

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-3
May 28, 2013
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Patrick Salerno

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

H-3 [Start: 11:15:10 a.m.]

Resolution authorizing entering into an amendment to the professional service agreement with Abramson & Associates for consultant services to assist with the redevelopment of the City owned garages 1 and 4 on Andalusia Avenue.

Mayor Cason: Alright, let's move onto H-3.

City Manager Salerno: Thank you Mayor. H-3 is a Resolution authorizing entering into an amendment to the professional service agreement with Abramson & Associates for consultant services to assist with the redevelopment of the City owned garages 1 and 4 on Andalusia Avenue. Mayor, Commissioners the process is outlined here for you, I'm prepared to answer any questions regarding the process. As we know, ultimately any decisions as to what gets done or if any, is the result of – will rest with the Commission, so I've discussed with each of you, gotten input from members of the Commission, particularly with respect to the RFP that Garage 1, Commissioner Keon and I believe Commissioner Quesada stressed in my discussions to try to activate the area in front of that, we will emphasize that in the RFP, but I recommend that we

proceed at this time with the process as outlined here to make the improvements that will benefit the entire community.

Commissioner Quesada: The last time this came up, I think I made the motion to defer the item, about six months ago and then we had discussed about having that parking study which we just got back and we just heard from Tim Haahs and Associates, so I thought that was a good presentation. I'm fully supportive of this RFP; let me go over some of the details first. I like the fact that although it's going to cost \$50,000, it would be worked into, we would be reimbursed by whatever developer selected later on, so we get that money back. I think that's a great way to put this out and recoup our money that we put into it. I think streetscape what's coming is one of those important projects that we've had in recent years for the downtown area. I think we have a wonderful infrastructure, it's just aging, I won't say it's a scar on our face, but it's a scrape on a knee on a beautiful downtown, and I think it's going to be wonderful once it's all fixed up, and if we are not addressing the other aging structures that are near that downtown, I think it's going to affect the resident experience, the pedestrian experience coming into town. Obviously, we are all aware we got that e-mail; I think it was last week or two weeks ago, the pictures of Parking Garage Number 1, of all the rust and all the aging nature of it...

Mayor Cason: It's an embarrassment.

Commissioner Quesada: It's an embarrassment and its funny, when I speak to residents and there was a commercial real estate forum the other day where we are trying to attract different corporations to come to downtown Coral Gables and I heard so much that it's almost an embarrassment when people have to walk through those alleyways, and again coming back to what Commissioner Kerdyk and Commissioner Keon said earlier, it's something that we need to address. Within that same realm this parking garage, which is directly on Andalusia and LeJeune, I mean, I don't know when the last time you guys were in it, but I hear a lot of complaints about it and I think it is a problem, and I think if we have a nice development, again we'll see what developers suggest and see what they bring forward, but I think it's only going to improve that downtown experience, you know I don't want to have a beautifully renovated downtown and then have an old aging structure that people first experience before we come into that downtown. So I think they all go hand-in-hand. I like the progress that we've had on Andalusia, I mean there is a lot of talk of that Publix being redeveloped by Salvat obviously the decision we make today or moving forward shouldn't be based on that because there is nothing before the City at this time related to that project. At least I don't think there is, I don't know if there is or not. We do know that there is a hotel just south of here, just south of City Hall on LeJeune, which I believe has been presented to the City, but still in the initial stages, so I think there is going to be a lot of foot traffic coming to downtown Coral Gables, I think there are going to be more residents, I think it going to create a more pleasant experience for downtown Coral Gables, and I guess it continues to improve our City, so that's why I'm in favor at this point.

Mayor Cason: I also think sequence is important, we've got to get this garage done, it's necessary not sufficient, we have a lot more work to do in terms of managing of the whole parking process integrating this in whatever we do in streetscape, but it's an embarrassment, it's probably a safety issue at some point, but we've got to get on with the garage and have it in place before we move into the other projects, so I'm in favor of it as well.

