

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-2
May 9, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz
Community Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro
Assistant Community Recreation Director, Carolina Vester

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Linda Stevens
Michelle White
Albert Sanchez

Agenda Item G-2 [10:41 a.m.]
Update on Burger Bob's and Coral Gables Country Club.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)
(Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

City Commission Meeting
May 9, 2023
Agenda Item G-2 - Update on Burger Bob's and Coral Gables Country Club.

Mayor Lago: If there's nothing further, and we'll move to a 10:30 time certain, item -- Agenda Item G-2. Okay, so this is an item that I sponsored along with my colleagues, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Fernandez, Commissioner Menendez, discussing the issue of Burger Bob's and where we are today in regards to the country club. Mr. Clerk, Mr. Manager, would you like to provide us with a little bit of a brief update? Have the...

City Manager Iglesias: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Diaz, good morning, sir.

Public Works Director Diaz: Good morning. How are you?

Mayor Lago: Would you like to provide us just a quick update because we're getting a bunch of calls. I know that we're moving forward with -- we assigned a contractor, we have a design in place. How are things going?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, I -- the Public Works Director and the Parks Director are here to (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

City Manager Iglesias: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Billy, presentation? We're having some difficulties?

Public Works Director Diaz: Yeah, I guess we're having some technical difficulties. So...

Mayor Lago: We move forward.

Public Works Director Diaz: That's all right. So, the design is probably over 90 percent completed.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: We're in the process of finalizing some tweaks relative to public input, color scheme, some minor things about the location of certain tables and things that is being changed, some finishes for the building. Also, at the request of the Commission, we're making it solar ready, so solar panels could be added in the future. It's been -- it's being worked on, it's going to happen. It's been -- the electrical room is kind of small, so making sure everything fits has been a challenge. But we should have a permit set of drawings, with permits probably within the next two to three months, more or less.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: And we're in the process of evaluating bids so...

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, if I -- if I just want to put...

Public Works Director Diaz: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Something in the record because I face this every single day having -- being in the construction industry. I just want to -- give me a little bit of background just to prepare my colleagues. We're seeing some pretty significant increases in regards to kitchen equipment right now.

Public Works Director Diaz: And timeline as well. And the -- actually construction schedule most likely is going to be driven by the availability of some of this equipment. We've already done

some inquiries, and you're looking at the -- certain stuff that may take at least six months just to be available. And obviously, the -- certain things that, you know, that maybe certain brands that are available. So, you know, they're looking into that, but it's certainly -- it's -- you know, the environmental -- I think the environment's a little better than it was several months ago, but it's still challenging with anything that has to do with construction as far as the availability of certain stuff. And we also -- we apply for a grant, so maybe we'll be able to add the solar from the get-go, but we don't really know exactly how that time is going to work. As soon as we have that information, we're more than happy to share it with the Commission.

Mayor Lago: If you could do me one favor, just for my colleagues, where I know they're well aware of what's been going on, they've been following it for the last year. Just give them a little information, not today, but you know, on their own time, when they're available, at their convenience, just in regards to the process from the moment that we started, the Commission's point in regards to what we've always wanted to see as now their driving policy here. Maybe they have some guidance, maybe they have some input, maybe they can offer, you know, some contacts to assist us through this process. Everything that we've done is to try to alleviate the time to push forward and bring Burger Bob's back. We've gone to the community, and we've had public comment. How many times have we had public comment?

Public Works Director Diaz: Oh, Burger -- I mean we went...

Mayor Lago: Just tell me, I just want to put it on the record.

Community Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, we just -- we recently went.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes, we did.

Mayor Lago: Recently went. We recently went with Parks and Recreation. I remember that.

Public Works Director Diaz: And we're making some adjustments based on those comments.

Mayor Lago: And that's all I wanted to hear. That's all I wanted to make sure that my colleagues on the Commission were aware of and that they can give their input and their guidance. And if they have any contacts in the construction industry, design, if they know -- you know, sometimes people have interesting contacts. If you have a contact in the kitchen equipment, you know, they want to offer us -- they want to offer us a discount, I would love -- I would love to see that because to me that is something that right now is going to be probably one of the most expensive things that we face. The increases, from what I'm seeing for the schools that we build, we're seeing a potential 50 to 60 percent increase in pricing over one year.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Over one year.

Commissioner Fernandez: Now, I think there's a bit of a disconnect in the message you're sending today and the message we got last night. At the town hall last night, the Manager was asked, and he said, if the Commission makes this a priority, we'll get it done quickly. But what you're telling us now is we're already in the process. So where's the disconnect between what you said last night and what you're telling us today?

Mayor Lago: Can I -- can I answer that, Commissioner?

Commissioner Fernandez: Well, I mean...

