

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C-3
August 26, 2014
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

Interim City Manager, Carmen Olazabal

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Major Raul Pedroso, Police Department

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item C-3 [Start: 9:32:19 a.m.]

A Resolution authorizing expenditures in the amount of \$136,895.21 from Federal Forfeited Asset Fund (F.A.F.) monies for the acquisition of additional law enforcement equipment; the specialized vehicle equipment for utilization by the Coral Gables Police Department.

Mayor Cason: Let's take up C-3.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you Mayor, I appreciate that. Should we read it on the record or...?

Mayor Cason: Item C-3 is A Resolution authorizing expenditures in the amount of \$136,895.21 from Federal Forfeited Asset Fund (F.A.F.) monies for the acquisition of additional law enforcement equipment; the specialized vehicle equipment for utilization by the Coral Gables Police Department.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you Mayor, appreciate that. If the Chief would be so kind to please stand and come up for a second? I have a few questions in regards to this issue. Can you give me a little bit more information in regards to Item C-3, if you'd be so kind?

Major Raul Pedroso: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, the Coral Gables Police Department for many years has known that we lacked the capability that we knew was necessary to respond appropriately to certain types of events. Specifically, by SWAT team our officers have – we do not have a vehicle, we never have, that offers any type of ballistic protection. We have no armament; armament meaning the ability to enter safely and if we were to take gun fire that the vehicle and what that vehicle is made up of would stop the rounds from entering. The other issue that we struggled with was, we don't have the capability in a vehicle to access areas that are affected by severe weather. So knowing this, over the years we have studied the possibility of procuring a vehicle that will provide this capability. Ballistic protection for our officers that we are sending into harm's way, and a vehicle that could navigate impassable roads, flooded areas, and be able to successfully get to areas in our community where people may need our assistance and our help following some type of a storm or weather-related event. The vehicles that we looked at that were available on the market to fit our needs, which were fairly basic in that realm of vehicle was about \$350,000, and it was out of reach, it was a lot of money and it was something that we felt was a high dollar amount. Then through the Military Surplus Program we identified this vehicle. It's referred to as the M-RAP; it's referred to as Mine Resistant Armored Platform Vehicle, but the reality is all it is, it's a ballistic vehicle that in layman's terms is bulletproof; it provides a capability because it is a high clearance vehicle and the way it's designed it can pass through 4 feet of water, it can push through debris, including down trees, it can go over trees, so we identified that vehicle, we went through the process and we went ahead and acquired two. Now they come – they are...they have no equipment on them, they have no weaponry affixed to them, nor do we have any plans or would we be attaching any weaponry to these vehicles. There really is just to afford us the ability to be able to take care of our citizens and protect our officers. As the Uniform Patrol Division Commander when I took this assignment three years ago, I really didn't have an appreciation for SWAT and what they do. I had never been on SWAT, I always considered myself a proactive officer, and I made a lot of arrests, but I had never been on SWAT, so I didn't know what they did and I had never been exposed to the level of danger that they face until I went out there as a Major my first night and I told this group of officers in a briefing that they were going to approach a house where we knew there were people inside that were known to be armed and that were dangerous; and so we went out to the site and I was safe a block away in a command vehicle and I watched our SWAT operators as they approached that residence in the middle of the night and in what we have now for them which is a Dodge Van. It's the same Dodge Van any of us could buy on the market today. And I had this feeling in my heart knowing these officers, knowing many of their families, feeling an obligation and a sense of responsibility for them and realizing that all that stands

