

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-5
January 9, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Frank Fernandez
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Ariel Fernandez

Agenda Item H-5 [0:00:00 p.m.]

A discussion of a new community platform called CityGrader, developed by a Coral Gables based business.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Now, H-5, a discussion of a new community platform called CityGrader.
Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: Yes. Thank you, Mayor. I'd like to call Ariel Fernandez up and his team, who came to see me, I think it was probably about a month ago -- no, two months ago.

Ariel Fernandez: Like three months ago.

Commissioner Lago: I think we've met like probably three or four times on this issue and they have an interesting platform, which, again, you know, I think Coral Gables separates itself, because we offer an incredible service and we pride ourselves on the service that we provide to the residents and the business community. But I think above that, I think we pride ourselves on transparency, and this is the kind of service which I think could potentially not only help cities, I guess, but would really revolutionize certain cities that maybe are not up to the level that we are in regards to transparency and service, so take it away.

Mr. Fernandez: We do have a PowerPoint presentation, if you could pull that -- there. First off, thank you all so very much for the time you each individually gave us to explain what CityGrader was and how CityGrader worked, also, to staff, the City Attorney, the City Manager, the Clerk and everybody who met with us during this process to learn more about CityGrader. What is CityGrader? CityGrader is a platform that allows residents, business owners, visitors of a municipality to post comments, reviews and grades for city employees, city departments and municipalities as a whole, based on six different categories. Residents are allowed to enter a grade system, A through F, where they can grade the municipality on these six categories and post a comment on their experience either visiting the city with a particular employee or at a particular department. Why use CityGrader? CityGrader helps with civic engagement and reportability. Residents are often looking for places where they can go to express their experience with a municipality or with an employee, and right now, there is no other platform that offers them with this opportunity, so a lot of them take to social media, the Nextdoor app. CityGrader is a little bit different. It also helps with transparency and accountability. I'll be talking about the differences as far as the public platform and how it's different from these other apps later on. It increased the quality of the public services, because now we can correct if there

are any issues or commend any employees who are effectively doing their jobs or going above and beyond for our residents. How it works? You'll notice that there's been a bit of a change to our site since we had our individual meetings with you. This is version 2.0 of CityGrader. You will still go to the main page where you will decide to sign up. On the main page, you can sign up using your Facebook account or your Twitter account, or you can create your account with your email address. It has to be a verified email address. This is the Coral Gables page as it stands today. We've changed the visibility of where people can grade the municipality, where the grades show up. You can also sort by the six different categories to see what reviews have been left by residents. The grading system was also simplified. We originally just had a bar that went from A to F. Now you can actually select the grade for each one of the six categories, or you can actually give a grade. Quick grade -- you click on quick grade and you can just give the City of Coral Gables an A. It will give them an A in every single category. We require that the resident leave a review. We believe that this adds to the integrity of the grade that's being left. We don't think that somebody should give the City just an F without explaining why they're giving an F to City or a C or a B or an A. You can tag your review and you can also post pictures or videos, and we've increased that to four pictures or videos that you can post. One of the things that we discussed with some of you, you all thought there should be an opportunity for residents to leave a quick comment right after their experience. So, we have begun production of CityGrader Go. CityGrader Go is a tablet system, which can be available at your City Hall at your department, where residents can log in right there on the spot, give a quick grade. They won't have to create an account right away. They can do that once they get home and get an email asking them to verify their account. But right there on the spot, they'll be able to add this information. Now, for CityGrader Go, well, we've decided to add some components -- some that have been suggested by you all -- to the actual CityGrader Go platform. It increases resident participation, because people don't have to wait until they get home or to their car to actually post a review. They can do it right there on the spot. If they had a great experience with the attendant that they had at the Clerk's Office, they can go right there, post a positive comment about this person, but you don't have to wait until they get home and remember that they had this positive experience. It also raises awareness on the City's focus on customer service. The City

Manager and I spoke when she had just been appointed. One of the first things that she told me that capture my attention was she believed that the City should be focused on customer service, and she wanted to make sure each one of the departments had a focus on customer service. This helps show the public, the residents, that the City has its focus on customer service and is interested in receiving this feedback. It ensures the accountability. It promotes transparency. And, one of the suggestions that Vice Mayor Keon made was that she wanted to see other -- not just those six categories, but feedback on other issues as well. The CityGrader Go platform will allow the City to add survey questions in other areas that the City would like reviews on, not just these six categories. But for example, if this month the City would like to see what the reaction was to the Christmas park this past year, the City could actually post this question on the CityGrader Go app and receive the feedback. We're also talking about integrating this with the users online so that the City can send that survey to CityGrader Go members in Coral Gables.

