

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-2
December 7, 2021
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

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Director of Economic Development, Julian Perez

Assistant Director of Economic Development, Belkys Perez

Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Development Services, Suramy Cabrera

Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item I-2 [Start: 3:26 p.m.]

A presentation of a maintenance action plan for the commercial areas of the city

Mayor Lago: Moving onto I-2. Julian, Belkys, welcome back.

Economic Director Perez: Welcome back. We have a presentation for you on this item. Belkys is going to make the presentation, but before we start, I'd like to also acknowledge the help and assistance of the Legal Department, Public Works, as well as Development Services. The presentation has two very important parts; one is to get the word out about the importance of maintenance, and then the other part of it is what we need to follow in terms of the rules and so forth.

City Commission Meeting

December 7, 2021

*Agenda Item I-2 – Presentation of a maintenance action plan for the
Commercial areas of the city*

[Date]

1

Assistant Director Perez: I'm supposed to be plugging in. Does anyone know where I can get that HDMI cable?

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Assistant Director Perez: I can go with that one, but I'm not sure if that's the updated version. Good afternoon, everyone, Belkys Perez, Assistant Director of the Economic Development Department. This presentation is not just mine, it is the teams, so it was a group effort. I'm giving you also a matrix document that Julian is passing out, because the one that's in the presentation we made some tweaks to it, just so you know. I have something that I'm just going to click through and I'm going to show you a website and so that's why I need my laptop. So, if we could pull full screen. So, I can get started and we'll forward when they pull up the PowerPoint. So basically, at the November 9th Commission meeting, you asked us through the City Manager to put together a plan of action for communication.

[Note for the record: Experiencing audio/technical issues]

Assistant Director Perez: If you could just pull up the one that's upstairs, thank you, sorry. So, you asked us to put together a plan of action in order to communicate effectively to our businesses what their responsibilities were in the downtown – next. So, what we first wanted to tell you was that there are some responsibilities that are the city's, Public Works, for example. They have landscaping, they do the landscaping in the swales, so they trim hedges; they plant trees; the trash cans are emptied three times a week and more if needed. Street sweeping happens in some of the downtown areas as well, and then we've got trash pick-up, spot cleaning, and litter pick-up all happening every day, multiple times a day in the streetscape area. The picture that you're looking at here is from November 22nd, we had Block by Block and members of Kevin's garage maintenance division, go out very early in the morning and they did a deep cleaning of the street. We had our businesses pick up their tables and chairs, so we were able to get to the street. Is this enough? – no. We need to do more; and so, as a result we are going to have some orderly cleanings that Kevin is working on so that people on Giralda know that it's coming and that they can prepare for it in advance. That's in addition to everything that the properties need to do as well. This requires a...this is Commissioner Fors matrix. The one that you have in front of you on paper is the updated one, but this matrix shows you the responsibilities for certain areas throughout the city, except when there are greater responsibilities whether there is a maintenance covenant in place or an encroachment agreement. I don't know if you have any questions about this, or you want to talk about it later, but this just gives you a handout where you know who's responsible for what.

Mayor Lago: I think it was well needed and I think it's going to serve and it's going to save staff a lot of time in regard to not having to ask so many questions.

Assistant Director Perez: So, what we did is that we did a general maintenance flyer, which is this one that you have in front of you, and so, with this one the goal was to provide property and

City Commission Meeting

business owners general cleaning and maintenance responsibilities that apply to all commercial properties. Now it describes the property area as property and business owners are responsible for maintaining the front and entire length of the property, up to where the street begins, as well as the area behind the property to the mid-point of the alley. Then we go into the responsibilities. Among them we actually highlighted, Mayor, the pressure cleaning of the sidewalks. We are asking them to do it four times a year or more as needed. They need to remove gum from the sidewalks, remove weeds and repair damage sidewalks, among other things. If they have any questions or concerns, they can call the number that you see there, that 442-1600, which is our non-emergency, if there are any safety issues, they require immediate attention. So, we are talking about things that could be tripping hazards, or anything like that. If they do need to make repairs to the sidewalk, then they have to call Public Works, which is the other number that's there, because there are certain requirements. So, this is just something handy that is very quick to reference.

Commissioner Fors: Have a very quick question. Pressure cleaning four times a year, is that part of the code?

Assistant Director Perez: It is not.

Commissioner Fors: Is four times a year a lot, or no? – pressure cleaning sidewalks?

Mayor Lago: You're talking about high traffic areas.