between them and a danger that we know to exist is a plate of glass and aluminum. Since then over the last three years, I've continued to send the officers to situations just like that, people that are wanted, people that are dangerous, people that – there is a reason we are sending SWAT and not the regular patrol officers who are capable and will do it and they do it every day, but these are circumstances that are a little bit different. I feel we as a City, as a Police Department, as leadership in the agency have an obligation to our officers. We know that there is a capability that's out there, it's available and in my opinion it's irresponsible to not take care of them when we can. So that's one issue is the armament, the ballistic capability. The other issue is weather related. We've been exposed here to many different storms; we are very vulnerable to that. We remember Hurricane Andrew. There was quite a bit of time that went by that we could not access certain areas within the City and what we know when these storms come in is, it's kind of everybody is on their own, every City has to take care of their own. We in Coral Gables we take care of our own and we do a lot to plan for those storms and we've learned through the years and we've gotten better and better at it, but the one thing we still don't have is that capability in the middle of a storm or immediately following a storm to access areas that are affected. I can speak to you personally, when Hurricane Katrina came in one evening, it wasn't expected to be a big storm. I happen to be the Shift Commander working that night and it was just me and a small group of officers, the regular group that would have shown up on any given night, and that storm came in a lot stronger than we had anticipated. During that night the Fire Department was no longer able to go out because of their vehicles and the nature of the winds. We received three calls that night. One was a person that was believed to be injured laying in the road at Ponce and Bird; an hour later we received another call from a woman desperate because she was in her vehicle stuck in a whole and the vehicle was taking on water and she had her six year old child in the vehicle with her and she was pleading for help; and then later on that night we had another situation where there was believed to be a burglary happening and we responded in our police cars to all three of those calls. It was very dangerous; we were not equipped for it. The call where the woman was taking on water, the first police car that got there fell in the same environment and then he was taking on water, and we basically had to use other police cars to do a rescue of that officer and then get to the family. More recently, two years ago, we had a situation where we had just a strong rain event and that evening a police car and a fire engine were flooded and were not able to access the roads in the areas that they were trying to get through. So this vehicle that we have acquired, these two vehicles what is the purpose?- and what is the intent? There really is capability. I understand the feeling when you look at something like this and I understand what the conversation is now nationally. Are we militarizing our police force?- why are we militarizing our police force? It's not about militarizing our police force, it's an opportunity. These vehicles brand new cost \$730,000-something odd dollars. We are acquiring these vehicles, we are equipping them to meet our needs as a vehicle that is of a defensive nature, as a vehicle that can be utilized to rescue people, to access areas devastated or flooded, to protect our officers. We are not putting weapons on them, obviously officers getting

in them are going to have weapons, we do that every day. So these vehicles which brand new would cost over \$700,000, once they are fully equipped if this FAF request is approved, they are going to be anywhere between \$80,000 to \$96,000, total cost. So what I would like to talk about is, to really think about before we make a decision, because this is an important decision. I want you all to understand, right now if there is a situation where there is an active shooter or there is a situation, where there is someone lying in the road and there is somebody behind that person shooting at the approaching vehicles, the Coral Gables Police Department does not have that capability to render aid. We cannot get to that building, we cannot get to that person, we don't have it. I have felt it when I have watched the videos when we train and we look at the videos of officers. It's been a while now, but the Bank of America shooting in Los Angeles, there were officers taking gun fire, there were civilians taking gun fire, and there was a female officer lying in the roadway and they could not get to her. The LAPD as large as they are, as equipped as they are, could not get to them because they did not have a vehicle of this nature and that officer lay there until finally an officer was able to flag down a brinks truck and they were able to utilize it to rescue that officer. We hear time and time again about active shooter situations. I believe that we need to have the equipment ready and the vehicle ready, so that we can do that rescue, so that we can safely get our officers to that building or that school or that environment, so that they can do their jobs and render aid and eliminate the threat. We need to be able to get in the middle of a storm to somebody that's calling for help and there is no one else to respond to them. So these vehicle provide that, they are no different really in their look than any other tactical vehicle that's been on the market that many departments all over the country use; and I feel that ultimately understanding the climate that we are under right now having faith and trust in the leadership of the Police Department in that we are going to guide and direct our officers accordingly, that we are going to deploy this vehicle responsibly, I believe our actions throughout the history of the Coral Gables Police Department demonstrate that we are a responsible agency, that we treat people the right way, we are proud of how we treat people and how we interact with the community, and we want to be able to do our jobs and do it safely. I'll take any questions that you have.

Mayor Cason: What caliber bullet can that resist? Right now some of the bad guys have up to what?- sub-machine guns, they've got all kinds of heavy caliber weapons.

