

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items 2-1 and 2-2
January 25, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant City Attorney, Naomi Levi-Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Jennifer Worth Sando

Angie Torres

Dr. Acosta

Agenda Items 2-1 and 2-2 [Start: 12:13 p.m.]

2-1: A Resolution of the Coral Gables School Community Relations Committee urging the City Commission to support and request Miami-Dade County Public Schools to ensure that there are self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities in public elementary, middle, and high schools within the City's boundaries.

2-2: A Resolution of the Coral Gables Advisory Board on Disability Affairs urging that the City Commission support and request Miami-Dade County Public School to ensure that there are self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities in public elementary, middle and high schools within the city boundaries.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, let's please move onto item 2-1.

City Commission Meeting

January 25, 2022

Agenda Items 2-1 and 2-2 – Resolution of the SCRC urging the City Commission to Support and request MDCPS to ensure self-contained classrooms

[Date]

1

City Attorney Ramos: 2-1 is A Resolution of the Coral Gables School Community Relations Committee urging the City Commission to support and request Miami-Dade County Public Schools to ensure that there are self-contained classrooms for students with disabilities in public elementary, middle, and high schools within the City's boundaries; and 2-2 is the same resolution, but from the Advisory Board on Disability Affairs.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Good morning, Naomi Levi-Garcia, Assistant City Attorney and Intergovernmental Affairs Manager. So, the SCRC discussed the concept of self-contained autism classrooms on multiple occasions, and ultimately in December, a member of the Disability Affairs Board came before the School Community Relations Committee and shared their own resolution regarding self-contained classrooms. The SCRS subsequently adopted a sister resolution. We have Jennifer Worth Sando here. She's been designated by the SCRC to be the point person on this discussion. She'd like to share a few words.

Mayor Lago: How are you. Good afternoon.

Ms. Worth Sando: Good. This is my first time in here. Oh, I hear Joey Chestnut is coming to the city, so I'm really excited. I am a member of the School Community Relations Committee. Our board unanimously supported the idea of having autism programs at our elementary, middle and high schools. Our understanding is our high school has one, but our middle schools and our elementary schools do not. On a personal note, I feel like some of you know my children, some of you don't. I have three children. We live within walking distance from Coral Gables Preparatory Academy. All three of them have autism. All three of them are non-verbal. My oldest one also suffers from seizures. My middle child is – I shouldn't just say she suffers from seizures, I'll also tell you she loves ballet, she loves Taylor Swift, to say something positive. My middle child, he is just a very social, runs up to people, grabs them, but he really doesn't have any communication at all. My youngest child is also hearing impaired, and he communicates through typing very effectively. So, all three of them attend Miami-Dade County Public Schools. They place them in a school that can meet their needs; and three times in a row that has not been our home school and it's not a school in the city. The first time, I'm like, okay, yes of course, they don't want my daughter at their school. Why would they, she is too hard to deal with. They don't want to expose their children to a child that might have a fit, might scream, might have an issue. My second child, I still kind of was like, okay, I can see how he could be disruptive at just a regular school. By the time I got to my third child, I started to get a little bit annoyed. Every time I would drive past the school that was in my neighborhood and see other children out there playing and know my children couldn't go there. And then I see the children in the neighborhood that know each other, because they all attend school together, and I notice how they don't know how to react around my children, but yet the children that do go to their schools, which are three different schools at the moment, Lou Lakes Elementary, Snapper Creek Elementary and Southwest Miami Senior High School, do know how, they are unphased, and they actually take initiative to be with my children, and I just wished that children that lived in Coral Gables would also have experience with children with autism and know how to take them in and make them part of the community. There is a little bit of a disconnect because this city has been so awesome, just awesome when it comes to inclusion and autism programs from the city level. I mean, the Parks and Recreation, Ericka Kofkin will

City Commission Meeting

[Date]

2

January 25, 2022

Agenda Items 2-1 and 2-2 – Resolution of the SCRC urging the City Commission to Support and request MDCPS to ensure self-contained classrooms

include everybody, she works so hard to do that, and you guys passed the Principles of Inclusion. You have this great all-inclusive festival. You have this wonderful sensory-friendly, disability-friendly playground, but still our children can't go to school with other children in our community. I was a lawyer in my past life, and I wrote down a bunch of legal arguments, but I can't, I'm too emotional about this. I can only make an argument that I feel.

