

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Non-Agenda Item
September 26, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias

Public Speaker(s)

Richard Martin, Coral Gables Resident

Non-Agenda Item [9:57:38 a.m.]
Discussion on trash pickup.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, I'd like to take something out of order now and have Assistant City Manager Peter Iglesias make a presentation on our trash pickup.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Good morning. I have a video that shows some of the sites that we have initiated. This is the 72nd Facility. We have here three...sites as of now.

Commissioner Quesada: Please speak into the microphone so those at home can hear you, maybe grab the portable.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We have three sites – 72nd Avenue, then we have the site on Eighth Street, and then we have the new site on 71st Avenue. This is chip we were talking about,

so you see it's not just one branch for everyone. That handles about 6,000 cubic yards to 8,000 cubic yards a day. That's what the site looks like right now.

Commissioner Lago: Peter can I ask you a quick question, if you don't mind, I'm sorry to interrupt.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Sure.

Commissioner Lago: The mulch that's to the left that's a little bit redder that's big quality mulch versus the one that's to the right?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: The right is debris and the other is clean and that's going to Waste Management in Pompano Beach.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I will tell you Mayor Valdes-Fauli had a tour and when we drove through the security gate we smelled the waste transfer station with respect that Miami-Dade operates. We got closer to our debris area and it smelled like fresh wood. It is a very, very clean site, very impressive.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: It is clean mulch.

Commissioner Lago: Peter let me ask you a question since you say its clean mulch and that was one of the concerns I had before; and I brought this up to the Manager, I know it's difficult under the current circumstances, maybe we have FEMA or one of those other entities and allow us to use it. But wouldn't it be great to maybe offer that mulch up to some of the residents.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Unfortunately, we've got so much of it; we are going to have 170,000 cubic yards. If that number is correct we are at 60,000 today or material picked up, so we are at 35 percent of the 170,000 so far. We start operations on the 72nd Avenue site first, get that one going, then we start operations at the Eighth Street site and we've leased a property that's about two blocks away from 72nd Avenue for a third site, so we have tub grinders or chippers at all three sites.

Commissioner Lago: So, you think it's a logistics nightmare or it's just – having people coming in and out of that site, which is kind of unsafe.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: It's unsafe to have people come in there.

Commissioner Lago: No, I just want to make sure I have an answer.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: It's an issue that the County didn't have something going to actually get this composted and do these things, but we don't have – the only alternative for the County is the recovery site and that's very expensive, it's about \$67 a ton, and it's a dump, so it really is basically a dump, so it's really a shame. Now Waste Management what they are getting is clean mulch, they will be processing it, so Waste Management is doing that, but we have to ship it over to Pompano, which is about 70 miles round trip.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: This has been very frustrating; you all have been very helpful in trying to get movement from the County. I don't think the County understood the amount of debris that was coming with Irma, but sir, if you'd like when we are closer to the end, we have a system in place, it's possible that we could hold back some of that clean mulch and figure out how to use it, but it's been explained to me that if we opened up the mulch for our residents, we would have five feet of debris of mulch; one truck of mulch is 4 or 5 trucks of debris. We would have it overflowing.

Commissioner Lago: The City...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We are producing at such an aggressive level that we have to get it off the site, so that we can make room for more debris. This is an efficiency study; you have done an excellent job synchronizing our trucks, get more trucks in through without waiting, because we are keeping things moving. Our residents want that debris gone. We have, as the Mayor said, 500 miles of swale to pick up. We've got to pick it up, we've got to sort it, we've got to chip it, and we've got to move it out. It is an intense operation, you are doing an excellent job and the ability – this is probably a 15-year supply of mulch for City what we are looking at, no joke. And, that doesn't include the trees we are taking down, because they landed on houses, landed on cars, landed on yards. So it's really important. We promised you three weeks for the first clearance, they are focused on that seven days a week. We know that our residents wished it was sooner. We are told by our FEMA monitors we are ahead. We are the first ones that are looking at final disposition with that mulch. We were the first ones that began the chipping operations and we are keeping that pressure on, not only our team, but our contractors to continue to perform.

