

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item M – Discussion Items
June 12, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item M – Discussion Items [7:12:15 p.m.]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anything else to come before the meeting?

City Attorney Ramos: One item.

Commissioner Mena: Can I just circle back. Obviously, I missed some items this morning; I don't need to go back to all of them. There was one in particular, H-6, which was sponsored by Commissioner Lago about the Kendall Parkway, which I think is important and symbolic. Can I add my vote in support of that at this time or no?

City Attorney Ramos: That's fine. You can add it, it's a resolution.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Billy can you do me a favor. I just want to make sure my colleagues are aware of it. I want to send that to all the cities and the County Commissioners as soon as possible, because they vote on June 20th, so get that information out there.

City Attorney Ramos: I'd like to provide an update. The union provided four names to my office. Of the four names, I have looked into the experience of the four investigators. The person that I believe is most qualified and beyond reproach is Robert Martinez. He was the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida for many years. He is very well respected. Mr. Martinez has agreed to do the work for free, pro bono to the City. He is very much into public service and he would like to provide that to the City. The only thing we would have to pay is his actual cost and then he would like to hire an investigator to do the leg work and we would pay the hourly rate for that investigator.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's very good.

Commissioner Mena: That's incredible news.

Commissioner Lago: Let's at least take him to lunch.

City Attorney Ramos: I think the Commission should know that and that he should get credit for that and I will be engaging him by the end of this week

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Of course.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you. That's great news. That's an incredible candidate/person.

Commissioner Lago: If anybody's bored and wants to...

Vice Mayor Quesada: For him since he's doing such a great service. If we are going to have a Magistrate opening or anything and he wants to participate, just keep him in mind.

City Attorney Ramos: Yes. He'll certainly be qualified. I'm not sure that he's interested, but of course.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Maybe.

Commissioner Lago: As if he has enough time available.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Or maybe he could be retired, if he wants to.

Commissioner Lago: So Thursday, June 12th 6 to 7 (p.m.), if you'd like to come out, we'd love to have you, Town Hall meeting.

Commissioner Mena: When?- Thursday.

Commissioner Lago: Thursday, 6 to 7 (p.m.).

Commissioner Mena: Not this Thursday, next Thursday?

Commissioner Lago: No, no, no, it's this Thursday, this Thursday. It ends at 7.

Vice Mayor Quesada: You are quite busy.

Commissioner Lago: I'm busy, I'm busy. It ends at 7. So, I welcome everyone to come and attend. We are going to have great speakers. Going to have Xavier Suarez, going to speak for brief, we are going to try to make sure he keeps it very brief. We are going to have; the City Manager is going to have a positive outlook on Coral Gables financial economic, neighborhood safety update from the Chief. Frank Fernandez will not be able to be there. Citywide improvement projects, Peter Iglesias will be discussing that and then we'll just have an open forum, open forum for about 30 minutes and we'll be able to discuss – I'd also like your support and consideration for Rhonda Anderson. I would like to appoint her to the Planning and Zoning Board, starting immediately, starting tomorrow, if possible.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK.

Commissioner Lago: I think we need to ratify that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: All those in favor?

All: Aye.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Opposed.

Commissioner Lago: Great attorney, very qualified, lives in the City. She used to be on the Sustainability Advisory Board. I will obviously have to find somebody to fill her role. She's great.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: May I suggest somebody?

Commissioner Lago: Of course. Give me a name.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Steve McCleary.

Commissioner Lago: Steve McCleary – can you give me his contact information and I'll write him an e-mail or just get in contact with him? Perfect...for Sustainability. Let's do it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Anything else?

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes. Whatever happened – you say Rhonda it makes me think of solar panels. We had discussed a while back, maybe tried to file suit with what South Miami had done with new projects or renovations requiring mandatory solar panels. I'm miss-remembering. What happened with that?

Commissioner Lago: I think we had discussed it really quickly, but I think if we are going to make that type of mandate, we have to consider whether it should be a mandate or should be a tax incentive and I'd like to just have some public input on that issue.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Can we have Matt...?

Commissioner Lago: Because again, it cost money. You and I did it, but it cost, you know it's an additional...

City Attorney Ramos: I have a vague recollection to on some state involvement on this issue that we need to look at.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Actually what I'd rather do, you don't have to bring it to the Commission yet. I'd like to do a one-on-one with Matt and discuss it with him.

Commissioner Lago: Bring it up.

Vice Mayor Quesada: But, I want to flush it out and bring it back to the Commission.

Commissioner Lago: And just to dovetail on that comment.

Vice Mayor Quesada: You may have brought it up in a meeting.

Commissioner Lago: You had brought it up and we had discussed it. But for example, another thing we are working on and I discussed this with the City Manager and it was actually her idea, was the issue of a tax incentive for straws. Instead of banning straws, let's find a tax incentive, let's not ban...

Commissioner Mena: Positive pressure.

Commissioner Lago: Positive – let's be positive. Plastic bags was a big move, but you don't want to be the guy who bans everything, you know. But, there's got to be – we have to find a little way to be a little more positive.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anything else?