Major Pedroso: That vehicle can stop the standard 223 round and then some. The 223 is something that we are seeing on the streets in this community, fortunately not in Coral Gables anytime recently, but definitely our neighboring cities and jurisdictions have been experiencing it very recently. A similar vehicle was used by the Marian County Sherriff's office in June, they were approaching a house to serve a warrant, the individual came out and used a high-powered rifle striking the windshield three times. That vehicle had the entire SWAT team in it and

fortunately the glass stopped all the rounds. So that vehicle exceeds that capability, but at a minimum it protects against that type of caliber rifle.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor if I may, I have a few questions. First, you used a key word, and that was what was in the best interest of the City and it's our obligation. That's why I ran for public office, it's my obligation to make sure that when \$136,000 ticket item, which is not again coming from the taxpayers of the City, but again it's coming from the FAF monies. I need to make sure that I pull the item and I find out why we are going to spend \$136,000, even though that money is not coming from taxpayer money. I have had a conversation with many individuals, residents, police officers in reference to this vehicle, because I'm a little concerned. I'm concerned like you mentioned before in regards to the militarization of our police force and I'm not the only one – "60 Minutes", this past Sunday ABC News. Fox News, CNN have had multiple shows and I just happen to catch 60 Minutes on Sunday and the show was about this exactly. I have very simple questions; my questions are not against the police force. I believe to be a big proponent of what the police does, I'm extremely grateful for the police officers in this community. I know that my colleagues are also, but I want to make sure that the perception of what a police officer is and their duties are not muddled or not vague. We are not Army, we are not police, we are not the Navy, we are not the Marines, we are servicing this community and we are protecting this community. I have a few questions for you. If we are going to spend \$136,000, you said that's just for the armament of the existing vehicle that we are supposedly getting that we purchased already, correct?

Major Pedroso: No. The \$136,000 FAF request is specific equipment that will make that vehicle – it will give us the ability to use that vehicle how....

Commissioner Lago: It's not for the purchase of the vehicle. It's the armament of the existing vehicle.

Major Pedroso: No, it's not armament. Its sensory and communications equipment, specifically there is a device that's going to be used, its thermal imaging to be able to see – let's say it's a situation where there is a SWAT deployment and we have someone hiding in an area, they could be hiding in a neighborhood, they could be hiding not that we have them here too much, but we do have them in the south end wooded area, this device would be able to see a great distance, identify thermal imaging to include footsteps, enhance prints, if they were moving on the ground we could follow their track; and also in an event obviously following a natural disaster or some type of other event where we would need to do search and rescue, we could deploy that vehicle and with that equipment be able to scan through debris, buildings, and identify somebody that could be trapped or that we are searching for.

Commissioner Lago: Let me also put on the record that Items C-4, C-5, C-6 and C-7 are also FAF monies, which were not pulled which we obviously as a Commission don't have any issues with. We see that as a necessity so you continue serving your day-to-day. How many of these vehicles do we have?- do we have 1, 2, 3?- how many do we have currently?

Major Pedroso: We have two, but if I can go back because I didn't finish answering the other question, which is the other equipment that's part of the FAF. So it's that device, there is another device that allows us to amplify so that if we are doing any type of situation, we need to amplify our voice. Also natural disaster, post storm, we are trying to communicate, give messages or even in a situation for whatever reason we need to amplify a message, which we do that following a storms and different things, we have that ability, and then the radio equipment, because these vehicles are loud when they run similar to the fire engines, we have to have devices, communication devices and such so all the officers can talk to each other, similarly like a helicopter where they have the headsets on and they are all talking on some type of frequency. So we have two vehicles.

Commissioner Lago: OK. Perfect. How many times have you deployed the existing vehicle?

Major Pedroso: We have not deployed it. We have not deployed either vehicle.

Commissioner Lago: So you haven't deployed the existing vehicle which we have already and then we are requesting a second vehicle?

Major Pedroso: We have both vehicles. We have acquired both vehicles. One has already been painted and the outside of it...

Commissioner Lago: Does that have an armament also that can block?

Major Pedroso: They are both the same vehicle.

Commissioner Lago: OK. So we have already an existing vehicle, which you've already spent monies from FAF funds, correct?- to – is that vehicle already been retrofitted to your capabilities and your needs or no?

Major Pedroso: So we have two vehicles...

Commissioner Lago: OK.