Commissioner Lago: I'll keep it very brief; I agree with what the Mayor is saying and also what Commissioner Quesada stated. I've got the pleasure of dealing with some of the residents in the community and some of the individuals in the B.I.D. like Mari. I went to the last meeting and I got a tongue lashing from several business leaders in this community in regards to the current status of not the downtown, but more importantly our garages, which is something that we are going to be investing in our infrastructure. We are going to be investing in our downtown, the residents are clamoring for it and to leave the garage in the current status that it's in is disappointing. It's not really an option, and that's why I asked the gentleman from Tim Haahs before in regards to the utilage of the existing facilities, it's underutilized for a reason, people don't want to park there, that's why is underutilized; and I do everything in my power not to park there and I received an e-mail from a friend and I think some other individuals may have received that e-mail that their bumper was ripped off their car, and I've also received phone calls from family and friends of mine recently after this election that they have had issues parking in that garage. So, I'm not here to pile on further, we are here to resolve the issue, which I think is the key. From my understanding I don't know exactly when this has been discussed in the City, but I know the revitalization of these two parking garages and Miracle Mile has been an issue for almost 10 years now, so I think we need to move forward on this issue, we need to give the residents and the business community what they need to continue to lead in this community. So, I'm 100 percent behind this, I also agree with what Commissioner Quesada said in regards to the \$100,000 to \$150,000 fee would be recouped through the developer fee or something that would have to be paid when a developer is chosen, so I give my approval in regards to getting a consultant to give us a little further information.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I think everybody agrees that both of those garages need to be developed. I think the reason the conversation was so extensive on the previous garage was from the standpoint we want to make sure that we have sufficient parking in that location, because once you build these garages or developments they are gone forever, and if you look at the garage that we are talking about, the initial garage was the Actor's Playhouse Garage. We are talking about basically adding 200 parking spaces, 200 to 300 parking spaces between what we are alleviating there and the garage across from Publix. By the way, just for a bit of knowledge for each of you, the paseos that you have there that will lead people into Miracle Mile are both private. They can at any time they want shut those up and then all of a sudden those pass-throughs are not there, so that's just a bit of knowledge that I think you should know. So the question is not the fact that should we do these parking garages or not, and it's not the fact that we shouldn't do these RFP's,

in my vision is the fact should we include any more parking on the 300 block on that for public parking? Now we heard that of course parking structures do much better by themselves and that's good, and I don't want to impede the progress as far as having a developer develop that 300 block piece of property, but you have to know the history. The history of that development or that location as is this one was that was historically zoned eight (8) stories for years and years and years, when we put this out for RFP in 2003 those all were for eight (8) story zoning. This City Commission about four years ago up-zoned those to 16 stories, and so you have the ability to develop a massive project there, which is a good thing. I mean if you are going to do something you might as well do it inside the Code. The question to this Commission is, should we assist that we give another 100 spaces of public parking in that parking garage or not?- and I don't know the answer to that to be perfectly frank with you, just food for thought before this RFP goes out I want to have substantial discussions with the City Manager, hear from developers, discuss what the possibilities and what the problems are going to be if we require some more parking there, but again, we do not have the parking space across the street there, which is on the north side of Aragon, excuse me, south side of Aragon north side of Miracle Mile, so once we build this it's gone, the 300 block. So I am supportive of it, I'm supportive of moving forward, but I do think that we really, really need to consider putting additional parking spaces in that for the City usage.

Commissioner Quesada: Would you consider – OK the consultant just told us between 835 and 1,000 additional spaces.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: 835 to 1,000...

Commissioner Quesada: I think that's what he said.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: If those numbers are good and of course they are consultants, but they are figuring at one percent growth a year, which I think and I live that guys, my office put in Brick Top, Swine, Season 52, I know the amount of traffic that draws to that area there, and then the other thing is what I brought up, the permit parking, we are like 600 or 700 parking spaces short on what that was in 2005, so if that ever goes back up again we are going to have that issue with parking, so once you build them it's gone.

City Manager Salerno: With respect to Garage 1, what the consultant is saying in order to make it a convenient, enjoyable experience for the patrons that use that garage, it needs to be in the neighborhood of 1,000, so maybe there is a flexibility of 100 because you said you could go maybe the 6 revolutions or whatever, we'll look at that. So that whether it's 1 percent growth, 2 percent growth, whatever you want; again, this was population, he came up with 700 spaces that when this garage is constructed there is a surplus of 700. He is also saying that any growth from the types of things, Vice Mayor like you are suggesting, are going to come off of that, but this is not a static thing, you are not doing this alone and you are never going to do anything else with

respect to the parking going forward, that would be – I can't imagine this body sitting stagnant doing nothing to improve the parking situation for the next five years. This step needs to occur and it needs to occur now, OK, that doesn't mean we don't stop working toward looking at the other options such as the trolley system being at a loop and making ourselves more efficient and looking at other opportunities for parking, including shared potential for use for shared parking, those opportunities. I think the key thing we have to remember is this garage is a \$25 to \$30 million plus or minus expenditure and the City is not wanting to pay that \$25 to \$30 million. So we have to make this project a viable project and as you stated, I was the one who brought forward the idea to change it, because I knew that the prior project in 2005 when the City went out to bid was flawed, because you couldn't get enough development into the zoning and that was proven out by the fact that nothing happened since 2005.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I don't think that was true, but go ahead, keep on going.

