

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-4
July 9, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

Public Speaker(s)

Rip Holmes

Agenda Item G-4 [10:40:48 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, directing the City Clerk and City Manager to set certain City Commission Meetings to begin after 5:00 p.m. and directing the City Clerk and City Manager to set matters of great public importance to be heard after 5:00 p.m.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: G-4 is a Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, directing the City Clerk and City Manager to set certain City Commission Meetings to begin after 5:00 p.m. and directing the City Clerk and City Manager to set matters of great public importance to be heard after 5:00 p.m. Ms. Throckmorton can you explain what this resolution does?

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Good morning. This is the Vice Mayor's resolution to suggest that when there are months where this Commission meets twice two regularly scheduled meetings, that one of those meetings begin after 5 p.m. and that all matters of public importance

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as determined by you all as a Commission be a resolution be heard at least once before final action at a meeting after 5 o'clock.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me say something. We tried this about 20-some years ago, and it was a disaster. It was a disaster because mothers complained about, mothers and fathers, soccer moms, jujitsu or whatever it is, dads, cooking, mothers or fathers for their spouses, dinner for the babies, every single city in, every single major city, not Pinecrest for example, but every single major city and the county starts at 9 in the morning. We've never had a problem. I remember Riviera having 55 of the 57 neighborhood owners here and if we start at 5 and have seven-hour meetings, we are going to be discussing items of importance at 11 p.m. and people are going to complain about that. We tried it once, you weren't here, I'm older than Methuselah and it didn't work, it really didn't work; and if we have a particularly important thing, we can start at 5, but let's not make it a custom of starting at 5.

Vice Mayor Lago: Let me tell you why I'm bringing this up; and I think we talked about the finer points, thank you for bringing that up and mentioning how it would break down if this Commission approved it. The reason why I put this on the Commission today was, I wanted to discuss and obviously, I have a resolution, if my colleagues agree that it's a good idea. I got this idea not by looking at any other city, best practices, or researching it, I got the idea as a result and I think you are partially to blame, as a result of your State of the City Address. When I attended the State of the City Address, it was standing room only, everybody was there. It was an opportunity for people to come after work who couldn't make it, because again, work, family take president and it was in hopes of being able to just be as transparent as possible; and I wanted to bring it before the Commission to see if there was any interest in having the structure, having this in the near future, we could load up one meeting that starts at 9 (a.m.) than the ones that start at 5 (p.m.), so we don't end too late. There is an opportunity to make this work if we are interested and if it doesn't work, we can always go back to the standard. I just thought it was a great opportunity after seeing the State of the City Address and how well that went and how well attended it was, to potentially have more people attending these meetings than consultants and staff. Consultants and staff are important, but what I'd like to see is a lot more residents input and have them attend and basically brought into the discussion on whatever issue it may be. Not on just only contentious development issues.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner your intent is very, very good, but it doesn't work. At 5 you'll have soccer moms, you will have soccer dads, you will have people picking kids from school, you will have people who work downtown who can't get here until about 6-6:30 (p.m.). You will have seven-hour meetings that will end up at 11 p.m., you will have cooking for my mother, father who is incapacitated at home, you will have a lot of those things and we haven't had any problem having
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– any time we have an issue, a contentious issue we have standing room only up here. Again, look at Riviera, look at a lot of these issues. I'm against changing something just for the sake of finding solutions to problems that don't exist. I don't think there is a problem – yes, we had that at 5, but it was 5 to 5:30.

Vice Mayor Lago: It went well by the way.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It went very well.

Vice Mayor Lago: I can box you in with that example, you didn't take the bait, but I tried, I admit it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's a good idea, but I don't think we have that problem. I tried once before when I was Mayor the last time, of rotating the place where these meetings took place, two different places in the City, the Fire Station Number 3, to get more participation from down there, we had the Youth Center, we had a church, I think the Women's Club, in North Gables we had, and it also didn't work. People are used to this, the televisions are here and if we start at 9 (a.m.) we'll be over by 3 or 4 (p.m.) and people will come from 9 to 10, rather if we start at 5, we will have a very contentious debate issue at 9:30, 10; 7:30 I have to cook dinner for my wife or husband or I have to pick my son up, who is going to do homework with them. I don't think that this would work and I would ask you to defer it and I promise that if we have a very, very, very contentious issue we could start at 5 and have it at a place like the Youth Center, which will accommodate more people more comfortably than we have today here.

