

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item B – Public Comments
Commission Chambers
November 10, 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

Public Speaker(s)

Rip Holmes
Mark Trowbridge
Javier Banos

Agenda Item B [10:00 a.m.]
Public Comments

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. City Clerk how many comments do we have, how many people?

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we don't have anyone checked in on Zoom yet, but we do have two people here who would like to make a comment.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. We will take them now. Please be brief. We have a very packed agenda with time certain. Who wants to speak?

City Clerk Urquia: Its Mr. Rip Holmes, he's outside and he would like to speak; and actually, its only going to be one person, the one that was here left already.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

City Clerk Urquia: Mark Trowbridge wanted to speak, but he left.

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have Mr. Holmes come in for him to...Mr. Holmes please be brief.

Mr. Holmes: How long do I have?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Two minutes. You had sent us several e-mails which we have read, so we are familiar with some of your issues.

Mr. Holmes: But the public doesn't know what is in the zoning code.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you. So, I personally think that even doing a zoning rewrite in the middle of a Coronavirus pandemic is ill-advised legally, because even right now the fact that people can't even sit inside here shows us, we have a social distancing problem. What if City Hall was to be rebuilt? It needs, obviously, to be factoring in Covid 19, questions of social distancing, and the City Attorney, who is very professional, she responded to me, and admitted its not even in there. So, can we tell people how to develop something when we are in the middle of social distancing. At the minimum, there needs to be clauses – I think it should be put on pause and clauses, I don't know, they might already be there, specifically addressing Covid 19, specifically putting all of the burden on the developer, telling them you – we can terminate you as a developer if you do not comply with all Emergency Orders....including social distancing and this needs to be in the code, social distancing, you developer, if you fail to comply with social distancing, Emergency Order...regulations, laws, etc., code provisions then we can terminate you at any time. Its to protect the city and from a lawsuit by health advocate or even a counter lawsuit from the developer who said, you didn't give us a warning. The warning needs to be there. Secondly, I'm against the height rise on Miracle Mile. I watched the remote parking workshop and I was hoping or expecting because of our great leader Mr. Lago, that there was going to be a reason that he had found to support remote parking. There wasn't. There wasn't. And in fact, its even more depressing. What's great about our city is people will talk to me, even if they might not share my point of view. Kevin Kinney is not on board with where I'm at, but finally in talking with me, he's kind enough to have talked with me at all, and I said, remote parking equals remote shoppers. Okay. You farm out your parking, guess what, you lose your shoppers. There is more to say but going back to remote parking. Can I take about 20 seconds?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please. You're over your time, but please finish.

Mr. Holmes: The good thing about Coral Gables, people talk – Ms. Keon was kind enough to say to me and a very nice thing about the transit hub at 245 Andalusia, she said look, maybe there is going to be a diminution of parking, right, so we don't know, but we are doing the transit hub and this and that and the other thing. So, I was looking for something in that remote parking workshop to say, yeah, there is going to be Ubers, there is going to be driverless cars, there is going to be this or that, but our good friend, Mr. Lago, to admit and stated, he says listen, I'm on the Transportation Board, people are addicted to their cars and they are going to be, probably for decades and they are going to need parking. So that tells you everything you need to know. Remote parking – I'm

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going to end this right now, so I'll hope you'll forgive me for using this phrase, because I'm about to sit down and save you time. Remote parking is a sham. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Mr. Holmes. Thank you very much for your opinion.

Commissioner Mena: Mr. Holmes, could I just really quick. I want to clarify one point for you. There is a lot to be discussed about Miracle Mile and we will be having those discussions. I did get a mass text message, I guess I believe you sent out, it had your name on it.

Mr. Holmes: Yes, it's mine.

Commissioner Mena: Okay. Nobody is considering 16-story buildings on Miracle Mile. I want to, at least allay that concern of yours. That has not been discussed, its not being discussed. I have not heard a single person up here mention 16-story buildings on Miracle Mile. It will not happen. I want you to know that, because obviously it's a concern of yours.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I agree with you.