Mayor Lago: I can answer it for you because I want to answer that because I -- I'm the -- we took the vote. So, a few Commission meetings ago, we decided to not go through an RFP or RFQ process to hire a contractor for the Burger Bob's site. We went with the contractor that was already hired for next door, that would expedite the process so we wouldn't have to go through the RFQ

process and all that kind of stuff. That's what we're going through right now. In regards to expediting it, I'm going to tell you what I think is going to be the expediting process. Is this a financial priority in the budget process? Because of the cost overruns that we've seen, as you're aware, we've seen as you've done renovations and you've seen when you thought something was \$5,000, it's turning out to be \$8,000. So, it's going to have to be -- this Commission is going to have to make a decision and say, okay, this is how much revenue we have. This is the money that is coming to the City of Coral Gables. What is the priority? Is Burger Bob's a priority? Or are we going to put more money into the pension from \$6 million last year to \$8.5 million? Are we going to do sidewalks? Are we going to do more sidewalks, more traffic calming? Because there's only so much limited money. And that's my understanding from what -- the conversation we've had was I want to get Burger Bob's done now. I want to get it completed.

Commissioner Fernandez: What is the current cost estimate for Burger Bob's?

City Manager Iglesias: If I may answer that, we are just about complete as far as the plans are concerned. The only thing that we had -- that we have left is some color selections and also some minor work to prepare for (INAUDIBLE). We went with this plan, which we can easily negotiate those two items. We went to obtain prices. We received our final bid Friday afternoon, in which we are evaluating those bids now. So, as the Mayor said, this will be part of the decision package as to what we move forward with. We've had escalation in construction at extremely high level, as the Mayor said, 50, 60 percent. This is not inflation. This is price escalation due to supply chain issues. So, this -- so we will have the bids evaluated this week, and we'll know what the magnitude of that change is. But as the Mayor said, it's substantial, and it's an escalation issue. It's not a inflation issue. Inflation, 7 percent, 8 percent, we can handle that. But what the problem is, escalation is 50, 60 percent, as the Mayor said, because he's in the construction.

Mayor Lago: Can I ask --? Commissioner, if I may, just to add to -- get some color, and I want to make a request from the Manager. Can you provide the Commissioners, once we have the price breakdown and review, sit down with them and explain to them what the numbers are for the

general contractor, and then allow them to make the decision if we go to market with different contractors. Because we have to be very, very finicky and very careful about allowing this information to get out there, because if it gets out there and all the other contractors in the market know what our prices are, it will affect us. It will affect us. You know, we want to keep that bird in the hand. We don't want to release it. Please, share it with the Commission as you do everything, but we have to be careful if we go to market to make sure that we don't divulge the pricing that we already got because a lot of contractors -- I mean, this industry, we kind of (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Fernandez: But I think my questions are not about the cost of construction or how much money we have allocated for it. The community has been clear for over a year, almost a year and a half, they want this to be a priority, and here we are, Burger Bob's closed February of last year, so it's been 14 months, and we don't even have a timetable of when we're planning on opening or beginning the construction, realistically, right? When did we go to RFP, or when did we request this bid?

Public Works Director Diaz: About a month ago.

City Manager Iglesias: The bids...

Commissioner Fernandez: A month ago, so over a year after...

City Manager Iglesias: We have -- we have two bids...

Commissioner Fernandez: Burger Bob's closed.

City Manager Iglesias: We have two bids.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: The drawings have to be prepared. The project drawings have been prepared, except for minor issue on color and EV. We went out to bid. We have two bids that have come in fairly close. We need to evaluate those, and we'll be providing those to the Commission. As the Mayor said, those bids, if we decide to go back out for full procurement, those bids -- those numbers should not be put out, which will affect the overall price of the project and generally in a negative way.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, if you'd like, I have no issues. And neither does anybody in the Commissioner's staff. We have two prices. We have a budget. The plans are done. We just have to permit them, correct?

Public Works Director Diaz: There's some finishes being done, but we should be able to have a permit...

Mayor Lago: You have a nine percent...

Public Works Director Diaz: Two months, three months, it should be ready to go, permitted set of drawings.

Mayor Lago: All right. We have a delta, we have a delta in regards to what we budgeted and what these two prices have come in at. It's higher, obviously. I would like for you, please, through the Manager, if possible, to have a sit-down conversation with my colleagues, explain to them what the delta is, and then we need to find that money in the budget. And we could start construction in three months once it's permitted, just like every other person who's here, who has to go through the permitting process. The City goes through the permitting process. We don't circumvent the permitting process. And then what we can do is find the money in the budget, but the money's going to have to come from somewhere. The money's going to have to come from another line

item in the budget, and we can push something else back. I don't have an issue pushing something else back, but I want that to come from consensus from the Commission.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right, and that's a decision that needs to be made because if we have to then put this out to bid then...

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Public Works Director Diaz: The process is going to take longer. So, depending on what route is decided, that's going to determine how quickly we're going to get out there and start constructing so...

Commissioner Fernandez: Realistically, when are these bids going to be reviewed by staff?

Public Works Director Diaz: All of them.