Commissioner Lago: Which I think is -- we hadn't talked about this before, but I think it's great because sometimes you see, let's say, like a Monkey Survey being used, and I just think it just falls short. I just think it falls short, so...

Mr. Fernandez: And, I think this is...

Commissioner Lago: That's great.

Mr. Fernandez: Something that even though it is coming from the City, it does allow for an extra level of transparency. We're a public platform that exists, whether we have a public partnership with the municipality or not, so the City isn't controlling the information that is going out on this platform. This is information that is controlled by the residents who are posting it, by CityGrader, and obviously, once we get to the public platform, we'll explain how the City will be able to monitor this information. CityGrader, we believe, falls into the City's three-year strategic plan on several categories. The City listed values of governance with integrity, learning, and exceptional service. We believe this falls into each one of these categories.

Governance with integrity, because we'll be able to hold staff accountable for the actions they take with residents and make sure that there's consistency. Learning, because we'll be learning from residents as to what the concerns are, what the issues are, as well as what is working correctly and what the residents are happy about. And exceptional service, because it'll help promote exceptional service with staff. As far as the areas of focus, the City listed customer focused excellence, workforce focused excellence and process excellence. And these three categories, we also believe, as far as customer focus, world-class levels of community satisfaction and residents and visitors and businesses see Coral Gables as a premiere destination, this will help us boost our personal -- our municipality's image in our community. Workforce focused, this we believe will also help build staff morale. As a former congressional employee, I know that we would never get credit for anything that we did, because the member of Congress always gets the credit for the actions that they take. As far as municipalities, it's also -- it also works the same way sometimes. You may have an attendant here at the front desk that never gets the credit for the actions that they take to help a resident take that next step or answers the phone and helps that resident, but nobody ever finds out about it. I think this will help the staff get recognition for the great work that they do. And as far as the process excellence, measure and improve customer satisfaction, expand knowledge-based library and provide citywide process improvement performance excellence training. We believe that this part is one that the City could really take advantage of. Data mining, getting information, nowadays, the most important aspect somebody has or an organization has is the data and the information that it can provide. This is a place where the City would be able to go in and say we're looking for anybody who's posted information about the trees in Coral Gables, and the system will generate a sort of notification where you would know these folks commented about trees in Coral Gables or any other issue that's of importance at that time. It'll also help with staff training. Maybe we find that there's a pattern that has developed among staff and there's a particular training that needs to be done to help staff better service the community. CityGrader is, as I said, an independent organization, but we do offer a public partnership. The public partnership provides the municipality with an ability to monitor and respond to residents' concerns, so there will be a platform where the City will see what the residents are saying and will be able to respond to

them. One of the things that we have taken as a recommendation that Commissioner Mena had made was give the City an ability to respond to those negative grades, so that they're not affecting the City or the particular employee whose name is attached to that grade. One of the things we're considering with the public platform is giving the municipality an ability to respond. The individual resident who sent that low grade, from B to F, will get an email after the City's response asking them if they wish to change their grade, so that they have the -- or change their review -- so they have the opportunity to change it before it goes live on the site. It shows residents the City's commitment to accountability. We spoke about that. Provides the City with access to data. Rodulfo Raimundo mentioned that the City is very interested in getting new data that can help the City make decisions and make streamline things for the City. This is a platform that can help the City get a wealth of data. Access to the public partner portal is part of the public partnership. Update staff information for accuracy with a grade. If an employee leaves the City, the City would be able to remove that employee from the system, so that the grade of the City either goes up or goes down, depending on -- it doesn't affect the grade of the City as a whole. And then the last one is data mine reviews. I know that said date mine reviews. I know some people would like some date mine reviews, but -- because they love data, but it's data mine reviews. We believe that that is an essential tool that the City could benefit from as well. Any questions?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think it's a good program, and thank you for bringing this up.

Commissioner Lago: No, please. I wish I could take all the credit.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do we have a motion?

Commissioner Lago: I'm proud...

Commissioner Mena: I have...

Commissioner Lago: No, no. I'm proud that it's a City of Coral Gables company. And obviously...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: City of Coral Gables residents. And by the way, we're not the first city. So, the City of Miami has already jumped on board, and I see that -- I potentially think that this is a great platform. I mean, I think it's a great platform for many different avenues.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: I do, too.