Mayor Lago: I know the Vice Mayor probably wants to say a few words. I had the pleasure of getting to know you a little better once I went to one of the meetings with the board, and I saw the commitment. I knew everybody was committed, obviously, but I saw the level of commitment, which is extraordinary. You're correct. This started a few years ago with our previous City Attorney and Naomi's efforts and the director's efforts in really pushing for an agenda of inclusion from all fronts. I need staff to give me direction on how we can achieve the goal you are talking about, because we all have kids, and we try to expose every single person on this Commission tries to expose our kids to every type of opportunity, that they can grow up to be the best people they can possibly can. And I went to a special school which really shaped me for three years, it was called Vanguard, and I've talked about it before, and it's at the very fabric of the very foundation of who I am on all fronts of life. My professional career, as an elected official, a father, friend, a litany of different things. It really teaches you a lot when you can be amongst people and not only understand the situation that they are facing, but also sympathize with them, and I would love nothing more than what you are asking for to come to fruition. I just need to understand what are the steps that we need to take to really bring this forward. We've tried years ago, I think it was when Commissioner Mena just got elected, where there was a potential grant for \$1.5 million dollars coming from the School Board. We talked about this, and we weren't able to find the place to potentially access that money and deliver that money, put it into a project that would shine a light on these incredible kids, so it wouldn't have to be the City of Coral Gables, which to me, that's a problem. When people who live in the City of Coral Gables have this great city that we are blessed to live in, have to step outside our boundaries to get care anywhere in any form, that's unacceptable. We've got to find an answer.

Vice Mayor Lago: On paper I was already supportive of this, because obviously it's a good idea, but I really appreciate your comments because you kind of gave us a real-life experience that not only for you and your kids, but also for the other kids in those schools, and so, needless to say we support what we have before us today. I think to the Mayor's point, I would love to do more than just pass a resolution supporting the cause, we'll definitely do that, but what else can we do. How else can we advocate for this? Is there something actually going to the School Board on this subject that we can lend our advocacy for? Whatever we can do to try to make this really come to fruition other than just pass a resolution, we'd love to participate.

Ms. Worth Sando: I think that the resolution allows you to send a letter to Miami-Dade County Public Schools asking them to explore the possibility. So, I think that that is the actionable part of the resolution that the city would undertake, correct me if I'm wrong.

Vice Mayor Mena: Have there been conversations with either your committee or on your side with School Board member Rojas or anybody else on the topic, and do we know if it's even, is this even under consideration or is there...

Ms. Worth Sando: You have people from the district...

Vice Mayor Mena: Sure. Okay, great.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: There have been some discussions at the School Community Relations Committee, the Mayor actually attended one of our meetings too, and it came up at that meeting. At this point, those are discussions, so it's on their radar. I believe they are aware that this is something of interest at least to the two boards and they were aware of the intention. Obviously, they have representatives here to take it to the Commission, have the Commission weigh in. As a threshold step, it would be the resolution from the Commission, if it's something you support, it falls in line with our inclusion initiatives, falls in line with the special needs planning initiative out of the School Community Relations Committee, so there are logical tie-ins, and we would send the resolution through the board member to the School Board and see where it goes from there, and obviously engage in conversations and see if there is a facility where such a classroom could be initiated, are there space considerations the city can come to the table on. Where can the city fill in the gap to make this a reality if that's the will of the Commission.

Mayor Lago: And another thing, if I could just add one quick thing, because its important, just so you are aware. As part of our strategic plan that we adopted as a Commission, one of the items was to visit as many boards as possible, so we are doing that, we are going to visit boards. I was very impressed by this board, by the Chair, the efforts of the entire board, but I also want to make you aware. As you know, I don't have to tell you this, because everybody here knows this community, School Board Member Rojas is everywhere, she's everywhere, and she's like, whatever you want, I'm here, on behalf of the kids, on behalf of the parents, and especially on behalf of those students that need it the most. So, what I would like to do, and I know that my colleagues probably want to speak about it, we'd love to hear from our colleagues at the School Board. The School Board is in transition now; they are going to have a new Superintendent. I want to make sure that we are as close to whoever that Superintendent is going to be, to make sure that they are our partners and that they come to the City of Coral Gables first, that we make this a priority. Another thing that I'd love to do is also talk to one of our colleagues after; many, many years of service is retiring is Commissioner Sosa from the county. She's been a pillar, stalwart in this community helping us on a litany of different issues. She's tackling major issues and I know she wants to get things done. Can we find out where that money is, what's going on. I may be out of the loop, maybe you want to talk about it later.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: No, no, actually Raquel did reach out to Commissioner Sosa's office recently to ask about the \$1.2 or \$1.5, that they had in mind for, I think it was an autism facility geared towards young adults at the time. I don't know if its evolved. I do think they responded.