Commissioner Fernandez: When?

Public Works Director Diaz: We'll review -- this week.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, when will Commission be voting on moving this forward? Or is staff -- is this a staff decision at this point?

Mayor Lago: What I -- what I would recommend, and what -- and again, it's at the discretion of the Manager, you're -- we're going to re -- they're going to review the two budgets, excuse me, the two proposals. We can -- we can use those, but again, it's going to blow -- it's going to blow away our budget line item, our proposals that we have for this project. We put -- we allocated X amount of money for this project. We know it's already above. So, now we have to go make a

decision. We either go to market and get three or four contractors to bid it. That's going to take at least a month and a half.

Public Works Director Diaz: A little longer than that. A regular procurement process...

Mayor Lago: It takes us -- it takes us -- just to budge -- just to get proposals from contractors in this market takes six weeks at a minimum. And then you've got to review it. You've got to qualify it, and you've got to go into contract with these contractors. So, it could take three months, three to four months to get it done. Or we can just jump the gun and try to find the money somewhere else in the budget. But it's going to cost -- it's going to take away from another line item in the budget. So, this is the bottom line.

Commissioner Fernandez: But I think it goes back to the issue that I've been hearing about for months. We are discussing items, we're putting them on the backburner, and here we are a year later, and we haven't gotten anything done. The residents haven't seen results. And I'm going to be honest. Thanks to the folks at Le Parc Café, you're not having a bigger outcry in the community because people are going there and enjoying the food, and they're there because they can't go to Burger Bob's. So, I think the community outcry has slowed down because of Le Parc's success, but we, as -- or actually, our predecessors on the Commission made it very clear -- and I have to commend the Mayor, Commissioner Anderson and Menendez. This was something that staff was told many times this was a Commission priority, and here we are a year and a half later, and we haven't even started.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, what I will say is that we didn't put it on the backburner. We had to hire a consultant, it needed to be designed. We went through a community process, which we take input, I mean, unfortunately, all that takes time. And this is where we are. So, we didn't put it on the backburner. We've been working on this project diligently. These things, unfortunately, do take time. You know, design and construction, these are things that, you know, there's a process of design, and you know, hiring consultants and all that. So, we're getting near

the point that we're almost ready to go. So -- but I can assure you that hasn't been put on the backburner.

Commissioner Fernandez: But has it been a priority? Because, I mean, my conversation with the Manager the other day, he basically said, this is a project where we're just giving money away to somebody. You know, that doesn't show me that this is a priority for the Manager. That shows me that this is something that he's really not interested in getting accomplished.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, the issue -- it is a priority. It's a priority for the Commission. At the end of the day, the Manager works for the Commission.

Commissioner Fernandez: And he does.

Mayor Lago: It's a priority. We've made it very clear. The issue that we're facing, if you look over the last 14 months, 12 months, the issue has been we demolished the interior of the building, okay? That took a month and change. We did an assessment of the overall condition of the existing structural capacity of the building. We had issues with roofing, correct? We re-roofed the building.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Then we went and procured an architect and an engineer to come in and review and design the project. That took months and months and months. Right now we're facing where there's so much work, where everybody's backlogged. That took months. Then after you've done that, we went out and procured two entities, two construction companies, to give us pricing. That took a few months to get it. We have the prices now. This week, we will have it in our hands, and the Manager will sit down with every single one of us on the Commission, and we'll have to make the tough decision of we are over budget, where do we get the money to make sure that this becomes a reality. I promise you, nobody wants this to be done more than I do

because I get calls like you're starting to get calls every single week about when are we going to get Burger Bob's back. And also, we went to the community before we started design, and we started listening to the residents say, how do you feel about the design? What do you like or what you don't like? So, staff has made -- staff has pushed the ball forward. We're almost there. And I promise you that once you see the prices and you see we're going to have -- we have a bigger issue on our hands and that is where we're going to get the money to make the shortfall.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to add that as a result of the community meeting we had for the public on the design and the feedback and the input from the community, I met a couple weeks ago with a consultant, architectural firm with Fred and Carolina Community Recreation. And I passed along the feedback that the community had. So, now I'm meeting with them tomorrow again because what was presented is not what is going to be going forward. We're trying to capture the essence of what Burger Bob's was, so we're looking for a retro kind of experience, not a modern day Neiman Marcus look. So, we met at length recently, and tomorrow I'll be seeing what the consulting firm has finally designed. But we went through piece by piece of what is in there and how we can make it better and a friendlier atmosphere for our community, so that's in the works.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, a last couple of comments on it from me is that it was clear that the community wanted something that was more retro and not that Neiman Marcus look. I have gone by, and I've noticed that staff has been -- you know, contractors have been working on the site, impact windows are in.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It is moving forward. I've done work on my home, and nothing ever happens as fast as you would like it to happen. It's more important that we get this done right the first time, so we don't waste taxpayer dollars trying to fix something after the fact without the public comment, without taking in account what the community really wants.