Commissioner Lago: And, I love what the Vice Mayor came up with about surveys. I mean, I hadn't even thought about that. I mean, that just keeps the integrity right on point, because I think that you see a lot of people -- and it's happened here before when there's been development projects or there's been discussions about art or there's been discussions about whatever the issue may be. Hey, I have a survey. I have a survey that says there's X amount of people that agree or disagree on this topic. I think this really provides integrity when you're talking about surveys. Again, it may not be scientific, you know...

Mr. Fernandez: And a couple of things I wanted to add. The City Manager had asked if we were going to have the platform in Spanish. We're already working on having that available within the next few weeks, so that people can also log in in Spanish. And, Commissioner Quesada had asked about possibly posting the top-rated employees on the City's page. We've already done that. So, you'll now see the list of the City employees. They will be listed in the order of their grades in the next few weeks.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Do I hear a motion?

Vice Mayor Keon: Could I ask the Manager...?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Sure.

Vice Mayor Keon: How do you -- how they will interface with you? Is that -- how does -- how do you interface with the City?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We had a very positive discussion and we think that the more the public has the opportunity to provide helpful feedback, the better our city will become. So, we talked about how we could facilitate the knowledge of this program and that they are giving us -- since it's a pilot also...

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The opportunity to have regular feedback, so that they can continue to fine-tune their product and we can continue to benefit from it. So, we will...

Vice Mayor Keon: So, you'll work through the City Manager's office.

Mr. Fernandez: Correct.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: What are your thoughts on the -- I talked about this with Ariel, with the anonymity of the posts.

Commissioner Lago: I'm not a fan.

Commissioner Mena: I'm not a fan either.

Commissioner Lago: I think that you have to...

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, if you have to...

Commissioner Lago: You have to show...

Vice Mayor Keon: Provide an email address...

Mr. Fernandez: Correct.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, but that's behind -- right, that's...

Mr. Fernandez: And that...

Commissioner Mena: You would have access to that on your end.

Mr. Fernandez: We will have access to that. And as we had discussed before, if there's anything that's controversial, anything that could be seen as a threat, we would immediately provide that information to this -- the information of that individual to the municipality. That is something we will definitely do. And, we talked to the City Manager about that, as well. The City, as a public partner, would have access to more information, as opposed to not being a public partner.

Commissioner Mena: I just think the goal is accountability and integrity, and that's got to go both ways. And, I think if somebody's -- I have no problem with somebody criticizing a staff member for something that they were unsatisfied with, but I think they should have their name behind it.

Vice Mayor Keon: I kind of do, too.

Commissioner Lago: I agree with you.

Vice Mayor Keon: It's like writing an editorial.

Commissioner Lago: A hundred percent.

Vice Mayor Keon: You know, you need to sign it.

Commissioner Mena: Otherwise, it's just ripe for abuse, you know.

Mr. Fernandez: Well, and again, we have -- we will be monitoring these posts as they go online. And the City, as a public partner, can say that we have a concern with this post for this reason. We will then review it. And, if we deem that that post is controversial, is not accurate, we will remove the post.

Commissioner Mena: Right. But I'm not as concerned with -- listen, you know, I'm not like going to regulate the content of people's statements. I think they're entitled to say what they want, but I think when you put your name on something, there's a self-governance that comes with that.

Commissioner Lago: And I agree with you.

Commissioner Mena: You know, we get emails all the time on issues, you know, and they're pretty passionate emails. And you know, I think that if there wasn't even a name or email address behind those emails...

Commissioner Lago: We wouldn't take it seriously.

Commissioner Mena: No. I think they would go even further than they already do.

Mr. Fernandez: Well, but there is...

Commissioner Lago: I wouldn't take it seriously unless you're willing to put your name.

Mr. Fernandez: There is an email address attached to it. Remember, they have to create an account and the account has to be verified, so they can't just create an account or say mmena@coralgables.com...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Mr. Fernandez: Sent this post, because that's going to be verified by the person who owns that email address.

Commissioner Mena: But, will the actual post be Ariel Fernandez says the following about Peter Iglesias...

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Mr. Fernandez: Unless...

Commissioner Mena: Assistant City Manager of...

Commissioner Lago: Yes, yes.