City Attorney Leen: I also wanted to just make a note for the public record. We are approving contracts based on the emergency powers of the Mayor and the delegation to the City Manager, we continue to do that, in my view they are legally sufficient. Based on that we are also going to be seeking FEMA reimbursement for them, if we can, there is always a risk that we won't get FEMA reimbursement for a particular contract, particularly when we have to do it on an emergency basis, but we have asked FEMA counsel, we have an outside counsel who is helping

us and we will do our best to seek such reimbursement. My view as City Attorney is that the Commission and the Manager made it clear that we want to get this removed as soon as possible and we are exercising our emergency powers to do so.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And not only two agreements that we did under emergency, everything else was FEMA anticipated; one was an additional site on Coral Way at around 71, because we did not want to use Lee Lincoln, we had promised before, we did not want to use Coral Way at Country Club Prado, we promised before, so they identified an additional site so that we could keep production going, Agreement No. 1. Agreement No. 2 – despite how hard you all tried to get approval from DERM for an alternate site for the clean mulch, our only alternative was Pompano with Waste Management and we had to do an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) emergency. City Attorney came in over the weekend, drafted the document, we executed those documents, those are the two that we had to exercise under emergency.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We really tried to get DERM approval for an additional site and it was a nightmare, we didn't.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Nobody yet has an MOU, with no additional city other than the City of Coral Gables.

City Attorney Leen: Because there is time between Commission meetings, I just want to be clear that as emergency agreements come up, there may not be many of them, but if they do, I will continue to authorize and perform legal sufficiency based on the Manager's discretion.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: And, the 71 Avenue site makes sense because our site was Lee Lincoln and Lee Lincoln has a school, which means that we get four-five hours with school there that we can't truck and we are trucking constantly, and then if we use the golf course we are tearing that up and have restoration cost, so it makes very much sense to do that. Let me say that all the credit goes to our Public Works Director and our Public Works Department who are working tirelessly for this. They have done an incredible job, seven days a week, 14 hours a day. I can't say enough for the Public Works team.

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

Vice Mayor Keon: Just two questions. Does all of that get to Pompano by truck, is it all trucked to Pompano.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Yes it is, but what happens Vice Mayor is that by mulching it, every four to five trucks that come in its one truck going out, so it's much more efficient. So,

when we truck out to Pompano let's say 100 yards of mulch, it would be like 500 yards coming in from debris, because it's very compacted. So, it's a much more efficient way...

Commissioner Lago: Is there an additional cost that we may have to bear taking it out to Pompano or...?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Some additional trucking cost, but it's much cheaper; it's about 35 percent still cheaper than going through the County facility....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Tell us who that person is, there is a monitor up there.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Yes. FEMA is not going to pay without monitoring, so we have the monitors are in the field, every truck has to be certified; certification means that the truck is actually measured and the capacity of that truck is determined, the truck is given a number, there is a placard on that truck. There is a monitor in the field guaranteeing that that truck is debris from Coral Gables. That truck goes to our facility that ticket from that monitor is given to our person at the gate. They actually go up a ladder and look inside the truck to make sure it's filled. That truck is then dumped at our site; then we have a second monitor making sure the truck goes out empty, so the truck doesn't just circle around. So, these are FEMA procedures that they have done, so you don't have a half full truck coming back and forth.

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

Vice Mayor Keon: Did we have to go out and hire any additional contractors to haul from what our contract was prior to the storm?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Right now we are working with our contract prior to the storm.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, we were well covered by our contracts that were in place prior to the storm to take us through the storm and pick up our debris.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: I'd rather not say what we are doing, but we are doing it very efficiently and it's working, so I'd rather keep our...

Vice Mayor Keon: I mean there was a lot of discussion, a lot of it you saw on the news and in the paper about having to go out for new contracts at very inflated rates.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We've had very responsive contractors.

Vice Mayor Keon: We've had extremely responsive contractors.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We are working extremely closely; Public Works are doing a great job, we are working as a team and that team is making the difference, because we are all working as a team.