Commissioner Fernandez: Is there a way to maybe have a portal online where we can show a status of a project with a timetable. That way residents are aware of -- and it's another level of transparency.

Mayor Lago: It's a great idea, it's a great idea.

Commissioner Fernandez: Where people can basically go and say, okay, look, Burger Bob's is under construction. We're at this point. We have another six months before we get to the next step.

Mayor Lago: When's the next meeting? When is the next...

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct, exactly.

Mayor Lago: Committee meeting? What's the next thing? I think it's great. Like what we do with permits.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Like you can go -- like Ms. Cabrera has implemented. She has implemented a process where you can go and see your permit immediately and you can see the status of it, what was the last review, what is missing, what is pending. I love the idea. I think it's great.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, that's something we can work with IT on.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. I mean, we have the best IT on the planet. So, I mean, if anybody can figure out, Raimundo can figure it out.

Commissioner Fernandez: Is that something we need to vote on or?

Mayor Lago: Just give direction to the Manager. Make a motion.

City Manager Iglesias: I'd be happy to put a portal for construction.

Commissioner Fernandez: All right, I'll make a motion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Second.

Commissioner Castro: I second.

City Clerk Urquia: All in favor?

The Commission (Collectively): Aye.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Okay, so moving forward, okay, we're going to get an update in the next 10 days. Each Commissioner is going to get an update in regards to the status of the two bids, and we're going to make a decision through the -- the Manager's going to make a decision on whether we go to market, will we go to market. I ask you to please, as always, the information that we're going to get in regards to these two bids, let's keep those -- do not share that with anybody because, at the end of the day, it will only hurt the City because we want to keep those prices as close as possible so that the process can be as competitive as possible. We want the best price for the City, especially when we have to find money, as we've talked about. Also, please send information to my colleagues on the Commission about pricing through the Manager. Please send a little bit of information in regards to how much kitchen appliances have gone up and how much of a big portion -- how much percentage of that is out of the project, the kitchen appliances?

City Manager Iglesias: Probably 40 percent.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: 40 percent.

Public Works Director Diaz: That sounds about right.

Mayor Lago: We've seen a massive increase in kitchen appliances and that consists of up to 40 percent of the project. So, please send that information to my colleagues so they can understand a little bit better about that.

Public Works Director Diaz: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: And maybe they have a contact, you never know. Somebody may have a contact here that can help us out with reducing the price.

City Manager Iglesias: And by the way, Mayor, the Pro Shop is being remodeled as...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: We -- and that's really part of the tenant improvement really...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: For that project.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Public Works Director Diaz: And things are being done on the Pro Shop that's going to facilitate the construction of the restaurant.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: We have incorporated those design features -- those requirements are part of the Pro Shop so that that will be basically a tenant improvement...

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: For the Pro Shop.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: We have members of the public requesting to speak on the item, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Perfect, okay.

City Clerk Urquia: The first speaker is Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Doesn't matter, we can have...

Maria Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Let's see how I can say this nice. We were here one of the times when we discussed Burger Bob's. And I remember very clearly in my mind that when the amount of money discussed was about half a million dollars, I remember the Mayor saying, if I have to, I will get some of the people that I work with, and we can do it for less. Okay, I remember, I can go look at the minutes. Somewhere along the line, the people that are involved with this forgot what we said, forgot what the people said, forgot what the residents want, and now

we spend time consulting fees, design fees, and now guess what? The design is not what the people want. We never said we want to bring a Burger Bob's as a magnificent place where we can go drink champagne. We said we wanted something like we had before, do whatever needs to be done and get it going. Now, last night I heard that since we were talking about the Mobility Hub, the City Manager says in 18 months, we can have it built. Well, Burger Bob is not going to make it in 18 months because that little piece, that little piece of building is going to take, what, 14 months now? Plus now three months for this, two months for that. It's going to be two years, and we're still not going to have Burger Bob. Guys, smoke and mirrors, find excuses to prolong the process. If I do not want it done, and I'm in a position to make decisions, I will find issues. Today, tomorrow, only two bids. We have to look at the bids. God forbid one of them walks out. Whatever we can put together so we cannot make it happen. Because the bottom line is the City Manager does not want Rita to go back in that place and fixing that place the way we're fixing it is giving Rita money. I'm sorry. How do I know? Because it's been said in several places and people talk. Okay, enough is enough. Listen to the residents, see what the residents want. Listen to your Mayor, he made it very clear. Listen to Mr. Menendez, listen to Anderson. We made it very clear. This is not a Taj Mahal. This is not the Vatican. This is a little place where we want to be able to go in flipflops and shorts and have a hamburger and not have to expect white gloves to be served. And we do not want caviar either. Please, please listen, give directions. The electeds that were sitting here told the City Manager to get this done and we're still waiting. I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Linda Stevens.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Stevens, good morning.