Mr. Fernandez: Unless it is submitted anonymously through the submit anonymously post, yes. But again, we will be reviewing all those posts as they're posted.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, I think what we're saying -- or at least what I'm saying and I think at least two of my colleagues...

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: If not all, are saying is we're not big fans of the anonymous option because, again...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE)

Commissioner Mena: If it's going to be something that we're trying to have accountability and integrity and transparency, then that should go both ways.

Vice Mayor Keon: And that it's positive.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Vice Mayor Keon: I mean, that it's used a positive platform for, you know, enhancing the quality of services within the City.

Commissioner Mena: And it allows us to address the issue.

Mr. Fernandez: Correct.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: Because if somebody has a problem with an event that occurred with a given staff member, if we know that they didn't, you know, pick up the recycling at your house and you comment on that, now we can get that taken care of for you. If it's just...

Mr. Fernandez: Well...

Commissioner Mena: Anonymous, you know...

Mr. Fernandez: The City will be able to respond even to the anonymous comments, because it will be going to that person's email address.

Commissioner Mena: But, we won't know who it's going to.

Mr. Fernandez: You'll have their email address.

Vice Mayor Keon: But who...

Mr. Fernandez: You definitely will.

Vice Mayor Keon: Who...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But, we would like to know...

Mr. Fernandez: You may not have their name, but you will have...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Who we're responding to.

Mr. Fernandez: Their email address. I'm sorry?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would like to know who it's going to.

Mr. Fernandez: You would like to know who it's going...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Mr. Fernandez: Okay. Well, I guess that's something we could take back and we can discuss, and we'll be working with the City Manager on this.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If they're going to make a comment on excellence or non-excellence, I mean, or disrepair or whatever, I'd like to know who it is...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. I mean...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: So, that we can address that person...

Commissioner Mena: Their email address could be...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, thank him or her or correct the problems.

Mr. Fernandez: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: Another -- this is my final concern, and I agree with what Commissioner Mena's saying. As this platform grows -- because it will grow -- I think it's the next step in regards to transparency and efficiencies and the way we can manage governments. I think that's what, you know, all municipalities want. I want to make sure that we have your commitment that, you know, we won't be forgotten and that, again, when there are -- wait, no, no. It's the truth. I mean, again, if you're offering a service where we contact you now and say, listen, there's an inappropriate statement that was written there that's not factual and you resolve it in

two hours or a day, you know, that there's not comments out there in six months that are left there for a month or two months or...

Mr. Fernandez: Correct. And no, we won't...

Commissioner Lago: We have a...

Mr. Fernandez: We want a quick turnaround.

Commissioner Lago: Because we have a brand here that, again, we want to protect at all costs, you know, and I think that's critical that we protect the brand. And, I strive for that and I know my colleagues strive for that every day, and that's why we're implementing this.

Mr. Fernandez: And for us, it goes the same way. I think we are building a CityGrader brand that we want to also be accountable and to also be transparent for people to be able to trust the system, not only from the resident standpoint, but also from the municipal and the employee standard. Because we do -- we are accountable to the employees, as well, whose information is being posted on the website.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah. And I think it's also important that people understanding -- including the individuals up here, along with all the 800-plus employees in the City of Coral Gables, you know, this is an opportunity to shine. Don't look at it as an opportunity that's negative.

Mr. Fernandez: Right.

Commissioner Lago: This is an opportunity to shine, because when I get people who call me all the time to talk about, you know, a resident or, like you were saying before, congressional leaders; they're the ones that get all the praise. I'm speaking on behalf of this Commission. I

speaking a lot -- our two aides, our two chiefs of staffs and I give them all the credit, all as much as possible. You know, the police, the fire, all the employees here, they do an exceptional job and we try as hard as we possibly can, but a lot of times, just people -- you know what, they need an easy option to say, hey, this person did an exceptional job. Because to write an email, find the contact person, it takes time. And, if we can make this as easy as possible, so that people are able to shine and I think it's a good thing.

Mr. Fernandez: And streamline the process for them.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay. Motion?

Commissioner Lago: I'll make the motion, with Commissioner Mena's comments. I think that the entire Commission...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: Approved that we take that into consideration as we move forward, before we go live.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, we put the names.

Commissioner Mena: I think it is live.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there a second?

Commissioner Lago: They're not live on...

Vice Mayor Keon: I'll second.

Commissioner Lago: CityGrader.

Commissioner Mena: Okay, okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Vice Mayor Keon: I second it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, will you call the roll, please?

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 4-0)