City Manager Salerno: From my perspective it was true...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No....

City Manager Salerno:...From my perspective the height factor limited the ability, I can tell you for sure you could not build – we could not get a private developer to pay for this garage if the only height, if the height was limited to what it was at mid-rise before. I've talked to 10 to 12 developers, not one of them, not one of them said that they could do it without getting this high-rise, that's the point I was trying to make. I brought that forward for a reason; the economics weren't there to make it successful; the economics are there, the Planning and Zoning Board approved it, the City Commission approved it. So now you have the dynamic, but we still have to keep in mind it's not just – you know I would love to be able to say, let's add 200 spaces to the site for Garage 4, I'd like to make it 400 spaces, but in discussing with the development community and I'd be glad, Vice Mayor, to sit with you and the other members of the Commission who would like to discuss what we should say in that aspect of the RFP, but it was made very clear by the development community when I had discussions with them over the last six to eight months, and that was the ability to get, to make it viable for them to pay \$30 million for a garage. They have to – it's certainly doable, I'm very confident that we will, but to take and add more public parking into the project and make their project less viable, we have to be very careful, that's all I'm saying. It's not just ask for more because what you are doing is by asking for more parking in that space you are making it less viable from a financial standpoint that they are going to be able to make the project happen, and this project doesn't happen unless it's a win for the City and it's a win for the developer that you pick, it's got to work for both.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No doubt about it and the only reason I'm asking is because this is a unique piece of property in a unique location in the City of Coral Gables right off Miracle Mile and it's our last developable site, so the only reason I'm doing this, I'm sticking up for the City, residents

and the business owners by trying to get as much parking in downtown as possible. If it doesn't work of course – I'm a fairly good businessman, I understand that it needs to work for both parties, but there also needs to be a point that you at least ask and see if they can encapsulate that into their project, that's all, that's it, I mean is that hard?- no.

Commissioner Keon: I agree. I know that we don't have the ability, we don't financially have the ability it appears to build the garage that we need to build without taking advantage of the sale of the other property that the garage sits on, so we need to at this time make a decision as to how this is going to happen to make it work financially for the City. I do agree with Bill that – I have grave concerns over letting go of an asset that could be so vital to the viability of that downtown area because of parking, but I certainly do understand the financial need to move forward with this RFP. This is only an RFP, it will come back to us, we will give great thought to all of these issues that came before us today and we will make a decision at that time, and I know you and I have spoken about it, I also want to know with regard to the size of this parking garage that if we use this parking garage as a valet-type parking garage where people can drop their cars and have them park because they don't want to circle six (6) times and they don't want to circle eight (8) times or whatever, and if we have this as a sort of drop-off, it that gets incorporated, if you need some design on this garage to make it pedestrian-friendly and not a wall as you walk down Andalusia or whatever else. How that affects the design of this garage and may affect the number of parking places that may be in this, and how this garage needs to function. I really want to know that because I don't want to walk in thinking we are going to get 1,000 spaces and then say no, but it if it functions like this, and if it has this, and if it does this, actually it can't, now you have 800 spaces or whatever. I just want to know all of these things, will this RFP tell us that?- the RFP is only going to tell us the financial side of it.

City Manager Salerno: This will just draft the RFP; all those decisions to satisfy you will come back later.

Mayor Cason: I think if you look at the last paragraph of this it says, "the RFP will make clear that the City is not obligated to designate a developer for the two sites. Rather, based on the input derived at each stage the City Commission may make an informed determination, in its sole discretion, to proceed or not based upon an assessment of the various proposals" that we will get. So with that do we have a motion?

Commissioner Quesada: So moved.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I'll second.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Quesada makes the motion the Vice Mayor second it.

City Clerk

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes
Commissioner Lago: Yes
Commissioner Quesada: Yes
Commissioner Keon: Yes
Mayor Cason: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)

[End: 11:34:28 a.m.]