Linda Stevens: Good morning. I am sorry for my outfit. I was not planning on this, but...

Mayor Lago: We're just blessed to have you here. Thank you.

Ms. Stevens: I was enjoying the Coral Gables Neighborhood Tennis. So, I speak on behalf -- I'm Linda Stevens, 1248 Milan Avenue. I speak as a supporter of Le Parc and as a resident. I just wanted to put in a very good word. I have been going to the Parc since it opened, and I am so happy to have this establishment. It is a place that I've become a regular, and every time I see, I see also the same familiar faces, which I think goes a long way for Coral Gables to create a sense of community. The owners are always present. It is a family business with everyone on staff working tirelessly, and they provide always great service and amazing food, and as important, as I mentioned, a sense of community. Please take this into consideration as I have three points I wanted to drive today. Number one, Le Parc needs to -- needs an answer and clarity in 48 hours or I was told they would have to shut down. The City shouldn't have the ability to kick Le Parc out on a 60-day notice without cause. And lastly, the City, from what I know, wants to take 25 percent of Le Parc's income, and no restaurant can survive that margin. My family in Switzerland runs restaurants, and I know that this is -- you know, it's a very tasking business. It's -- people are not in it for the money. They're in it for the love of what they do and providing that sense of community. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

City Clerk Urquia: Michelle White.

Mayor Lago: Ms. White, good morning. Thank you for being here.

Michelle White: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Morning.

Ms. White: My name is Michelle White. I am Marwan's wife. Also, I guess then vicariously an owner of Le Parc. I truly appreciate everybody that's here in our support. We've had a tremendous amount of support online and in person. We are in a really critical position right now. It's not an exaggeration to say that we will close soon if we cannot negotiate with you soon. We've retained counsel. I'm a real estate attorney and I'm very comfortable negotiating real estate leases and contracts. However, we've gotten literally no give from the City. So, we've retained counsel and had counsel try and negotiate on our behalf. And she has said to me, this is not a negotiation. This is bullying. This is stonewalling. This is they're not working with you at all. And we're being very flexible. We're saying, look, just be reasonable with us. You can't kick us out on 60 days' notice without cause. What restaurateur or even businessperson would agree to continue to invest their money into an endeavor when they can be kicked out in 60 days for no reason? And yet, the City is upset with us that we're not seven days a week, eight to eight. That's their complaint with us. Well guess what? We cannot invest more money into staying open till 8 p.m. with more employees when you can kick us out for no cause. That doesn't make sense. It's not business sense. And that's a point that the City has adamantly refused to negotiate on. Nope, sorry, we don't like what happened with Liberty Café, so we're not going to work with you on that. We can kick you out in 60 days if you've done nothing wrong. That's ludicrous. No businessperson would agree to that. We can't hire more employees to cover dinner shift because we can be kicked out for no reason. We have no term. You've given us no term. All we're asking for is some reasonableness on the side of the City. Hey, we love it here. We are invested. We are residents. My husband and I -- I've lived here for 20 years. My son goes to school at the Growing Place. We are rooted here in this community. We want to be here. We're passionate about it. Like she said, this is our passion. Our family has run restaurants for 40 years in Miami. We want to be here, but you have to work with us. We can't keep pouring money in when we can just be kicked out like this. We're not Liberty Café. Whatever the arguments or problems were with Liberty Café, that is not us. We are here to do a good job. We want to do a good job. Give us the opportunity. And I think the community would agree that we've done a good job, the support that we have of everybody sending these emails and communicating that they want us to be here. Let us be here for a reasonable amount of time. If we breach the contract, sure, kick us out. But to

say that we can be kicked out for no reason is not fair. It's not negotiating in good faith. And the 25 percent margin is the other issue. 25 percent, no restaurant can survive. Anyone who knows the restaurant business knows you cannot survive if they're taking 25 percent of your income. That's not 25 percent of our profits after we pay everybody. It's 25 percent of our income. That's what we use to survive, to pay our employees. So, what we're asking for the City, for you all as the Commissioners, for the City Manager, who we would love to sit down with, but we've not yet had the opportunity, is to just allow us to do what we do. We want to be here. We want to do this. The community wants us to be here. Let us do it with your support. We need to work together to support each other to make it successful. Thank you for your time.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

Mayor Lago: So, maybe if I -- maybe if my colleagues ask, I just would like to respect everybody's ability to speak. We have a very long agenda today. I would like for, if you're on one side of an issue or on the other side of an issue, please don't clap. Don't -- refrain. Let's respect the entire process. That's all I'm asking, please.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, the next speaker is on Zoom.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: I'm sorry.

City Attorney Suárez: Sorry, Mr. Mayor, just wanted to -- to your point, that that is part of our civility code for members of the public to please refrain from clapping.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: All right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Can we...?

City Clerk Urquia: It's Albert Sanchez.

Commissioner Castro: Excuse me.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Can we add Le Parc on for the next agenda for a discussion?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Sanchez is on Zoom, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Sir, the floor is yours.