Major Pedroso: One has been painted, it's got the police lights on it, and the inside has been worked on. The other vehicle hasn't been painted yet and they both need the communications equipment – the FAF you have before you is the equipment for both vehicles. Neither vehicle is complete, neither vehicle has been deployed. We've been training with it and training our operators to drive the vehicle, so that we are ready to utilize it, but right now we are still using the van.

Commissioner Lago: Have you ever had a call for that first vehicle to be taken out because let's say in reference to an active shooter that was required? How long have you had that vehicle for?

Major Pedroso: I think that vehicle – well we've had the vehicles now I think since they came in March and I think the one's that pointed now, I want to say early June, mid-June is when it was finished being painted, the other one still needs to be painted, and now we are waiting for the FAF to be able to – we can't deploy the vehicle right now effectively because we don't have the equipment on it or the communications capability.

Commissioner Lago: But that \$136,000 is that for one vehicle or for both?

Major Pedroso: Both. It's for the technology that's needed to be able to utilize that vehicle.

Commissioner Lago: And let me ask you another question. How heavy are these vehicles? because you just mentioned something that I didn't even think about before. You know I've heard and something that Vice Mayor Kerdyk has been very passionate about in regards to our bridges. I know we've had problems in regards to the fire trucks not being able to go over certain bridges because of the weight, the load. How heavy are these M-RAP vehicles?

Major Pedroso: I can't tell you the exact weight, but I know that we've already examined the weight and the people that worked on this project; the weight is far less than our fire engines, our standard fire engine.

Commissioner Lago: OK. And the most important question of all and this is why I brought up the issue of \$136,000. Do you think that this money could potentially be used for something that's a little bit more day-to-day operations? For example, new police cars, new computers, something that maybe the police 191 strong can maybe use on a day-to-day to make their lives easier and to serve and protect and amplify that ability, instead of building two vehicles that I think would see very limited use. I understand having one vehicle, but two vehicles I think to me is just a little excessive in regards to \$136,000, we could use that monies especially when times are tight and this money comes from FAF monies instead of tax monies, maybe we could

redirect some of those funds to provide maybe a new squad car, maybe some computer upgrades, maybe some uniform upgrades.

Major Pedroso: So to answer your question. One, FAF there are limitations; we can't use it for, in many cases we can't it for things that we normally budget. But to get to your point, I'm all about making things easier and better for our offices, I'm an advocate for our department and every man and woman that works in our agency. But I can tell you with every confidence that I have that there is no greater need right now than providing a capability for our officers of this nature. I tell you and this isn't about drama, it's not about trying to paint some type of picture for any purpose other than it is what it is. This afternoon this very minute we could have a situation where our officers are called out to approach a building where there is someone known inside to be armed, or there could be shooting happening. And if they go right now they are going in a Dodge Van.

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you a question. When you talk about that because you used the issue of active shooter. When you have an active shooter situation, isn't the police officer who engages that shooter aren't they required at that moment to engage the – so you are not waiting for the M-RAP vehicle to show up, you are already engaged.

Major Pedroso: No.

Commissioner Lago: Hold on give me one second. So if you are going to be in a situation where you are going to be driving the M-RAP vehicle around Coral Gables waiting for the shooting to occur, the M-RAP vehicle always shows up after the shooting has already occurred or when the active shooter is already taking place. I just want to clear that up because I know we have a long agenda today and I don't want to...but the bottom line is that, when I receive e-mails and when I receive phone calls from residents about this issue who have watched 60 Minutes on Sunday, who have watched – and it is a concern, it's my duty to bring it up today in the Commission. Again, please don't think my obligation is not the same as yours in regards to protecting the men and women who serve this community, because the last thing I want is to compromise their ability to do their jobs when I'm expecting my second child any moment today and there is nothing more important than my family, so that's the only reason why I bring it up.