Commissioner Mena: I got various text messages last night, I suspect my colleagues did as well, from people who received your text messaging saying, hey, is this true that there are 16-story buildings going on Miracle Mile, and I had to correct them and explain to them that that's not accurate. I understand why you would be concerned about that, if that were true, but its not accurate, its not happening, it will not happen. Its not even being discussed.

Mr. Holmes: First of all, I appreciate your giving me that reassurance and I don't know if you can understand this, but if you got yourself elected, I think you can. In my now, how long has it been, 20 years visiting City Hall and talking with people. I'm a perennial losing candidate for City Commissioner, but why did I even start? – because I was told half-truths or mistruths so many times that like someone who has been bitten by a snake is too many times. I'm afraid and to take anything...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Holmes your misinformation doesn't help.

Commissioner Mena: Mr. Holmes, if we approve 16-story buildings on Miracle Mile, I'll give you my word right now, I'll resign the next day.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We are not going to approve that. That has never been....

Commissioner Mena: That's not being discussed. Its not in there. Its not in the stratosphere of what's being discussed.

Mr. Holmes: I just will say one thing. On a televised thing with the Planning and Zoning, I heard people – see there are some people that are concerned about license. I have a license. I've tried to get a license that I couldn't get. You have a license. I think you are very conscientious about your

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ethics, not everybody is. I've heard people on televised Planning and Zoning, city officials, it's like saying, okay, we notified all the merchants, which was a lie.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Thank you very much Mr. Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And its not 16-stories, its 72 stories.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we do have two people now on Zoom who would like to speak.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mark Trowbridge please.

City Clerk Urquia: Mark Trowbridge would like to speak.

Mr. Trowbridge: Good morning Commissioners. I want to say thank you again for the opportunity to appear in person a few moments ago and receive our Proclamation for Small Business Saturday. Thank you as always for your great support of our Chamber and the programs we do in support of our local businesses. Just two comments. The first is, I want to thank the city and congratulate them on the outstanding work they have done to secure some grant dollars and will be working with each of you and Julian Perez in the Economic Development Department, to get those out to our local businesses by year end. So, I just want to say a huge congratulations. I know those dollars come from CARES Act dollars, coming through the county, so well done in securing that. I think that goes a long way in continuing to show, not only our collaboration, but that we are putting our business front and center in terms of their recovery. And second, a few minutes from now, you'll be talking a little bit about expansion of the city's Economic Development Board, something that the board has shown their support for, and certainly our Chamber and the opportunity to have a permanent seat for the Chamber and a voting seat in the expansion of that. So, I look forward to that conversation and ask for your support. And as always, thank you for your support of our Chamber.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you Mr. Trowbridge.

City Clerk Urquia: Vice Mayor, next is Mr. Javier Banos.

Vice Mayor Lago: Mr. Banos you have three minutes. Good morning.

Mr. Banos: Mr. Vice Mayor, good morning, Commissioners. I wanted to join Vice Mayor Lago this morning on once again congratulating the Suarez family, the Mayor, Suarez senior and junior. I was an appointee of theirs in the Civil Service Board of the City of Miami. I see what a wonderful family they are. What a close-knit family you are. I sat at their kitchen table of Mayor Lago's dad when they were running together to support him. So, they are a testament to this community and a testament to everyone in South Florida who has promoted our community and promoted public service. In addition to that, I did want to speak to one of the items presented, which is an item sponsored by Commissioner Keon on having the county pass a fertilizer ordinance. I believe it is

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the right move. I think it's a wonderful thing that the Commission is promoting the passage of this particular item to the County Commission. It should be adopted. I do, however, have something to say about the way its coming in. We passed a similar ordinance for fertilizer in February or March, I believe, of this year, which has significant exceptions to the way fertilizers were going to be used to a point, in my estimation, as to make it not effective, or at least diminishes effectiveness. And if we are going to talk the talk, we should walk the walk. I was present at the event that was hosted by Commissioner Keon, they very aptly pointed out the many items that need to be assisted by the bay, and its important that if we are going to go ahead and have those discussions, we also follow it with action. And in my estimation, with deference to the Commissioners, that action was lacking. When we passed our original ordinance and it should be beefed up to take away the exceptions that were there and really make it have some teeth, so that we can assist the county to pass it saving our bay. Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Okay. Our public comment section is closed.