

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-2
October 28, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Carmen Olazabal

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller

Public Speaker(s)

H-2 [Start: 3:36:52 p.m.]

Discussion and/or possible action regarding a Trash Pit Mitigation Program

Mayor Cason: Let's move on to H-2. This is a discussion regarding the trash pit mitigation program, as you recall. I think it was almost four years ago we put a quarter of a million dollars into the budget to provide for a solution, which we thought at the time would be slabs that had been in the ground, I guess two or three years being tested in lieu of or in addition to, it was a choice that we were offering to the residents to have either the pit, traditional pit or put these slabs in and so we are picking up here now, what are the possible solutions.

Ms. Keller: Yes, this has been a long time coming. Good afternoon Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commission, I'm Jessica Keller, Assistant Public Works Director, and this program is to restore our City swales and limit the excavation of pits by our trash collection operations. Currently we collect trash five days a week and last year we tipped 33,000 tons of predominantly yard waste. Currently we have over 3,700 pits that need to be filled in the City of Coral Gables, and right

now we fill them with lime rock and we fill them as manpower becomes available. So when we have extra manpower we get out there and we fill them. Recently, we filled 190 trash pits around the City, over 8 days using our contractor; this is one of those pits. Typically they last one to two years before we have to go back and refill them again. And as the Mayor was saying, we had explored the possibility of using high density polyethylene, and we had a pilot at the 2700 Block of Country Club Prado. We installed four of these slabs about six years ago and we only have one that remains. We installed another one two years ago and that no longer remains. The HDPE actually is in very good condition, it's the anchoring mechanism that we haven't been able to refine. So the bucket picks up the slab and takes it away with the yard waste. So then we explored – that's a close-up picture of the slab there.

Mayor Cason: Let me ask you before you go on.

Ms. Keller: Sure.

Mayor Cason: What is the annual cost to us of everything involved with buying the crushed rock, what's the bottom line cost with what we are doing now?

Ms. Keller: Well we had budgeted \$33,000 this past year.

Mayor Cason: \$33,000 a year?

Ms. Keller: \$33,000 for lime rock?- yes.

Mayor Cason: And does that count labor cost and everything else?

Ms. Keller: Yes.

Mayor Cason: OK.

Ms. Keller: And that's when we do it ourselves in-house.

Commissioner Lago: I apologize. What was the cost again, I'm sorry?

Ms. Keller: We have \$33,000 budgeted per year.

Commissioner Lago: OK. Do you have any idea of how many holes we fill in a year?

Ms. Keller: Yes. Well how many we do per year?

Commissioner Lago: Yes, just on average let's say over the past two or three years.

Mr. Cetty Marino: Hi, my name is Cetty Marino; I'm the Sanitation Superintendent for the City. Gables Estates, obviously...average per week you could do ten a day, an average 50.

Commissioner Lago: About 500 a year.

Mr. Marino: No. No. Because it depends whether you have the manpower or not to do every day, we don't have that ability to fill holes every day.

Commissioner Lago: OK. So what I'm trying to do is I'm trying to get to a number per pit and how often we have to, let's say....

Mayor Cason: \$33,000 divided by 2700, did you say, 2700 pits.

Mr. Marino: No, no, that's the number of dollar amount; the number of pits is 3700 pits.

Mayor Cason: 3700 pits.

Ms. Keller: 3700 trash pits in the City that need to be filled.

Commissioner Lago: Oh, that needs to be filled.

Ms. Keller: That needs to be filled – yes.

Mayor Cason: How many pits do we have altogether?

Commissioner Lago: Because I want to get...

Ms. Keller: How many locations?

Mayor Cason: Yes, how many holes are there?

Ms. Keller: We have actually holes to be filled 3700, we service 11,000.

Commissioner Lago: And the reason why I ask you about the number, just to get an average in regards to what each pit would cost to fill, so I know that there is also gas, there is manpower,

there is insurance, there is overhead, but I just want to get an idea because later on when we discuss the actual plates I want to know what the life expectancy is and all that information.

Ms. Keller: So if we were to average out right now it would cost approximately \$129 per pit as an average, and we got that number based on the fact that we just filled 190 holes in the City and that was the cost of it for us to do those holes.