Major Pedroso: So to answer your question. Active shooter – we have changed our tactics following Columbine nationally. We realized the days of just locking down a building or an area and waiting for the SWAT team, it was not effective because people are still vulnerable. They are being attacked, people are dying. So our training now is that we go in, if there is an active shooter we go in. It could be that first officer that gets there he is going in, he or she will go into that building. The situation that I'm talking about with this specific vehicle is a situation where

somebody or people are engaging officers that are approaching with gun fire. An active shooter yes, but a different situation, it's almost a sniper-type environment where our officers cannot approach safely. A situation where somebody is down on the ground, they are shot, they are hurt, they are trapped, active shooter training doesn't apply in that model, because in that situation we are sending our officers out in the open to be just shot, there is no opportunity to get to that person. So this type of vehicle is specific police work. Every call every situation we respond to is very fluid, it's very different, there is no real text book way to answer each and every call. We can only go plan the best that we can, train the best that we can, and equip our officers responsibly and appropriately based on our ability to do so. So the situations that we would utilize this vehicle its limited, it may not be every day, hopefully we never have to use that vehicle or those vehicles, but if we need to we should have that capability. We have it, it's there...

Commissioner Lago: Let's say before these vehicles existed in March, we currently don't have the capability to use the vehicles, so what do we do right now if you are in a situation where you need this type of machinery? You call in the County to bring their SWAT team and their militarized vehicles?- or their armed vehicles?- is that what we currently do?

Major Pedroso: So what we would do now is, what we do now is we send our SWAT team in.

Commissioner Lago: But the County doesn't come back and bring back....

Major Pedroso: I haven't finished my answer. So we send our SWAT team in, in the vehicles that they have. If it's something that is of a nature that we cannot responsibly direct our officers in then we will call for another agency and there are other agencies that have that capability, and we would wait for that agency to be able to deliver that vehicle and render aid to us and to the people that need the help.

Commissioner Keon: How do you get in and out of that vehicle?

Major Pedroso: It's actually just – you just step up on it. There are steps around it, there are steps around it. It really is – it's just a big truck that...

Commissioner Keon: A military vehicle.

Major Pedroso: It is.

Commissioner Keon: How you get in and out of it?- is it like through the top?---

Major Pedroso: No, no, no. There are doors on the side and there are two doors on the back and there are steps at every point of entry that lead into the vehicle.

Commissioner Keon: I truly share Commissioner Lago's concern about militarizing our police department and having military vehicles on our streets.

Commissioner Lago: I'm going to say that we – I'm going to make a motion to defer this item and I'm going to request the Police Chief come forth and bring a detailed breakdown, because I didn't know that you are going to be arming two vehicles with this.

Major Pedroso: I hate the word arming. We are using arming and military a lot and if I could just...

Commissioner Lago: Wait a minute let me finish, let me finish. I was in the middle of a statement. We are retrofitting a vehicle or two vehicles for \$136,895.21. What I need from you is for you to give me a detailed breakdown of what you plan in regards to retrofitting two existing vehicles and why you think it's prudent to not have one, but have two vehicles for the City of Coral Gables when we haven't ever used these vehicles, obviously because we haven't had the capabilities, but the reasoning behind it and bring it forth at the next Commission meeting or...

Major Pedroso: Well, I can talk to...if you'd like....

Commissioner Lago: If you want to discuss it now, I think we've taken enough time on the issue. I think what's in the best interest of the City as a whole is that you provide that information to the City Manager, she disseminates that information to all of us and we bring it forth at the next Commission meeting. I think that's what's in the best light, unless the Vice Mayor, the Mayor or my colleagues have another idea, I'm more than willing to...

Commissioner Quesada: I agree with your motion. I want to see it in writing because what we were provided was limited. From my understanding these funds, these are federal funds, it's not coming directly out of our everyday coffers, this is coming from the federal government, but I want to know how we came to the decision of applying those funds to the M-RAP, I'm sorry, the acronym I don't have a clue what it is, and what other options do we consider for the police force to use those monies towards. So my understanding of the federal funds is we can apply them to police law enforcement services. I don't know the details of it. Educate us a little bit on what we can use those monies for exactly, and if this is the highest and best use for those funds then that's what it is. I guess what I'm hearing from Commissioner Lago, which I agree with Commissioner Keon is, we just want to make sure it's the highest and best use of these funds and what other options could there have been, if this is something again, knock on wood, we don't obviously

