I understand that point. I know on Betsy Adams we had the whole issue and we're going to talk about that a little bit in a minute. But I think the point I'm trying to make is I -- maybe that is a reasonable budget for certain parks. And maybe that's why, frankly, some of our parks aren't as good as parks when you cross Le Jeune into City of Miami sometimes

because maybe we're not budgeting enough and every time there's a park and Fred comes up here and talks about it and he's selling us well, we can do this, but we can't quite do that because we don't have the budget for it. It's not in the capital plan or it's in the plan in six years. You know, I just don't want to be, you know, cutting you short and having situations where it's, you know, almost great -- it's a really good park but not great. I want it to be great and I want the other parks to be great too. And I think everybody up here wants that. And so, when you see things like Betsy Adams -- and I know that was a complicated situation and you know -- but...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Mena: You guys did a fantastic job with that park and yet now we have these, you know...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Mena: Barricades because we didn't quite have the funds to do that next part.

Vice Mayor Lago: And everybody's focusing...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's...

Vice Mayor Lago: Not on how stellar the park is...

Commissioner Mena: But on the barricades.

Vice Mayor Lago: But on the barricades.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, yeah, right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Let's go on to the Betsy Adams Park, which is...

Commissioner Mena: So...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What we're on as it is.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: But I just want to -- I'm telling you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: H-6, Betsy Adams.

Commissioner Mena: I can't speak for everybody up here, but you have my support. If you need more budget for these parks...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: You need to tell us and I want them to be A-plus parks...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Gotcha.

Commissioner Mena: Throughout the city. Every time you do one, I want -- so, look at your plan. Look at the one coming in 2019 and '20 and '21, and I want you to tell me if you have enough for everything you'd like to do there and then let us scale it back if we need to.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: But not have you short because...

City Manager Iglesias: Let me just...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Great.

City Manager Iglesias: Let me say that we have five parks coming up and those are \$200,000. They would be a million. At \$800,000, it would be...

Vice Mayor Lago: Four million.

Unidentified Speaker: Four million.

City Manager Iglesias: Four million dollars. So, the cost can go quite high.

Commissioner Mena: I'll say it again.

City Manager Iglesias: As you know.

Commissioner Mena: I hear you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: Public safety, city finances and some city schools, but we have a school board. I think parks are fundamental to what we do as a city and I think our parks should not be good. I think they should be great. I think they should be the envy of the rest of Dade County. I think when people -- I think people should be saying I come from the Grove to the Coral Gables parks, not I go to the Grove to use their parks. There's no excuse for it. We have the budget. We have an affluent city. We need to find a way to make it work. We spend money on a lot of things in this city that maybe we need to reconsider and allocate towards parks because -- this is just my opinion. I can't speak for everybody. I think our parks should be the best parks in Dade County.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Mena: I don't know how else to...

Vice Mayor Lago: Listen, I...

Commissioner Mena: I don't know how else to communicate that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, no. I agree.

Vice Mayor Lago: I agree because when you look at a park like, for example, Ingraham Park, I know that everybody comes from that area of the Grove to use that park. Number one, how incredible the location is; and number two, just how exceptional the overall park is. You know, it's a beautiful, beautiful park. So, I agree with you wholeheartedly, Commissioner.

City Manager Iglesias: We understand.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: We understand, Commissioner.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Maybe we need to have a workshop with Finance and, you know, some sort of Sunshine meeting to really discuss what's going to be our capital goal for the next two years in regards to parks. Maybe that...

Commissioner Mena: Yep.

Vice Mayor Lago: Needs to be -- that -- maybe that's -- if you want, I'll host it with you or...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Whoever else wants to join us.

City Manager Iglesias: Let us look at this, Vice Mayor, and we'll get back with you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just don't forget we also discussed a while back ago -- and it was Commissioner Mena who pushed this in reference to fees for construction.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: And we talked about millions of dollars that were diverted...

Commissioner Mena: This was part of the reason I wanted...

Vice Mayor Lago: That were diverted from an intent that I had so that they could be brought in to upgrading existing parks and new parks that we're purchasing. Excuse me. No, I'm sorry. It was existing parks. It wasn't new parks. So, where are those funds?

City Manager Iglesias: Impact fees would have to go to new parks.

Vice Mayor Lago: Excuse me, new parks.

Commissioner Mena: Well, it could go to new -- and we had this discussion at the time.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, do we know the number, how much we have on impact fees already?

City Manager Iglesias: To increase...

Vice Mayor Lago: I mean, that was a priority...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: Infrastructure.

Commissioner Mena: But it could be increasing infrastructure in existing parks.

City Manager Iglesias: Existing parks, yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: What I don't want...

City Attorney Ramos: It can't be maintenance.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: What I don't want to do is I don't want -- and we were very clear about this. I don't want to use those funds in place of where we're budgeting for already. So, I would like to see from staff -- let's put it on the next Commission agenda -- I would like to see how much -- since we -- since Commissioner Mena proposed that those impact fees be diverted, how much have we already collected in the coffers on those impact fees? And I want to know how much we have right now in total for the next year for parks.

City Manager Iglesias: For the parks impact fee.

Vice Mayor Lago: For parks impact fee. I want to know to see what's going on with that. And then what are we also -- I know we propose it -- per project and -- but I want to see how much money we've gotten so far.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. I agree wholeheartedly.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do you want to...

Vice Mayor Lago: But if I see that we're dipping because we're depending on those impact fees, I'm not -- I'm going to be wholeheartedly opposed to that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: Was there anything else on Biltmore Drive open space?

Vice Mayor Lago: No, I just...

Commissioner Mena: Okay. The same discussion.

Vice Mayor Lago: When are we starting?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Are you...

Vice Mayor Lago: Excuse me. Not Biltmore Drive. When are we starting the issue of Betsy Adams?

Commissioner Mena: Of H-5.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Take that up, okay.

Commissioner Mena: No, that was part of H-5 that we didn't address.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay, Biltmore.