

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-3
January 28, 2025
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Alberto Parjus
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Planning and Zoning Director, Jennifer Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-3 [10:45 a.m.]

Discussion regarding metal roof and solar panels.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item F-3.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: Oh, this is just a discussion to update my colleagues on some of the work that we've been doing. I received complaints from residents about the process of having metal roofs approved in the city, as well as the process for solar panels and locations of solar panels. I've had meetings with staff regarding this process and one of the solutions that we came up with, Board of Architects will be addressing this point in the coming weeks of creating a form of checklist for metal roofs on what parameters they would normally consider a metal roof, so that when a resident is applying for a metal roof permit, they go off that check list, they probably won't be approved or they have a possibility of being approved. One of the things that we came up with was using some of the parameters that we have in the Med Bonus where you have images of the types of homes, because some of the homes that are coming up, there is a list of types of style. One

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of them, for example, is post war. So, people automatically assume, well, my house is built after 1945, therefore it would be post-war, but there is a specific style. So, what we talked about was creating this checklist as well as these images, just to make sure when a resident applies for the permit, we are not going through an extensive process with staff and for the resident of creating this application process, drawing designs, going through the BOA, for a process that will probably be denied. We just want to make sure we get to a point where residents know, look, I went through the checklist, I don't qualify, I'm just going to go with the type of roof that I currently have. So, I don't know if Jennifer, you have anything that you'd like to add.

Planning and Zoning Director: Yes, a current update a list just like this one, a checklist that they referred to. It will specify the styles, as well as weather graphs and other materials that they expect to see for the Board of Architects review. Also specify the neo-classical, the post-war modern style, high modern that they would be more acceptive of that material on the roof.

Commissioner Fernandez: As far as the solar panels, the discussion that we had is right now there isn't anything set in stone on the location that would be approved. There have been questions from residents on, well, I was only allowed to put it on the backside of the house, that may be more aesthetic. We've also had the first Tesla roof that has been approved in the city, has been approved in South Gables, but it is something that is still in the works. The design is still a little outside of the norm for Coral Gables, so it will be on a case-by-case basis, but just wanted to update all of you on what we're working on. Once that checklist is completed by BOA, what I've asked staff is to bring it to the Commission so we can make any recommendations and if there is anything we can do to add to improve it, for residents, we can do so at that time.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to add a little bit to it, because I think it was 2017, 2018, I assisted a resident with an idea to be able to have – it was a copper metal roof, but a metal roof approved on a structure that was not architecturally suitable for metal roof. So, I made the suggestion of adding and extending the eave and put in a decorative piece underneath and when they went back to the Board of Architects with that addition on there, they approved it. Any checklist may necessarily deter a person like that from moving forward if they didn't have the opportunity to really sit down with somebody that has assisted somebody and getting an approval before. The other part is, we recently had some that went to the Board of Architects, was refused by the Board of Architects, and subsequently approved by the Special Magistrate. I don't want to deter people from utilizing the processes that are existing by a checklist that doesn't really reflect the full process. They need to know that the Special Master process exist, that the Special Master can agree to disagree with the Board of Architects on the appropriateness of the architecture. I know that there are certain members of the Board of Architects that just don't like metal roofs at all, but the way the legislation was written and being one of the co-authors of that legislation, I remember it well is, the only areas that are not qualified for metal roofs are historic homes and historic districts. So, I'm going to be cautious by deterring people from doing an application for a

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process where they really want a metal roof, they can get it through the Special Magistrate. So, I'd appreciate if staff would circulate the checklist, so we make sure that we don't make people think that its an impossibility if they are willing to go that step for further. Okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: And that's part of what was requested. We've had residents that have been denied because of the type of material that was used on their driveway. It has nothing to do with the actual design of their house, but because they had brick pavers on their driveway, the Board of Architects will not approve it. So, through the process, they were able to file an application to change their driveway in order to get the metal roof approved, but I think there are residents who don't understand what the parameters are and in the conversations that I had with staff, including the Clerk's office, the largest number of public records requests we get for this type of application and the largest number of appeals that we've had throughout the last two years for processes in Planning and Zoning has been for metal roofs. So, I think a little bit of clarification for our residents can go a long way just because a lot of residents don't understand that there are parameters that are being considered since the legislation is as open-ended as it is, and actually we talked about it with staff. If tweaking the legislation would make a little more sense, but we didn't want to tie the hands of the Board of Architects and the Special Master who can make a determination that's different from what's in the code, because the code was left open on purpose because it is a decision that should be made by the Board of Architects, if we say a specific area that can apply, but a specific area that cannot, there may be homes in a different area that would qualify for that type of roof. So, we wanted to make sure that we didn't tie the hands of the Board of Architects or of our residents from being able to apply. It was more of an informative piece so that they understand, if you have these parameters, you are more inclined to have a denial from the Board of Architects and you can make a decision early on as to whether you want to fight it through, because there is a cost to our residents of going through the application process, the appeal process, before Special Master, because they have to be paying their contractors for this process. So, it's not something that's cheap and people may decide to go in a different direction if they know that there is less of a probability of having it approved.

Mayor Lago: Before we move forward. As the author of the metal roof ordinance and also the solar ordinance that gives residents a reduction of 100 percent on your permit fees for installing solar and also expedites your permits for the installation of solar. I'm in favor of tweaking of those two ordinances, as long as it makes people more secure and makes the process and streamlines the process as much as possible. I worked on those ordinances for years to garner support during a time when metal roofs were not something that was much appetite for it, but I had residents that came to me for years and asked for that legislation and I have been getting a lot of questions. Thank you to our wonderful staff who are always addressing residents' concerns and helps them through the process. So, any way that we can tweak the process of the legislation that I wrote, I'm 100 percent behind it. I don't think its an issue, but one of the things that we are going to be seeing a lot is the placement of solar in regard to the BOA. That is something that I've probably dealt with

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on two or three dozen occurrences for residents who have been denied as a result of the solar panels being in the front of the home and being visible from the street. I don't know how we are going to resolve that issue, but at the end of the day, I think we need to do our best to find some common ground on all fronts. Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment on this.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor, Mrs. Maria Cruz.

[No speaker]