want to run into a situation, but we've never needed a vehicle like this as far as I can remember. I guess the Vice Mayor would be more appropriate to speak about it, but obviously it doesn't mean it can't happen in the future and we shouldn't be prepared. I understand your argument. The point is in 25 years we've never had to use anything, so I just want to make sure it's the highest and best use of these funds to really make our Police Department more efficient and really assist everyone.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I would like to answer that or react to that. First of all, you make a very compelling argument as far as with the natural disaster. I can remember my aunt actually having a very serious issue during Hurricane Andrew and they couldn't get to her. Just to be able to use these vehicles to get through those streets, which of course as we all know we have a lot of trees in the City of Coral Gables and navigate through those trees, streets, make it very compelling for me to support this. I have no problem waiting, deferring so we can see more in fact, but what I would like you to do is go ahead and explain why we need two vehicles as opposed to one vehicle, and I understand the fact is we practically got these things given to us. Really there was no outstanding cost up front here whatsoever, if it was it was minimal, but maybe you could go ahead and tell us a little bit about why you feel it's important that we have two vehicles as opposed to one that is fully equipped.

Mayor Cason: In that respect as well, we already have two vehicles, right?

Major Pedroso: We have them.

Mayor Cason: So that's a fact. The question – this is electronic equipment so you can use them in the unlikely – or possibly more likely a hurricane situation and I know we could have bank robberies and other things here in Coral Gables where they might be useful, so it's to be precise we own them already, so it's not a question of us buying. It's putting electronic equipment of the type that you described on these vehicles, so that they can be used and protect officers in a situation that they have to get close to with shooting, or something is going on and save their lives.

Major Pedroso: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: I have a question also. How much money has already been spent on these vehicles? I understand its a couple \$100,000 that has already been spent?

Major Pedroso: No, no, no, no. So far, we've spent ballpark about \$25,000 for both vehicles and part of that cost hasn't been spent yet. The \$25,000 is the transaction fee, which was \$2,000 for each vehicle, and we also spent another \$4-6,000 to transport them because we had to bring them

to the City and then the remaining balance was the cost of painting them and putting the lights on the outside.

Commissioner Keon: What color are they?

Major Pedroso: One's black – the one we painted is black, the other one is still the military paint.

Commissioner Keon: Why don't you paint them white and put the blue stripes on them like our police cars?

Major Pedroso: Well that's a good question. So, we talked a lot about painting them and with police work – you know police work sometimes it is – what we use is our tactics and there is a reason we wear the uniforms that we do and we respond the way that we do and a lot of times you have one officer or a small group of officers or you are engaging an environment and there is a psychological impact that you are trying to make on the people that you are approaching, if they are bad people. You have to – there is a science behind it, there is a reason for it, it would be like us wearing the red blazers that some departments used to wear back in the 70's as opposed to a police uniform; and so the vehicles are the same way. Your hope is that when you approach a residence where there is somebody armed or there is a building or somebody is shooting. Just by seeing, just by the presence alone of that vehicle that it's going to impact them so that they most likely surrender, stop resisting, or that they feel these people mean business, this is the real deal, and so. Sometimes the friendlier something looks it may be better for the public as far as perception, but it's not as effective when you are dealing with a dangerous encounter.

Commissioner Keon: Maybe you can share that research with me.

Major Pedroso: OK.

Mayor Cason: And one more clarification. These things are not going to be roaming around the City; they are going to be used only in the event that they have to take people safely to and even other than a natural disaster where people are firing on your officers.

Major Pedroso: It would be utilized for – first of all there would be a directive in place. As it is right now that vehicle doesn't move unless its approve at my level or the Chief's level, and it would be used for encounters such as a SWAT situation where we are approaching a residence where we know or believe there to be a hostile or violent people inside or a rescue type situation, active shooter type situation where we are taking fire from a building and a natural disaster. It would not be used to just drive up and down the streets; it would not be used in any way – that's not our plan to utilize that.

Commissioner Keon: Does our motor pool have the ability to work on and repair – do we have parts and everything that’s needed for a military vehicle?

Major Pedroso: At the end of the day the mechanics are the same as the mechanics that they deal with, with the large trucks at the motor pool, and as far as parts, those parts are readily available on the market. My understanding is just like any other vehicle, there is a market for the parts and they are able to maintain them.