Labor Relations & Risk Manager: Elejabarrieta Not yet.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Okay. So, we'll follow up to try to get a response on whether that money is still available.

Mayor Lago: Can we do something. Can you remind me, remind my office, or write a brief memo and we'll have the Commission sign it?

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Every Commissioner will sign it and we'll have the Disability Board review it, and we'll ask them. On your last year, I know that this was money that was allocated, and again, this is a year where there is going to be sufficient funding across the board, not only at the local level, but at the state. Let's take advantage of this, maybe we can find some flexibility, bring in the county Mayor and see how we can just say, push this money to some sort of allocation so that when she does leave, we don't lose that money.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I would also say, and I'm going to sort of invoke our prior Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli on this. Our community pays a significant, significant amount of taxes towards the School Board. I don't know the number off the tip of my tongue, but our tax base is significant, and therefore to me, I know that the way the School Board treats those tax dollars is sort of across the School Board system. However, for me it's unacceptable that with the tax base and the amount of dollars that our residents pay towards that system that our city does not have a single option to meet that need for residents within our city and have to leave our city in order to have that. So, I'm all for grants, I 110 percent support that, but I'd also really like to engage with the School Board. Let's look at those dollars that all of our residents pay every year, we should be able to find the money in there, and I'm saying that as nicely as I can. Mayor Valdes-Fauli would have had a stronger tone about it, but he's right. If you look at the number of dollars and for our residents to be under served in this respect, that's not acceptable and I think its fair for us to call that out and then to have a real conversation about it.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Vice Mayor, on that point of the one point five (\$1.5), from what I remember, it was monies that she had allocated to actually build a facility to meet these needs. Maybe we can use that money and plug it into another school so that we can start offering these types of services, divert those funds into that school and say, hey listen, maybe you don't have a wing, we'll build a wing. Maybe you don't have the proper funding for teachers, well this will give us a five-year, a ten-year runway to be able to bring somebody who specializes to make sure that these kids. So that goes to the sentiments of the Vice Mayor, it's unacceptable, it's unacceptable. This community deserves better. Nobody should have to take their kids outside of the city to get services.

Commissioner Menendez: Because you were sharing with us your plight and the plight of so many families. All of a sudden, I had a flashback to my own childhood growing up here in Coral Gables, and I remember at the Youth Center there were always a few kids, a few teens that had disabilities. Back then they probably weren't diagnosed as autism, diagnosed as something else, and yet the

City Commission Meeting

[Date]

5

January 25, 2022

Agenda Items 2-1 and 2-2 – Resolution of the SCRC urging the City Commission to Support and request MDCPS to ensure self-contained classrooms

staff was always doing everything they could, almost individually, almost as if the system didn't exist, to help these young people become part of the larger community which was the Youth Center. And my heart always went out to them and their families, because even as a kid you could see the challenges and how much energy and how much dedication it took just to get from one week to the other and keeping things steady. So definitely it's a system failure and we are all here to do what we can. My question is, I know we've had public meetings and public officials from other cities, counties have come and spoken, so whenever there is an opportunity before the county, before the School Board, I'm sure one of us, two of us, three of us, all of us, would love the opportunity to speak personally, in addition to the letter to communicate the city's position in a firm way. Do you all have a task force focusing on this that has maybe an elected official, that has a member here that can sort of consolidate and push that ball forward? I know we have the different boards, but I don't know if we have anything that's consolidated that can focus on this particular issue. If not, its just an idea of maybe creating a task force, focus on that one issue and try to move it forward. I don't know if that makes any sense, but something to consider.

Commissioner Anderson: I just wanted to follow up. Thank you for coming and sharing your story. I can't imagine having to take children to three different schools, the stress it creates for you. As all of you have said, its unacceptable. I had the opportunity to go to the last Disability Affairs Board meeting and Commissioner Regalado was there speaking and she had her daughter there with her, and quite a remarkable human being as well, because they all have qualities. But I'm going to dovetail on what your ask is, because at the conclusion of the meeting I brought up an issue that was brought up to me by a lot of residents, you're going to eventually face as well, and that's when these children age out. Where do they go? We can't be with them forever. We wish we could. So, the topic of group homes came up, and I've asked the City Manager that we need to start looking into that issue and how we deal with it in our zoning code and how we administer it here to make it part of our community as well, because you wouldn't want them to end up at the other end of town, because there is no facility here.