Commissioner Fors: Its every three months. I don't know. I haven't thought about it.

City Manager Iglesias: We thought about that.

Commissioner Fors: On paper it sounded like a lot.

City Manager Iglesias: Those high traffic areas with gum and everything else, about three months is probably a reasonable, unless you have outside seating, outside dining, and you may need to do more than that, because you may drop food and so forth, so we felt that that was a good – about four times a year for these high traffic areas.

Mayor Lago: What I would like to see, Commissioner Fors, maybe I shouldn't say this in public, but if I can get them to do it once every six months, I'll be happy, because right now they are not doing it at all.

Commissioner Fors: Right. Right.

Mayor Lago: They are not doing it at all. So, if you look at certain areas in the city, the sidewalks are black or brown, like super dark brown, and the moment you hit them with a little bit of pressure cleaning it comes back to the original luster.

Commissioner Anderson: If I do mine once a year it holds it up, so I think a couple times a year may be sufficient, unless there is food and other additions by our pets.

City Manager Iglesias: We put maybe additional required because of the dining issue.

Commissioner Fors: I throughout the idea, I don't know if it's something we could explore, of maybe getting quote/unquote qualified vendors for pressure cleaning who the benefit that they would receive would be that they would be on our list of qualified vendors for pressure cleaning, but they would give us in return is perhaps discounted prices on an annual contract for four sidewalks a year so that we could negotiate for our business owners, four times a year pressure cleaning at less than what they would ordinarily pay, and presumably those qualified vendors, the two or three of them, I guess you would say, would get more business as a result of that four cleaning contract.

City Attorney Ramos: Yes, we could put out a formal process and work through a list and come up with a top five, or whatever it is to negotiate pricing, put it out with we are looking for a discounted rate, like it's possible. All I'm saying is we need to have a procurement process; we can't just go pick them.

Mayor Lago: And the great thing would be, if we could, and I agree with Commissioner Fors, it would be a good opportunity. Can you imagine if we were able to have the businesses in an entire block coordinate...?

City Manager Iglesias: Good idea.

Mayor Lago: Cleaning that entire block and everybody could chip in. That would be the plan. You're not cleaning it one week and the next week someone else is cleaning it. It would be nice to do it in a coordinated fashion where everybody gets together, and that's what I was hoping, and I'm hoping that the B.I.D. and the Chamber can really help us coordinate that.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because people start pressure cleaning and it spills over into the other business, depending on if they coordinated.

Commissioner Anderson: I think it would be cheaper too rather than discount I'd like to do that with my entire residential block too.

Mayor Lago: And another question that I had too, moving forward is the issue of the swales where you have, for example, the plants that there is no plant life, or they are missing half the plant because it died, and it was never replaced. Who is responsible for that? – is it the development agreement? Are you looking at Fors Maintenance Responsibility Matrix?

Commissioner Fors: What was the question?

Public Works Director Diaz: So, it depends on the location, right. If the developer has a maintenance agreement, the abutting property owner is responsible, but if it's a planting area, like for example, some of the ones that you see on Ponce de Leon Boulevard in some of the corners and stuff like that, that would be Public Works responsibility. The abutting owners would be responsible removing the litter and stuff like that, but the actual planting that would be ours.

City Manager Iglesias: We would be responsible for cleaning it, the plantings would be on us. We have also special irrigation in some areas and things like this, so we really want to handle that, the actual cleaning.

Mayor Lago: What I would like to do Mr. Manager, if possible, is I would like to in the next two weeks, schedule time with someone from your staff and from landscaping, and I'm going to walk all of the downtown myself. I'm going to walk up and down the streets and I'm going to, I want to identify areas where the landscaping is missing and then your team will go back and find the responsible party, either be the city or the property owner, because that's the only way we are going to get this done.

City Manager Iglesias: Covenants are now on GIS, so we'll have the covenants on GIS.

Mayor Lago: I see Ms. Cabrera getting up. I think she was going to bring that up right now. For example, the Adult Activity Center, the landscaping there, across the street you have a few dead trees, you have a light post that is broken. That is obviously the responsibility of the Palace, excuse me. They have some sort of development agreement that details who's responsible for the swales, who's responsible for the lighting, and that needs to be addressed. So, I would like to, Hermes, in the next two weeks with the Manager's office, pick a day, coordinate with Chelsea, and I'll walk all of the downtown, bring your sneakers, or we can get a trolley, or a golf cart, whatever you'd like, or a scooter, Fors is coming with us.