Commissioner Lago: For next Commission meeting maybe you can address the following items also. I just want to make sure – Number one, get me hard data in regards to our bridges. I need to make sure that if for some reason we may have to use these vehicles one day active shooter or not, I want to make sure that we are not hindered by the fact that we can’t go over a certain bridge due to load capacity, that’s number one; and number two, I also need to make sure, you need to give me some height clearances because as we all know in the City of Coral Gables we have beautiful canopies on certain streets. Now am I willing to compromise on canopies to save a life?- 110 percent, that’s not even in question, but I want to make sure that your vehicle doesn’t have an issue let’s say going over Coral Way where some of the....

Major Pedroso: The vehicles they are not higher than the trucks that already navigate through the City.

Commissioner Lago: Just want to make sure, that’s why I’m asking those questions.

Major Pedroso: And one of the things that we can do if you are open to it is arrange for all of you to see it. I think you’ll have a better appreciation once you see it and can get in it and understand what it looks like.

Mayor Cason: Why don’t we....

Commissioner Lago: Yes, we’ll bring it back.

Commissioner Keon: Your data and research on the color of those.

City Attorney Leen: Mr. Mayor, you know I’m actually one of the members of the FAF Committee and what I will do is I will provide you because I think the Commission’s input is important going forward. So what I will do is I will provide you a guide that the Attorney General of the United States prepares, which indicates all – how this money can be used and then you can in the future, I will make sure to interact with you directly over the items....

Commissioner Lago: Craig that's a great idea.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: I'm very grateful for that because what we can do is we can look at what's permissible and we can speak with the police to see what their active needs are and then maybe we can come to some sort of accord because I think that's essential. I don't even know what's acceptable right now in regards to FAF monies.

City Attorney Leen: I just want to make sure you know what the money can be used for and that you can provide the input to the Manager, to myself, to the police, because ultimately it's your decision.

Mayor Cason: But let's bring it back. But for the record I'm satisfied how you explained what the use will be. I'm going to be supporting it. I have enough information now. I don't look at these as military vehicles in the context you are going to use them. Regardless of the way the press looks at them, anything that protects our officers whether it's arms wear or helps during natural disasters I'm in favor of, so bring back whatever you need to do and we'll talk about it again, but I will be supporting it the next time.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: By the way, protects our officers and protects our residents and business owners. It's just the time when you say it's never happened that it happens.

Major Pedroso: I appreciate your questions and we'll bring that information back.

Commissioner Keon: But I think the issue or one of the issues that we are dealing with is, is this militarization of your police force?- and we know that there are vehicles that would do the same thing, we know that there are armored vehicles because the police officers absolutely should be protected, and you don't want them to be targets when they don't need to be, and so we should have the capability to be able to send officers into danger knowing that they do have protection of an armored car or whatever else. Traditionally, and at least as of today, that's what we see on our streets, that's what we expect on our streets. The presence of military vehicles on our streets has truly has a real effect on – are we policing or are we doing battle?- and yes, you may say we are doing battle with people that do wrong, but you know is that the appropriate vehicle within a City?- are there other choices that will be a more, that will provide us with the same protection and provide you with the same protection that better belongs on a City street? You know when you look at military vehicles, you have a sense that you are fighting an enemy and a lot of times in crowd control or whatever else these are your residents, these are your people who have the

right to protest. There are better ways to deal with it than making them the enemy. And I know that we got these for practically nothing, so there was a monetary consideration in doing this, but I also think we need to think about what is overall is in the best interest of our City, and yes you should be protected, but we also have to maintain a certain behavior within our City. We don't do battle on our streets, and that's a concern with that particular type of vehicle, and particularly if we paint them like military vehicles you know. I would tell you to paint it pink and put flowers on them (laughter), but you know paint them pink....

Major Pedroso: Yes, we can do that (laughter).

Commissioner Keon: Or paint them like a police vehicle, but do what you need to do to actually take away the militarization of these vehicles because they certainly understand their value here, but it's the issue of them being – you see them on the streets of Ukraine, you see them on the streets in Israel and in Gaza and in places that are war-torn, we don't want an image of a war-torn community, we are not. So, I would ask you to maybe give that some thought and maybe talk among yourselves, if you are going to go forward with these vehicles how do we make them not look so military?

Major Pedroso: OK.

Commissioner Keon: And I would like your research about the colors and everything else, it's like the back car.

Major Peddroso: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Commissioner Keon: Alright. Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

[End: 10:11:54 a.m.]