Vice Mayor Keon: I know there are many residents that don't see the entirety of this process and don't see what you've done and the planning that you did and that you went out on the road as soon as the storm was over and could go out and what you've done and how effectively and efficiently you have done this process. You deserve a tremendous amount of credit, the entire staff related to this deserves tremendous credit for the work that you have done for those of us that can see the entirety of your operation, and you have done an outstanding job.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: And by the way, the tree trimming crews are out; we had 16 crews on Sunday, we are trying to get that up to 20 or more. We've already trimmed over 1,000 trees and we'd like to get production ramps up it would be better and better, so not only are we handling debris, but we are also doing the tree trimming and then they have to come by a second time to pick up all the debris. So, we are going to have to do multiple passes, as the debris comes from the trees from backyards, we pick up and there is more coming in.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You are doing a wonderful job.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm sorry, I just have to remind the public, we are only picking up landscape debris. Do not put broken fences or other types of debris in those piles, it's got to go through the chipper; and the other is, I've had some residents say, why worry so much about FEMA, why don't we just pay for it? Katrina cost \$9.9 million dollars, Wilma, same fiscal year cost \$12 million dollars. You've worked very hard to create significant reserves and to have \$23 million dollars go away, because we didn't follow FEMA process would have been financially irresponsible. So we are following their guidelines, we are confident that we'll get the 75 percent reimbursement that happened previously, twelve and-a-half (12.5) percent also came from the State, City paid twelve and-a-half percent, but it is critical that we follow their process, follow the preapproved contracts and move it forward. Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Madam City Manager, if I may just add one thing, is there a way that we could address trees that have fallen over before it's too late?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Oh, we have a tree rescue team.

Commissioner Lago: When is it starting, do you think?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: It already has.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It already has.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Thank you sir for bringing that up. So, we have three different crews; one hauling debris, one trimming branches, and one rescuing the trees that have fallen over poorly; City trees, I can't save your backyard tree. So what we've done is, they have done an assessment, they are going and righting up the trees that can, it's a very delicate process, those stakes will be there for at least six months to make sure that it is propped and able to recover from the storm, but if a resident has a swale tree and we love our residents, and they care deeply for the swale trees in front of their houses, they have a great deal of pride and ownership. If they have a tree that has fallen over in the City tree the best thing that they can do, aside from the rain that we had yesterday and today, is to water it. It will take us time to get to all of the trees; 40,000 trees in the City, 40,000 of City trees, and I would estimate myself, I'm not a scientist, but 10 percent of them were impacted severely during the storm, so it takes time to get there.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We also have other crews removing trees from private property and they are doing an excellent job, they are very careful removing them to minimize damage.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Those are City trees that ended up on the roof, on the cars, on the yards. We are not removing private trees on private property, but if our City tree ended up on your private lawn we want you to e-mail: irmatrees@coralgables.com take a picture, give us a contact, and our Risk Management and our tree crews are doing an amazing job. How odd that we would get compliments from City residents complimenting us on how we extracted our Fichus tree from their house, they are really doing a good job.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Most of them are documented now, but if we missed any that would be a perfect...

City Attorney Leen: I just want to note for the record that based on sovereign immunity, the City does not have to do that, because typically you have a Fichus tree or an Oak in the right-of-way that serves a community benefit, unless there is something sick about the tree, there is not a duty on behalf of the City to pay for damages. The City has historically, if a tree falls on someone's house though, out of the common good and the decency and the idea that we'll look, now they are having to bear the harm of one tree, you know the benefit is defused, the harm of it falling is just on that property, we as a matter of policy and the City Manager has endorsed this and put

this in her policy, allowed that and we should, I believe we should do so, I think it's a good policy. But, I just wanted to note that legally it's not required and we do this out of decency.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor, I do need to provide a correction to my statement, we are bringing back up trees that have fallen, except for Fichus, they are on the hit list for this City.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very much so, and we announced that and I think it makes very good sense in the world.