Ms. Worth Sando: That I do know and that is my worst nightmare that I try not to think about, but I know I do have to plan for the future.

Commissioner Anderson: I've asked the City Manager to start the process with staff and we'll bring it up again at another meeting.

Mayor Lago: I think we can bring it up at the next meeting. We can make sure its an item and give everybody enough time and staff to have a conversation. And I highly recommend to my colleagues, I know many of you have, is to visit the board, visit this board. They have their meetings early in the morning, in the Public Safety Building and I think its an opportunity for you to understand a little bit more and get a little closer to issues that are sometimes overlooked.

Labor Relations & Risk Manager Elejabarrieta: Mayor if I may, during one of the board meetings that you attended, you asked for some statistics as to how many families within Coral Gables have children with autism. And so, we reached out to UM CARD, which is right here in the Gables, and we asked them if they would be able to provide us with that information. And so, we gave them

City Commission Meeting

the zip codes that belong to Coral Gables, so there was a little bit of overlap, right. There are some zip codes that are outside of Coral Gables, but children, school aged kids between the ages of 3 and 21, we have over 500.

Mayor Lago: So, the numbers that I've read, is it still a little under 50.

Labor Relations & Risk Manager Elejabarrieta: 1 in 49.

Mayor Lago: 1 in 49. So, I was thinking it was going to be around 1,000, keeping in line with our 51,000 residents.

Labor Relations & Risk Manager Elejabarrieta: But that's only children from the ages of 3 to 21. If we add children from the age of months old to plus 21, we are looking at over close to 1,000.

Ms. Worth Sando: I think it's important to remember that CARD members only encapsulate those families that have chosen to register with CARD. Not everybody does that, some people might go to some of their events and then when they ask them to register then they just, they kind of don't get around to it.

Mayor Lago: People are very private in certain instances. Can you circulate that information to my colleagues? I'd like to include that in my next newsletter to make sure people are aware and put those statistics out there, so they understand. Again, we take pride in being a very inclusive community and I think we do it better than any other community. But we can always strive to be better on multiple fronts. I just wanted to say again, thanks to the board for what you guys do and the representatives who are here today, along with thank you for sharing your story. I think its important that you continue to do that. I also want to thank the School Board and ask the School Board to please come before us if they have anything they would like to add. You're an integral part of this community and we can't thank you enough for your engagement. I know there is a new Superintendent. I look forward to sitting down with him and I ask him to please come before the Commission at his convenience.

Ms. Torres: Absolutely. My name is Angie Torres, I'm a Director with the Department of ESE, Exceptional Student Education with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and I'm here with Dr. Acosta who's from the regional center in the central center. And I've known Ms. Sando for many years as one of the parents of our families of children with autism, and we work closely throughout the years in supporting Ms. Sando and many families. As far as when it comes to need, you know our school system, first of all, inclusion that's what's most important to us, and our schools do include students with disabilities, and they range. Students with intellectual, behavioral, autism, students with specific learning disabilities. So, our schools do include students with different unique abilities as we like to call them. As far as when it comes to students with very specific disability, for example, our students maybe with intellectual disabilities or emotional behavior or students in this case with autism. In this case, as Ms. Sando was mentioning, we are looking at students with autism, but now we are looking at students with autism that have a greater need, and so, in us looking at the number of students in the community; the number of students currently in

City Commission Meeting

the community that need a specialized classroom that are within Miami-Dade County Public Schools, we have 16. So that's the number that need that very specialized that are currently within our school system. So that's how we make some of the determinations as to areas where we need to grow programs, that alongside with capacity in schools, which is where we work alongside the region. We take a look at the schools in the areas that do have a higher number of students with disabilities, in this case autism, to see the capacity in which schools can we then go ahead and open up program. When it comes to autism, our classrooms are very small in number. We have a teacher to about six students. So of course, capacity definitely plays a large role because of the fact that we need a building that is going to be able to sustain those classrooms for the students to move from Kinder, first, all the way though fifth, if its an elementary school. So currently, as far as students with autism who do need a self-contained program, within Dade County we have eight that are within the elementary school level. So, at this moment, the schools that the students are attending primarily are Kensington Park, which is one of the schools that's in the Coral Gables site as a nearby school, and then for middle school we have students who are attending Citrus Grove, different schools within about a two to three-mile radius, and then for high school we have our students attending Coral Gables Senior High School. They have a program there for autism, one for intellectual disabilities and one for emotional behavior disabilities. So those are the three schools.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for that information. But I want at the end of the day continue this conversation. Commissioner Fors you have something you want to say.