Albert Sanchez: Good morning, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, Commissioners.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Sanchez: My name's Albert Sanchez. I live at 619 Camilo Avenue, where I've lived for the past 22 years. And I should also note that my wife and I have been members of the Coral Gables Country Club since its reopening last June. Today, I too am here to express strong support for Le Parc Café. As you're all aware, the country club has experienced many hiccups since its reopening.

Despite these many obstacles, Le Parc has successfully created a thriving business that has benefited truly the entire Coral Gables community. They have a comprehensive menu, delicious food, reasonable prices, but even more importantly, they have created a conducive environment that is welcoming to the entire community where you meet friends, you meet family, and you're allowed to linger. Also, I think part of the café's success, in my opinion, is the fact that the proprietor is there every day, as a prior speaker mentioned. He's hands-on and has contributed to the entire welcoming environment. I ask, Mr. Mayor, you and the Commission, who are all successful entrepreneurs, please put on your entrepreneurial hat. Evaluate this as an entrepreneurial venture. You all well know that no entrepreneur is going to invest in their business if there is not a long-term commitment by their chief partner. There also needs to be fair revenue sharing and much-needed upgrades to facility. In the end, this has to be a win-win for the City as well as the proprietor. Because if it's not a win-win for both parties, we all lose, and that would be a shame. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: In reference to what we were talking about, Le Parc and Commissioner Anderson's comments about putting it on the next agenda -- I imagine there'll be many cosponsors, probably the whole Commission will sponsor that item. Before we make a decision or the City makes a decision, can we hold off and just so we can have that conversation at the next Commission in the public, if it's possible.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, I think there's a number of items that have to be resolved.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: And where this deal is something that the City -- is good for the City. I don't do deals that are not good for the City.

Mayor Lago: I know.

City Manager Iglesias: Also, this has to be good for both sides.

Mayor Lago: I understand.

City Manager Iglesias: And I do -- and it is something that we're negotiating right now with our Asset Manager and our City Attorney. But again, it has to be good for us, it has to be good for them. It has to be good for both sides.

Mayor Lago: So -- but what I would like, if possible, please, is for you, for your staff, and yourself to speak with each one of us and have a conversation and give us more depth and breadth in regards to the deal. I'm not that -- I've only heard one side of it, and it's from the gentleman who works at Le Parc.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, there's one side -- I'm not going to get into (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Oh, I don't want to do it on the dais.

City Manager Iglesias: Here, but I'll be happy to meet with all of you individually and let you know exactly where we're at.

Mayor Lago: Because listen, unlike many people here, I was very involved with the country club and what was there. A lot of the facts were never said in an effort to protect the City from lawsuits, not on our side, on the other side, and a settlement that we had to engage in to ensure that we could take control in regards to the country club. There have been millions of dollars spent on the country

club, from the roof, to the pool, to structural elements, a lot of deferred maintenance. So, there's millions of dollars that we did not expect to spend that we spent on the country club to bring it back to its current state. And that was not our fault. That was the responsibility of the individual that had the lease. So, it's a lot of things that we don't say out there because we don't want to publicize because it would hurt and damage the City. We have to have more oversight and that's why I requested and this Commission supported having our asset manager visit all our properties that we lease out -- we're already doing that -- and sending a report to these Commissioners every three months, so the Commissioners and the Manager now have a report for every single piece of property that we own in the City that we lease out to make sure that these individuals that are leasing it have -- know that we're watching them and we are taking account of the current conditions of these properties, so we never have that situation ever happen again. So, I would like for you to please, let's continue negotiating with Le Parc. If my colleagues have any input or anything they'd like to say about that, I'd like to hear about it in the next Commission meeting and see -- but I need to be more versed in regards to the negotiations and what's happening there.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, we don't do leases or contracts that don't benefit the City.

Mayor Lago: We did that for a long time.

City Manager Iglesias: They have to bene -- yes, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We did that for a long time before.

City Manager Iglesias: And our contract will benefit the City. It has to be -- it has to benefit both sides or it will not work. So, contracts that do not benefit the City, we don't do anymore.

Mayor Lago: But I'm not an expert when it comes to restaurant contracts, so I need to understand what other -- in other similar circumstances, what is occurring in other cities, what are all the, you

know, public establishments that are going into P3 models. I want to understand where we stand on that, but not here, when we sit down, and we have a conversation.

City Manager Iglesias: There are a number of issues, and I will be happy to discuss with them -- with all of you individually.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm not going to go into the contract or the numbers, because as we agreed, that's coming back to us and gives us time to learn a little bit more. But I do want to comment because I'm a regular of Le Parc. They already know my order. It's already ready before I even sit down. And Commissioner Fernandez is a regular as well, but now that we're Commissioners, we don't talk. We just wave at each other.

Commissioner Fernandez: Well, I usually go first.