Commissioner Anderson: Watch out for any broken pavers.

Development Services Director Cabrera: We've also added the properties that the city maintains and the properties that SFM maintains when you all have of what has a covenant.

Commissioner Fors: Quick question on the responsibility matrix. Says responsibility matrix for downtown, does that mean the commercial business district or does that mean, in other words, how do we define downtown?

Assistant Director Perez: Its actually citywide.

Commissioner Fors: Okay. So, this applies to citywide.

Assistant Director Perez: It is citywide.

Commissioner Fors: Including residential?

City Commission Meeting

Public Works Director Diaz: We don't do swales in residential at all. That is 100 percent the property owner.

Assistant Director Perez: Its commercial.

City Attorney Ramos: Commercial throughout the city, but not CBD, so it includes like U.S.-1 or whatever, not residential.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Perfect.

Assistant Director Perez: So, in addition to that, we put together a maintenance flyer. We actually just revised it a little, because when the streetscape project was done, we did come out with a maintenance guide for our businesses as well. So, what we did is just refined it a little bit, cleaned it up, and we reissued this one for streetscape specifically. So, in this case, it's not that they have different requirements, it's that because of the pavers and the uniqueness of them, they do have to maintain it a specific way, and so that's why this flyer was done. And we also put in a phone number, so if there are any issues, if they had any questions or concerns, they found any damage to pavers, lighting or graffiti, which Block by Block cleans up a lot of graffiti in the streetscape area, they have to call this phone number that's there, and they will get...

Vice Mayor Mena: You get a lot of graffiti, really?

Mayor Lago: We've been getting some graffiti in the North Gables area too. I have a few residents that send me the graffiti that's been going on in the North Gables and our team have been addressing it. So, I've sent you, Mr. Manager, they've been doing a good job.

Parking Director Kinney: It's actually a little bit cyclical, but yes, there are times where graffiti is a daily issue, and the fortunate thing is, Block by Block starts work at 5:30 in the morning, so most of its gone before anybody sees it.

Commissioner Fors: And Waste Management also, because often what gets graffiti is the green dumpsters. Waste Management also has a roving person that comes out and immediately paints the dumpster. I know down by my office, every once in a while, we get graffiti, it's always on the Waste Management dumpster.

Parking Director Kinney: No. It's an unfortunate reality of what we do.

Commissioner Anderson: Job security.

Assistant Director Perez: So, after that, so these two brochures are being handed out right now by Code Enforcement, and this is targeting businesses. In addition to that, because not every property owner lives in the Gables or is local, we did create a brochure; and this brochure has both the general instructions and the streetscape as well. And we are mailing this out to all property owners,

City Commission Meeting

and in addition to that, we are also mailing it to businesses. So, we are hitting everyone again a second time.

City Manager Iglesias: The general brochure applies to all commercial areas. The one for streetscape is special because of the type of paver that we have in Giralda and in Miracle. So, we are really covering all the commercial districts with these two.

Commissioner Fors: I also think, if we get around to it, an informational video wouldn't be bad either to share on social media, which just says the same thing that this says in these brochures.

Assistant Director Perez: This has been printed and its now at the mail house. So, this is going to be out in the next couple of days. And aside from that, we did create a website. It is coralgables.com/businessmaintenance. This website has not only all of the information that we've talked about, but it also has important information on the maintenance covenants that we were talking about as well. And I'm going to have Hermes come up. So, this has information on everything that we talked about. It talks about where in the code you can see this information, so you can reference our code, which is right here. It talks about the general information, it talks about streetscape, and then right here there's maintenance covenants. So, if you're not sure if you have additional responsibilities, you can click on this link, and I'm going to click on it so Hermes can take you.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, I would like to actually call out Public Works on the permit section and the IT staff that actually help pull this together. There were over 10,000 documents that have to be reviewed and catalogued one by one. Some of them had multiple pages and you see every dot that you see on this map is a covenant.

Commissioner Anderson: Wow.

Public Works Director Diaz: And then the beauty of this, yes, wow, exactly – so then you get to click on one of them, and then there it is. So just wanted to call out some of the guys and ladies who, in addition to their daily duties, this took a lot of time. I think it's a worthy product to have.

Mayor Lago: It's a great tool.

City Attorney Ramos: Where is it on the website?

Assistant Director Perez: You can go to either coralgables.com/businessmaintenance but aside from that we did create a direct link to this portal, which is coralgables.com/maintenancecovenant.