Commissioner Fors: I had a quick question. Assuming the rest of the folks or the kids in Miami-Dade County go to private institutions.

Ms. Torres: Well, when it comes to autism, the number, remember it's a very large spectrum, so some students you know may need a smaller environment with those specialized supports. We have students that do not need as much support and they are included in our general classrooms or maybe in a smaller, maybe like an ESE classroom, but not quite as supported as an autism self-contained classroom. So therefore, the number that I heard earlier may be across the board, that includes students who do not need that self-contained, small well supported classroom.

Commissioner Fors: Got it. Got it. The devil's advocate question I was going to ask was, whether you think maybe we'll get more students like that if we did have more self-contained classrooms available or the way it shakes out is it your opinion that the kids whose families are going to send them to public school system are generally already in that public school system, perhaps not going to a location as convenient for them, or do you think the low numbers have anything to do with the fact with the lack of availability of those classrooms, or is it impossible to tell.

Dr. Acosta: Its very difficult to tell whether some of the parents chose a private option. We know that, and Ms. Torres can speak to this a lot better than I can, but we know that not only within the autism spectrum, but any type of exceptional student education or disability, we have students who are deaf or hard of hearing programs, etc., there is a range. In that particular question, we just go by who is currently enrolled in a Miami-Dade County Public School and the numbers are small,

City Commission Meeting

so we look at capacity within a generic geographic area so that we can service as many students as possible. We can't open up those specialized centers within every municipality if the need isn't there, so we look at what school has the availability, the space available, and how close in proximity is it where the need is within the community, and that's where we identify those.

Vice Mayor Mena: If I'm understanding, seems fairly obvious to me that if you had the capacity and the facility within the public school system, you'd have parents who are currently in a private situation that would consider it.

Commissioner Fors: For me, the bigger question is, I guess, are the kids there that need the self-contained. Would there be more kids at those locations was my question but are the kids that are in need of the self-contained they exist in those areas, so that they might even consider, for example, Coral Gables Elementary.

Dr. Acosta: That's very difficult for us to.

Ms. Torres: We are able to capture those that live within Coral Gables that attend Dade County Public Schools, so those are the ones that we are able to when we run our data, those are the ones that we are able to capture.

Vice Mayor Mena: They wouldn't attend the school if there is no program for them, right.

Dr. Acosta: They attend the school. We capture the students who are currently within that spectrum of self-contained the students within Coral Gables, the municipality of Coral Gables that are attending a public school, and I believe the number was 8 in elementary.

Ms. Torres: Four in middle.

Mayor Lago: But those parents are having to drive outside the city boundaries in an effort to get this type of education for their children. But if you look at other facilities, for example, you have Vanguard, Crystal Academy, you have a new school that just opened up, Prism, McClennan. There is a litany of other schools that provide this type of education in a private setting. If there was an opportunity in the Gables to offer free-standing facility or a facility that's attached to another school, I think a lot more people would take advantage of it, because the cost is – imagine private school is significantly more expensive than anything I've ever seen. Some schools are now bordering on even more costly than colleges, and I know for a fact that the cost to attend one of these schools that offers this specialized education for these children that are dealing with issues on the spectrum or disabled, or learning disabled, one form or another, the costs could be \$50,000 a year if not more.

Commissioner Anderson: Another point – insurance covers some of it but doesn't cover all of it and have we compared the numbers for what's registered on the CARD system to who actually attends in Dade County Public Schools. If the numbers are greater on the CARD system than what's pending in Coral Gables area, it gives you an idea how many people are forced to make

City Commission Meeting

that hard choice as to where they have to send their children and which children lose out on programming, literally lose out.