Commissioner Fors: I also appreciate the intent of it. It makes sense to me. At the end of the day though, I also share the Mayor's views that it won't work the way we think it will, I think that people are going to find that they will come even less if its more difficult for them to come. I also fear something that the Mayor mentioned early on, which is that I had a lot of court hearings that start at 9, I had court hearings that start at 5 p.m. and people just don't have the same attention span at 5 p.m., people get impatient and they start sort of hurrying through issues of public importance and I think most importantly is the fact that any of us up here, from what I understand, can at any time move to schedule one of our meetings at 5 p.m.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: The Mayor can always set a time certain for any agenda item. We always send those requests through the Chair of the Committee, of the Board, which is the Commission here, so any item can always be set for a time certain which can begin at any time be it 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock.

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'd be very happy to schedule, my ability or my powers as the Mayor conference to start something at 5, if it is something like – we did this at the Youth Center a year and-a-half ago having to do with schools and having to do with spaces for Coral Gables residents in Coral Gables schools and I counted it. We had 18 staff members and School Board members and we had 11 members of the public.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's what I mentioned in the beginning. Just an idea of trying to change this up so that if there are more residents and business owners than there are actually staff members. We need the staff critical for us to conduct business, but its just an idea, its an idea that I wanted to bring before the Commission.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It was a good idea and I will schedule things that you feel are – I will schedule at 5, but as a matter of principle, I would be opposed to changing our regular.

Commissioner Keon: I'm not going to admit to being as old as Methuselah, but I agree with you.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, I stand alone. I stand alone so far.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: [Inaudible]...the younger Methuselah.

Commissioner Keon: The younger Methuselah, yes. But I agree with you. I come to a lot of Commission meetings over the years and I don't think it makes any difference to be honest with you.

Vice Mayor Lago: So even if I amended it and I promise that I will bring food for everybody (laughter)

Commissioner Mena: What are you bringing?

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Lago: I'll order. Listen, I'm not going to make promises that I can't keep. We have enough...What I will say is that I will buy food for everyone in the Chambers and it would be something like pizza.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Everybody seeing us eating barbeque ribs.

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Commissioner Mena: Listen, I appreciate, I'm open for like trying new things. I would like to see us maybe have a better process also, for like time certain items. I feel like we try to do it the best we can, but a lot of times people have a time certain and they end up a good hour later, you know. That's difficult to manage when you have issues that last for a couple of hours. So, I don't know if there is a better way to approach that so that we can...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I promise that I'll try to do.

Commissioner Mena: No, I know you do. Sometimes we end up talking about a tree for two hours and you didn't see that coming. I hear you.

Vice Mayor Lago: So obviously, the sentiments of my colleagues on the Commission are, if we took a vote on this, I'd be the only one voting in favor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: I think we should make a concerted effort when there are issues, and we know what they are, we had it on Cocoplum recently, we've had it on certain development projects. Let's make a real concerted effort on those to place them at 5 o'clock so that there is no limitation on the issues that we know are of broader public.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is not a public hearing, but we have Rip Holmes wishes to speak and I will give you time to speak Mr. Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you very much Mayor Valdes-Fauli. If anyone wonders if dinosaurs like him and I can change, 20 years ago you might not let me speak, but now you are, and I appreciate it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes sir. You're not a dinosaur, I never called you a dinosaur.

Mr. Holmes: But I like this idea. I mean I think we owe it to the people of Coral Gables and to ourselves to try something. I understand your caution, I guess 4 out of 5, but what's wrong with giving it a try. We don't commit to anything, we say we are going to have a meeting at a nighttime venue and see if anyone shows up,

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You can't have a Coral Gables City Commission meeting and see if anybody shows up, that's not proper.

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Vice Mayor Lago: This is the wonderful about democracy, we don't have the support it today, maybe in the future we will. Go ahead.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: I was just going to say that this resolution only related to those regularly scheduled meetings of the Commission. Special meetings that you all set can always be set at any time, so those could always be set at 5 o'clock for special issues like you were discussing.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Absolutely.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: So not just particular agenda items but whole meeting.

Vice Mayor Lago: Listen, we have a long agenda today, so I don't want to discuss this any further.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Lago: The writing is on the wall. We move forward. Next item Mayor. Yes ma'am.

City Attorney Ramos: Would you like to withdraw your resolution, or do you want to vote and have it fail?

Vice Mayor Lago: Let's vote and have it fail. So moved.

Commissioner Mena: I'll second it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes
Commissioner Mena: No
Commissioner Fors: No
Commissioner Keon: No
Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes
(Vote: 2-3)

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Lago: That's one of the first votes I've lost in a long time, but you know what, it's OK.

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[End: 10:52:54 a.m.]

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