Public Works Director Diaz: I have nothing to add, unless you have any questions.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. You made a lot of progress.

Commissioner Fors: I'd put the matrix on the website. We have a link here for Municode, like anybody is going to look that up. I'd put that link, the matrix, that's my suggestion.

Assistant Director Diaz: I'll put the matrix on it.

Commissioner Fors: I would.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's not on there?

City Manager Iglesias: We'll be happy to put it on there, put the matrix on.

Commissioner Fors: What I like about the matrix is, this website right here kind of reads like an article. The only thing I care about is my sidewalks. I've got to read this entire article till I bump into sidewalks, as opposed to the matrix where I go to sidewalks, what's my responsibility.

Commissioner Anderson: Its perfect. I agree with you.

Mayor Lago: Give them the matrix on the website. Makes them happy. Easily made happy, right.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes. Nobody wants to read all that stuff.

City Manager Iglesias: We are happy to put the matrix on there.

Mayor Lago: Belkys, you've done a great job, by the way. Thank you.

Assistant Director Perez: Thank you. So, Code Enforcement wanted to talk about that. Officers are now walking their zones twice a week, that's really important, and they are helping us hand out the flyers to our businesses. They are telling our merchants that warnings started December 1st, citations will start January 3rd. If there is a violation that is egregious, then citations are being issued immediately. I don't know if Suramy wants to add anything else to that.

Mayor Lago: Can I ask you a quick question. Are we building a list of the most egregious, most neglected properties that should over the next month or two we start working with them to bring them into compliance?

Development Services Cabrera: We can run a report that will show us how many citations the different properties have.

Vice Mayor Mena: The communication that's going out with the flyers you referenced earlier will let them know that this is, like hey, we are going to start issuing penalties. I know it's not on the flyer, but the extent you are mailing it out, we should probably let them know, like hey, we are not just sending you a flyer, we are going to start taking action.

Assistant Director Perez: We don't give a specific date, but it does say, please not that Code Enforcement may assess fines, if the public right-of-way is not maintained. However, having said that, and I'll show you in the next slide, there is more communication.

Vice Mayor Mena: Alright. Perfect.

Assistant Director Perez: So, we agreed that this is something brand new for a lot of our businesses and so, whether it's been in the code forever or not, I think that they are going to find it interesting. Some of these things they might not know. To that end, we are going to be working with Communications, putting it on E-NEWS. We have put it in a business report, which is something that is sent out through the Economic Development Office. We are thinking with the Chamber and the B.I.D. to partner on an award that can come to the City Commission. We have people nominate what's a model business that is exemplified and is following all this to the T and perhaps we can bring them to the Commission as well and honor them that way. Informational workshops – I think that we should have also a roundtable of businesses that have any questions and then we can this once a month, whatever we want to do. We can go out there, we can do it on zoom, it doesn't matter, but the more information we get out there to them and explaining why this is very important. We know that rising tide...and for that reason they need to understand that this is also important and of course, we are going to continue our downtown cleanups, I believe there is a new one coming in February. And so, we'll continue all those efforts.

Mayor Lago: That's great. To Solanch's credit, we have to give her credit, she's worked incredibly hard, along with the Chamber and the B.I.D. and I think we had like about 40 people show up to the last clean-up, which was more than the time before. We are going to be giving out prizes at the next Commission meeting, some cash prizes and I'm looking forward to doing the same thing in February.

Assistant Director Perez: That's it. And if you have any questions, the team is here to answer.

Mayor Lago: I'm impressed. Again, just like the sidewalk conversation that we had before, we are getting things done. We are coming up with ideas and we are rolling them out and we are actually hitting the ground running. So that's a testament to staff.

City Manager Iglesias: And the technology, Mayor, is moving forward, the technology is moving forward.

Mayor Lago: Moving forward, moving forward. So, I think that's critical, and we can't be afraid to hold people accountable. By the way, when holding people accountable, we are holding ourselves accountable at the end of the day. So, congratulations to staff, you deserve all the credit. Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: Mayor, if I may interrupt for one moment. I need to leave in like five minutes.

City Commission Meeting

Mayor Lago: We'll be done right now, as quickly as possible.

Commissioner Anderson: I have no issues with anything else. But I did want to mention to you, we are going to have a mangrove pod planting. I'm going to ask the City Manager's office to have it ready, so we can do it like the very first weekend on Saturday, in January, I think its January 8th. You are all welcome to come out with your gloves and help pot.

Mayor Lago: I will be there.

Commissioner Anderson: Scout House.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.