

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Commission Chambers
Agenda Item G-2
October 13, 2020
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
ACM, Ed Santamaria**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-2 [12:17 p.m.]

A discussion on supporting South Gables Businesses and periodic outdoor dining events on San Ignacio Avenue. (Sponsored by Commissioner Mena).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: G-2, Commissioner Mena.

Commissioner Mena: As Mark Trowbridge mentioned earlier, I had a Zoom call, I believe it was last week with various businesses in the South Gables area off of 57th Avenue and Sunset there. The nexus of the meeting was, I had spoken to Mark and I've always felt like that area really sort of views itself as South Miami or part of South Miami, which is fine, but they pay City of Coral Gables taxes, they should have certain expectations of what they get from us, what they get from their Chamber and so on and so forth. So, I just kind of wanted to have a meeting. They were really appreciative of it. They had a lot of comments about how we are dealing with the pandemic and how their respective industries are doing, the restaurants in particular, all very constructive. One of the things that came out of it was the idea from a purely economic development perspective, and actually its an idea that dawned on me when I went to the Wings for Wishes event that Vice Mayor Lago sponsors and supports every year and that we participate in.

Vice Mayor Lago: We got robbed again (laughter).

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Commissioner Mena: Where they close off San Ignacio for that event, all the way from, its basically really a two block, its one block but it's a very long block, and it's a wonderful event. It reminds me a lot of what we used to do on Giralda before we sort of permanently closed it, and it really lends itself to that because there is really no traffic impacted closing that street for a special event. Its set off from residential well enough that it doesn't have a big impact in that respect; and so, we started brainstorming about the possibility of basically taking the playbook from what we used to do with Giralda Under the Stars and trying to come up with some sort of periodic special event for this area where, especially at this time where you are looking for more outdoor dining opportunities and especially heading into the coming season where the weather is nicer, where maybe we can sponsor or help organize some sort of outdoor dining public event where we close San Ignacio or maybe half of San Ignacio even. I don't know if you necessarily need to close the whole thing. There is a small two-story parking garage in the middle there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And there is a bank there.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You can't prevent access to the bank.

Commissioner Mena: No, no, no. But I'm talking about at night. I'm talking about doing this at night.

Vice Mayor Lago: You could even do a one-way with police...

Commissioner Mena: We can figure out those logistics.

Vice Mayor Lago: I think it's a great idea.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's a good idea.

Commissioner Mena: But the idea is let them have outdoor dining one night, a nice setup like what we used to do with Giralda Under the Stars, have some music or whatever.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But Commissioner, how many restaurants – there is Fiola.

Commissioner Mena: There is Fiola, there is Sports Grill. There is a new restaurant called Public Square that's opening in the next two weeks, where Shula's was.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's where Shula's was.

Commissioner Mena: Right. There is Three-Fold Café right around the bend.

Vice Mayor Lago: There is a little French restaurant adjacent to – Oyster Place.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: As long as its only at night or weekend.

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Commissioner Mena: Yes. I'm talking about a single night event. Giralda Under the Stars is basically the idea. Its not a totally brand-new idea. Its just the location, I think would be good for these people. You have Whole Foods there. You have a lot of corporate partners, like Baptist, Whole Foods, the Bacardi Family has their building on that street, where maybe you can get support for that area. You have a new building that's about to come online there, which is mixed use, which I assume will have some dining options at the ground floor. So, if this can turn into something somewhat periodic, I think would be a nice thing. A), I wanted to just get a feel from you guys if you thought it was a good idea and will be supportive of it and then that way we can direct staff to find out what needs to be done to get the street closed for that type of thing and start working with the Chamber on – have Economic Development start working with the Chamber on how to fund it, whether it's through sponsorships.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: My reaction to that is, I think its an excellent idea, if it's at night or weekends, but let's not impede – there is a mixed-use building coming, there is a bank there, there is a parking lot.

Commissioner Mena: I'm thinking of Friday night, just like, again, Giralda Under the Stars used to be.

Vice Mayor Lago: I think it would be great. I'm all for it.

Commissioner Mena: There was a lot of excitement from these people for it, obviously restaurants are having a really hard time right now, and again, people are looking for outdoor dining. So, I think it's the socially responsible thing to do right now. Its good for economic development, its good for supporting this area and starting to kind of, I don't want to say rebrand, but you know, have the city really support this area as a part of City of Coral Gables, which it is, the way we should.

ACM Santamaria: Good afternoon Commissioners, Mr. Mayor, Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager Operations and Infrastructure. It's a fantastic idea and what we will do from the part of staff is, we'll get together and start forming a group of stakeholders, Economic Development, Special Events Committee, Public Works, any of the folks that would be involved in this kind of initiative to come up with an internal plan. We will revisit how this was done when Giralda was not a Plaza, when it was still a street, and we'd be happy to meet with the stakeholders on the ground, the businesses to see how we could forge a path forward.

Commissioner Mena: And I'll tell you a couple of things. Francesca from Economic Development was in on the call and she already pulled some basic numbers for me about Giralda Under the Stars and sort of what that looks like, loop her in. Look at, not only how we used to go about closing Giralda, but how Wings for Wishes just a few months, I don't know, about six months ago maybe.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Maybe a little more – closed off this very street for a special event.
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Vice Mayor Lago: Its been so well received and I've been involved with that organization since inception and forget about the hundreds of thousands of dollars that's raised for the great cause for the wishes for all these kids, but all the businesses who are involved, the local businesses they get so much great exposure and it's a family affair. The kids enjoy it.

Commissioner Mena: Maybe put a stage for Wings for Wishes, just to give you an idea. I'm not saying we should do all of this, but I'm just kind of giving you a sense that a stage at the end with music and the whole thing.

Vice Mayor Lago: Kids playing.

Commissioner Mena: One of the parking lots was converted into like a mini amusement park where little kids' kind of like you know. They did a lot for that event. I'm not even trying to go that far.

Vice Mayor Lago: It would be nice to have a little bit of live music.

Commissioner Mena: Yes, some live music, some tables, some lights, and a nice outdoor venue that people can go eat in the restaurants, make some money and have a little boost to their business.

Vice Mayor Lago: Somebody can sell ice cream in the corner or something like that. Just to bring the kids out, it's safe.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have a list of 112 things that can be done there with clowns and – let's not go through that. I think it's a great idea. Will you come up with a plan?

Commissioner Mena: Yes. It would be great to have something this year while the weather is nice.

ACM Santamaria: I think that's possible.

Commissioner Mena: Let's see what we could do. Thank you.