Commissioner Menendez: You're there before me. You're the first act. I'm the second act. But you know, under difficult circumstances with Burger Bob's, you know, the Pro Shop, the Country Club, all the repairs, millions of dollars of repairs that had to go into it, that area could have been barren. And you know, I admire the work that the family has done because it's created a community environment. When I go there, you see, on weekends especially, grandparents, kids, parents all over the place. And you know, it's a difficult environment because a lot of things were, you know, not open. But the fact that they've helped create a community within our community is something that I respect and admire greatly. And you know, I hope that we can find a fair and amicable solution to this because they've done great work, but I think also -- and I agree with our -- my colleagues -- that we need to do things in a way that, regardless of who's there, we make sure that there are certain safeguards in place. But I'm one that I think everyone should be given a fair opportunity to shine, and a fair opportunity to create community. So, I hope, I hope we can find a fair solution so that everybody wins.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I guess it'll be on the next agenda.

Mayor Lago: Yep. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Do you have any other speakers?

City Clerk Urquia: No, sir.

Mayor Lago: All right, we'll close the public comment. Do you have anything else you want to mention in regards to the country club, any issues? Because I know that we...

Commissioner Castro: Yeah. As...

Mayor Lago: Just brushed over it.

Commissioner Castro: As I understand it, you have to go ahead and fight for the benefit of the City. I would also like to -- you consider that the people who run this place are residents of Coral Gables, and that is very valuable, especially when we want to go ahead and improve resident engagement and involvement. Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Can we have -- if you don't mind, Fred -- sorry to interrupt, but the pool opened recently, or Carolina.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think you had a presentation, right?

Commissioner Menendez: Oh, okay, even better.

Assistant Community Recreation Director Vester: So we did prepare a presentation. Good morning. If you'd like to see it, we can quickly go through it, just as kind of marking the milestones. We're almost at the one-year mark when we had the keys handed over to us from the previous operator. And we wanted to give tribute to the pool today because that was our most recent milestone, the reopening of the pool, which was a very long hardship obstacle, but we got there. And giving a little tribute, this is the original pool from the early 1960s when it was built. And you can see it was quite the gathering place. And that's what it's coming to right now. This was the missing piece for the country club to bring our families back together. Please, next slide. Sorry. Maybe not. All right, so a quick review of our milestones. We did take over the building in May of 2022. The athletic club opened within -- shortly a month later, so June 2022. We acquired brand-new fitness equipment in there, did quick repairs, and got that club running right away. And we went ahead and honored some of the original prices for the membership, and we really wanted to make sure we didn't lose the membership that was there before. We then, as previously mentioned, were able to work with Le Parc to open the café right away in August of 2022. There is more work planned for the rest of the month. Again, we tried to rush and open the place as quickly as possible to bring back the community to the country club. There were some things that hadn't been finished. At the end of the month, we're going to be switching out the front equipment as well as the catering equipment in the kitchen. We then reopened our venue spaces in October of 2022. And like I mentioned, the pool most recently opened Saturday, April 22, 2023, following our very tedious health inspection process. So we finally got clearance from the FDOH, and we went ahead and opened the pool back up. And our current membership has grown to 841 members, and we've definitely seen a peak in the last two weeks as our families are coming back, and they know the pool's back open, and they want to join. Here's a quick snapshot of the current hours, the club hours, the pool hours, and then, of course, we also have a partnership with Neighborhood Tennis, and they manage the six clay courts across the street, and there are two courts reserved for our members at all times. Next slide. Our venue office hours, like I mentioned, the venue is back open. We've had several successful rentals there from small gatherings to celebrations of life to corporate events. Our venue office is open Tuesday through Friday from 10

to 5, and then on Saturdays by appointment. And then, of course, Le Parc Café, they're currently open Tuesday through Sunday from 8 to 5, closed on Mondays right now, and we're going to take advantage of that to go ahead and do the install on a Monday, so we don't disrupt operations. A few events coming up. We have a monthly tennis clinic that Neighborhood Tennis hosts every month for our membership. We have our monthly mixer. This will be our third mixer that meets every third Thursday of the month. It's been very successful. And we will be having -- to celebrate the reopening of the pool -- our Memorial Day or Memorial Weekend barbecue, so that'll be on Saturday, May 27th, open to our, of course, our membership, and they're also welcome to bring guests. We'll have our upcoming City event this week. It will be the Boards and Committee Reception. That will be on Thursday, May 11th at 6. And then we're going to be having a wonderful community event, which is Cars and Coffee in the parking lot in the back of the country club on Sunday, June 11th. Here are a few pictures of our successes, our different member events that we had over the last two months. Community events, we've had a wonderful holiday reading with Mark Trowbridge. We also had a wonderful glow in the dark Easter hunt event in the Grand Ballroom. What a spectacular event. We were able to close all the doors and have a glow in the dark in the middle of the day, so it was very, very successful, packed crowd, lots of families, lots of bunnies. And then most recently, we did create a membership services page, so it's an independent page which is clubgables.com, which all the membership has access to to make their reservations for classes. It's tied into the menu with Le Parc Café, our different services, Neighborhood Tennis, golf, et cetera. So, those are all the services that are within the larger framework of the country club. And we have a variety of fitness classes offered Monday through Saturdays, and with the reopening of the pool, we'll be introducing AquaFit and SwimPro. So, we have a busy schedule of instructors, and we're adding additional instructors as the membership grows. We have a monthly newsletter that goes out every month with a message from our most recently hired promoted director, Mitchell Zuriarrain, who gives us a monthly message. And then here you see the team. We kept some of the individuals that previously worked with the previous company, our maintenance manager and our -- Carlos Llompart, who is the athletic club director. And then we also have our most newest acquisition, which is Valerie, who's going to be managing the venue spaces. And that's it.