Commissioner Keon: Yes. I would like one moment to respond. I just went through these e-mails. Let me tell you. I find it – I could not understand for one minute why anybody would take any concern or interest in any e-mail that is in this packet that has my name on it, and for you to sit here and to attack someone who is our CEO of our City and to carry on the way you have, I think it's truly uncalled for, truly uncalled for.

Commissioner Lago: Let me respond to you. Let me respond to you. If you were not copied on these e-mails and you didn't know that there was an outside consultant that happened to be

working in the City under the Manager's auspice, paid and you did not see one. By the way, there are 1,700 e-mails, I just gave you probably, I don't know, I gave you 50 e-mails.

Commissioner Keon: A copy of the same e-mail.

Commissioner Lago: Mistakes happen – mistakes happen. But the point is...

Commissioner Keon: They are nothing. There's like nothing in there.

Commissioner Lago: But to you it may not be nothing, but at the end of the day, that is...I think we are done. Thank you. I'm not going to disrespect you like that. You mock me.

Commissioner Keon: I didn't mock you.

Commissioner Lago: You are. You are talking under your breath and you are mocking me. I have too much respect for you Commissioner. I can't do it.

Commissioner Keon: And I'm going to tell you. I don't know every attorney that is an outside attorney under the City Attorney's office, I don't know who they are. I'm going to imagine that I have faith in her, she credible, she's good, she has integrity. I'm going to assume that she has them because she needs them. It's not an outrageous expense. I know that Public Works does peer review. They go out; they hire people that assist them in their jobs. They have budgets for that also. Every one of the departments in this City does and the Manager is certainly entitled to someone that assists her with communication if that person has expertise in that area and represents multiple cities as well as does messaging to the level he does. I don't know. No more than I would attack her about her outside attorneys, Public Works about their peer review, and any other department in the City would I think it is appropriate that you would attack her. That's the issue.

Commissioner Mena: But there does need to be a line, Commissioner Keon, I think that's important. Our City Attorney can have an attorney representing her personal interest legally. Those are attorneys she hires, if I could finish, those attorneys she hires are representing the City in City matters; and so, we need to take care and I said this to the City Manager last night to just be mindful of that line. If it's a communication like the communications that were put up there about the City or about issues that we have taken action on and the messaging behind that, I think that's a perfectly appropriate use of that type of consultant and communications person. If it's about who she is individually dealing with us that's different.

Commissioner Keon: With me it's how do you respond to issues within the City. She is asking someone to help her with their grocery list; I think that that is terribly...I think if you are asking somebody in the performance of your job, you know, I think she deserves that discretion.

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you a question.

Commissioner Mena: I think the person who lives down the street who is paying taxes to this City and whose tax dollars are being used by the City needs to be given a good reason why those dollars are being spent, and that person probably doesn't give a crap who our City Manager is, who our Commissioners are, who our Mayor is, they may not care.

Commissioner Keon: They don't even know.

Commissioner Mena: They may not care. So, there is a line between our dealings with each other on issues, controversial issues that come up that impact us individually in different ways and things that are city issues in communications and we need to respect that line.

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely. I do too....requires not much...that it is more appropriate than you go in and you sit down with whomever is the director, whoever it is, whether it's the City Attorney, whether it's the Clerk, or whether it's the Manager and you have that conversation with them before you publicize and go to the lengths and extent that you do.

Commissioner Lago: What do you mean publicize to the lengths? Let me answer you first off. I don't appreciate the fact you say that I attacked the Manager. The Manager is in a position of authority. She is the CEO of this company. She needs to be held accountable just like everybody else here, OK, because we are held accountable every single two and four years when we run for public office, because you've been up there in the debate and they've been peppering you with very tough questions; and if you think I'm attacking her, I'm the consummate gentleman. But the problem is, is you don't like what I'm talking about and that's OK, but that's OK, but don't say that I'm attacking her because that's just not, that doesn't look good on your behalf. I'm being a gentleman in regards...

Commissioner Keon: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Lago: Listen and Commissioner, I'm being a gentleman about this consultant and his involvement with other people on this Commission and all the things that are going on that in my opinion, are inappropriate. We should not hire campaign consultants that work for other people on this Commission even if it's not an election time or not, it's just not a good look. I'm sorry. Maybe my colleagues don't agree or they do agree. Do you agree?

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: No.

Commissioner Lago: OK. But, you've got three people that agree on this Commission, so the point is; don't say I'm attacking somebody. Is this out of the norm for Vince Lago to be a little stern?- yes, but you know what, before you brought it back up again, I went back to giving the Manager credit and try to be a nice guy and the problem is that sometimes we've got to put tough things out there, so they are corrected, and all I've asked for is very simple things, called consideration and respect, consideration and respect, because everybody on this dais if you look around and you look back at the minutes, it's always Mr. Mayor may I, always giving every

single person on this Commission the deference and the respect that they deserve. Give it back to me; just give it back to me that's all I ask for.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Everybody deserves that.

Commissioner Lago: Everybody deserves respect.

Commissioner Keon: Everyone deserves it – everyone.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Meeting adjourned.

[End: 7:23:49 p.m.]