Commissioner Quesada: Three quick points – Number one, thank you; number two, that video that we just saw, can we place it on YouTube and place it on our website, as well as do a citywide mass e-mail.

Commissioner Lago: They've been doing a lot of that already.

Commissioner Quesada: But that video is very effective, I'm sure I speak for all of us, I've had several conversations a day about pickup; and the third on the video, I saw someone highlighting a map of the City. I'm assuming we have a map of areas that we have covered.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Yes we do.

Commissioner Quesada: Can we, a PDF of that map daily updated to the website?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We are currently trying to get that map on with G.I.S.

Commissioner Quesada: G.I.S. – it's too fancy, it takes too long, it's too complicated. All you've got to do is make a color copy of areas you've covered and scan it in and put it on the website. It's much easier, less involved, anyone can do it.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We'll work on that; and also understand, this is not our only time in your neighborhood. We are going to pick up the first round of debris, you are going to put things back from the back yard, still landscape debris, we are going to come back, we are going to clean up.

Commissioner Quesada: And that's fine, we can put that language at the bottom of the map, but I get the call 5, 6, 7 time a day, what areas are you guys covering today?- and I don't really know. It would be so much easier to provide that information, look these are the areas that we've

covered from major first round pick-up through today's date, we have a map so that we can direct someone to our website.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We are currently working on that same thing.

Commissioner Quesada: You don't have to over complicate it, that's all I'm saying.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We are working on the color map, we are also working on the G.I.S.; the G.I.S. is for operational purposes and the color map would be good...

Commissioner Quesada: I'm just trying to make your life easier.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: A question. When will we be starting bulk pick up, because as you probably can tell when you drive through the neighborhood, especially in my neighborhood there are beds, there are all kinds of things that are in the area.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We are doing some of that now; yesterday we had 12 trucks picking up that. That cannot go to Waste Management that has to go to...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm going to intervene. We have not announced bulk pick-up yet, we will; we are doing garbage, we are doing recycling and we will do bulk pick up, but we have not announced when we will, because we've got to get that debris off the streets. People will add more household goods and all into the equation.

Commissioner Lago: And the second point I wanted to make and I know I spoke to you, I think I spoke to you on Sunday when we talked about the tree. We need to be very vigilant right now in these times, because I think we've had one case in point where people took advantage of the hurricane to cut down some rather large specimen trees in the City and I also noticed it outside the City, so make sure, I know staff is working 14 hours a day, 16 hours a day, we ask the residents out there if you see somebody cutting a tree down, please call Code Enforcement. There is a procedure and a protocol on how to do this, we take great pride in the canopy in the City of Coral Gables, and it's a shame to lose certain trees when people are taking advantage of our overworked team and the fact that we are constantly cutting down limbs that are hanging currently and they are taking advantage of this time.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We are keeping an eye on that Commissioner.

Commissioner Lago: I know you are. Remember the tree that I showed you, it was not in the City of Coral Gables...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Peter, thank you very much.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: I'm so proud of the Public Works team, they deserve all the credit, they've done an outstanding job, they are working 7 days a week, 14 hours a day, so they just did an outstanding job and they deserve all the credit here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very, very much. We have a member of the public to speak, Richard Martin, 1527 Dorado.

Mr. Martin: Thank you Mayor. I just wanted to mention something. I live on Dorado which is between Alhambra and Red, and we didn't see a City vehicle truck until Thursday, and fortunately one of our neighbors is a contractor and he went in with his crew and cleaned up our street. But, my main concern was on Thursday when the truck that we did see was a trash truck, and they didn't come, they had already passed my street and I went back up to them and I said, we were supposed to bring the garbage cans out to the curb, and I said we didn't know that, and they said, well an e-mail was sent. Unfortunately we didn't have power or Internet or cell phone until literally the following Saturday. So, I'll just make a suggestion, next time something like this happens either put it on one of the radio stations about when the garbage truck is going to pick up or if we could do something similar to what we do at Christmas time when the fire engine goes around the City with Santa Clause. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you sir. Thank you very much, good suggestion.

[End: 10:18:14 a.m.]