Mayor Lago: And also, that's a great point that you are making. If you think about it, I think the numbers, Mr. Manager, 13 or 14 percent of children in Coral Gables that attend public school, correct? So, the rest of the schools are attending the Coral Gables public schools are from outside the city boundaries. So, if you apply that number to, let's say 12-1300 children that have some sort of disability, maybe 14 percent of those individuals would attend instead of sending their kids to another school outside the boundaries, they'd send them to a school if it was offered within the city boundaries that was in a public setting. But they have no other choice, because both parents work, they can't drive in a different direction or one reason or another, they make that sacrifice financially. I met people who can't even afford to send their kids to a private school and say, I'd rather send them to a public school, because I believe in public education, and I respect that. But I think that – I would like, and I know my colleagues would, to just see if we can explore it and get all hands-on deck. You have Commissioner Sosa who has a significant amount of financial money available, the last time I checked, to make an investment in this type of education. She wants to leave a legacy. We worked on it for several years. We couldn't bring it to fruition. We couldn't find a location. But I'd like to see us explore that.

Dr. Acosta: Mr. Mayor you bring up a very good point and that's something that we could explore, but in terms of residents of Coral Gables, and I want to be very specific to what we are discussing. We are discussing one component within our ESE department, which is a self-contained student with autism in this particular spectrum. For this particular program, if some parents are choosing to drive their students to a private institution outside of the City of Coral Gables, my question and this is where we would have to explore is, why are they not choosing to drive their children to a Dade County Public School that offers the same program. So that's a deeper question that we would have to look, because if distance and driving is not a factor in going to a private school, then it shouldn't be that factor in going to a public school. So that's something that we would need to explore.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Anderson.

Commissioner Anderson: The facilities that the Mayor mentioned for local, they weren't driving to them, so that eliminated that.

Mayor Lago: I think that we can have this discussion in further detail, I think it's something that we need to have. We can't continue to say we are going to talk about it in a year or we are going to continue to bring this up. This is one of the last components that is essential to really rounding out our educational portfolio here in the City of Coral Gables; and there has always been a saying, if you build it, they will come. I think that if we build it with Miami-Dade County Public Schools exceptional reputation, I think you are in the 80's now of graduation, 90's, was it?

Dr. Acosta: 94.

Mayor Lago: 94 was something that you were celebrating the other day, the Superintendent, I commend him on getting those with your staff and your team, getting those graduation rates to a pretty impressive level. And I think if you build it, I'm a believer that they will come, because if you look at institutions like Vanguard and other institutions, like Crystal, Prism, they are full to capacity, they are full to capacity. And I think that there are people who would say, I would send my kids to a public school if it was offered at Coral Gables Senior High or Coral Gables Elementary or Ponce Middle. I want to move forward on this issue.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'll make a motion to move and accept the minutes from the boards.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

City Attorney Ramos: Do you also want a motion to adopt a resolution asking the School Board?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes. I'll make a motion to adopt a resolution asking the School Board to pursue this and work with us on kind of make it a reality.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: In closing, I want to say thank you to our members from the School Board – go ahead please.

Ms. Torres: I know its not the item but its kind of related to it. I did want to ask if it's a possibility since we are talking about autism programs, maybe to expand also as far as high school. Many of our high school students and high schools have partnerships with the city that they are in. So, for example.

Mayor Lago: City of Miami.

Ms. Torres: Exactly. The ones who are in our programs at Coral Gables High School, they do their Project Victory, which is like a hands-on daytime, either full daytime or part daytime experience. They've been doing it at Children's Hospital and then they transitioned over to Publix, but in some of our other schools, they have that program with City of Hialeah or other municipalities. So, I wanted to know.

City Commission Meeting

Mayor Lago: We talked about that at the last meeting that I attended with Ms. Sando and our team here, saying let's do the same thing here. So, we are working on that, and I know that staff is going to present that in one of the next future Commission meetings.

Ms. Torres: So, this is something that I know is not part of the item, but I would definitely like to explore because we have our transition.

Mayor Lago: Send all the information to our team and copy the Commission and copy the Mayor.

Ms. Torres: Yes. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I just want to say thank you to the members of the School Board. Send our best to the new School Superintendent, along with Ms. Sando, you are resilient, I love it. I can't thank you enough. Keep fighting, it's the only way we are going to push the ball forward. Obviously, thank the Chair, the entire committee. Ms. Garcia-Levi, I would not even attempt to say Raquel's last name, so I always say Raquel, so its not a matter of respect, so I won't even try, I apologize. But thank all of you for keeping the ball moving forward and we are achieving a lot of great things and it's based on all your community efforts, so thank you.