Commissioner Menendez: By the way, you -- I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: No, please.

Commissioner Menendez: You left out the centennial celebration.

Assistant Community Recreation Director Vester: Oh, quite the celebration. I think we had 1,200 ice cream displayed for our community. So, I think it was the largest event that we've had with the community participating so...

Commissioner Menendez: I think Maria Cruz had 10 of those, you know, but it was okay. It was free. It was free. But I also want to congratulate Mitch on the job he does. Very hands-on and very receptive to everybody who's there. Residents that I meet, I bump into, I speak to, speak so highly of staff. So, congratulations to a great job by staff.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. You -- by the way, congratulations, Commissioner, because you did a great job with the ice cream, as always. You know, that was your -- you took the lead on that, and you did a great job. And I want to thank Carolina, Fred, the entire team, and Mitch. Again, kudos. I mean, so many tough moments over the last six months with the pool. Can you briefly -- because we've got to go to time certain at 11 o'clock, and we're going to need to take a five-minute bathroom break. Can you briefly explain, because I want to put it on the record, what happened with the pool? What was the issue? Why did it take so long?

Assistant Community Recreation Director Vester: So, like I mentioned, the pool was...

Mayor Lago: What did you find --? What was the state of the pool when we got it from the previous leaseholder?

Assistant Community Recreation Director Vester: It was treated like a residential pool. So, the Florida Department of Health shut it down within two weeks of us hosting our community open house, which was very tough because we had just displayed the pool and we were excited to have it as part of the membership. When I say residential, it means it did not have a commercial chlorination system. You have to treat the pool for health, you know, reasons with muriatic acid, some kind of a chemical, either gas, liquid, or Pulsar, which is what we're using. We had to make sure we retrofitted the equipment in the pump room, service all the electrical, the pumps. There was extensive repairs that were happening at the bottom, but also inside the pool. We had to resurf the entire pool. So, all the Diamond Brite had to be resurfaced. And what happens is when you do resurface the Diamond Brite, certain Code regulations are triggered, and we had to go back. We had to redo the light fixtures.

Mayor Lago: ADA -- and we have ADA issues with steps.

Assistant Community Recreation Director Vester: We did. Well, we had the steps, correct. We also acquired a new ADA lift. We repaired the existing lift that had not been operational. So, there was quite a variety of different operational factors and regulatory factors that had to be remediated. What we also uncovered is when we went ahead and removed the ladders to update the ladders is that the entire pool did not have the...

City Manager Iglesias: The bonding.

Assistant Community Recreation Director Vester: The bonding -- correct, sir -- the bonding that was necessary. So, of course, the pool was originally from the 1960s, it had not been upgraded, it did require the bonding, so that was additional work we had to do that was not foreseen.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, just so we're aware...

City Manager Iglesias: And grounding of the equipment -- and grounding of the equipment, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: And just so we're aware, because I was involved in that with the Manager, the Manager played a role, you know, dealing with all the structural integrity issues of the pool, of the building, making sure that we streamline the process, expedited the process, because we weren't dealing with just the City of Coral Gables. We were dealing with county and state regulatory departments. So, every time that we got a call, every time we got an email, why is the pool closed? We're paying for our membership, we're paying for our membership. We were rushing as hard - - and I know Commissioner Menendez got a thousand calls because I saw him one day, he was about to pull his hair out here in the City. We wanted to open as quickly as possible, but the State -- you know, the departments of the State did not allow us, and we were pushing as fast as we could to meet the inspections that were required. So, your staff did an incredible job, and the Manager played a very big role in oversight and ensuring that, again, we could use his structural engineering background to ensure that, you know, we took care of every issue that hadn't been taken care of in over 10 years. The deferred maintenance on that pool was embarrassing. And it was a liability, and somebody could have gotten hurt significantly if it would have continued that way, so thank you for your hard work.

Assistant Community Recreation Director Vester: Absolutely. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Are there any other further questions or statements before we take a five-minute break? Anything else? All right. When we come back, we'll take G-3, and we'll take a five-minute bathroom break. Thank you.