Mayor Cason: That's an annual cost?

Ms. Keller: To do 190, it cost us \$129 per pit.

Mayor Cason: And they last for two years.

Ms. Keller: One to two years, yes.

Commissioner Lago: That's not a very good lifespan.

Ms. Keller: No, it's not.

Mayor Cason: Well, it's because they pick up the....

Commissioner Lago: I'm just speaking about it right now. OK. So \$129, OK – perfect.

Ms. Keller: And since we are along the lines of asking how much each of these cost, I'll tell you how much each one of them cost. The high density polyethylene will cost \$338 to \$500 each and that does include labor, this is outside labor; and they may last up to six years if we were fined the anchoring mechanism.

Interim City Manager Olazabal: How much did they cost per hole?

Ms. Keller: For high density polyethylene is \$338 to \$500.

Mayor Cason: So we put \$250,000 in the budget, so divided by 500 that's roughly, what does that come out to? - 500.

Ms. Keller: If we were to do all of them it would be a million and a half dollars, that's the average.

Mayor Cason: So the amount of money that we have in the budget is roughly four years ago would take care of 500 slabs not counting labor at the high end of the cost.

Interim City Manager Olazabal: And I believe the original plan was to do it in....

Ms. Keller: Yes, over the course of five years, that was the original plan.

Commissioner Quesada: They are not lasting like we anticipated.

Ms. Keller: I'm sorry?

Commissioner Quesada: They are not lasting like we anticipated.

Ms. Keller: No they are not.

Mayor Cason: But they are lasting not because they are broken, but because you haven't been able to find an anchoring. Have you ever thought of putting them in a base of cement or something?

Ms. Keller: We have very talented engineers that work for the City and I'm certain we could figure it out.

Commissioner Quesada: It's also got to be cost effective too though. Are we creating a brand new expense?

Ms. Keller: Well that is our concern is the maintenance that would be associated with those slabs.

Commissioner Quesada: Are there any other materials, I know you guys ended up on this material; you thought it was the best.

Ms. Keller: Oh, I still have one more.

Commissioner Quesada: Oh, I'm sorry.

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you a question...the \$129 per pit is that yearly or is that a year and six months?

Ms. Keller: \$129 per pit to fill it. If it last one year then it's every year, if it last two years...

Commissioner Lago: What do you think is fast?

Ms. Keller: Two years.

Commissioner Lago: Just trying to see – two years?

Ms. Keller: I would say two years.

Mayor Cason: Two years – so let's say half of that per year. Why don't you continue with the rest of your...

Ms. Keller: So we explored another material and its recycled asphalt fill and for those of you who don't know what recycled asphalt fill is, its 95 percent lime rock, but it has 5 percent asphalt material within; and because of the liquid content of the asphalt what happens is it hardens over time and so there is a crust that forms over the top and it makes it more resilient to loads applied by the bucket.

Mayor Cason: Now when you say overtime, the week after you put it in the truck comes with the claw, what does it do?

Ms. Keller: Well if you were to go out and look at the – installed some of these, we installed about 30 of them last week and if you were to go out there you can feel the difference between lime rock, which is even though its compacted it's still loose, but the recycle asphalt its sturdier, you can just feel the difference.

Mayor Cason: But it doesn't until it hardens it won't take a big chunk out of it and back where we were. Can that be made green?

Ms. Keller: It can be colored. It can be colored either with a sealant or it can be incorporated in the mix.

Mayor Cason: When I look at the picture with black, most of the residents don't like the white. They say it looks out of place. I'm not sure if black is out of place, it would be really great if you could make it green then it looks like the grass.

Ms. Keller: Well what you will find, if you go and take a ride out, is that it actually looks like the color of the soil around and we have a number of pictures, which I did not have included for this

presentation, where when you do place it next to a tree it does look like an extension of the soil around it, but it can be colored.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Can you send us a location so that we can go out there and take a look at it, mail it to us.

Ms. Keller: Yes – absolutely. Yes.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK.

Mayor Cason: I think the key thing is really, other than the aesthetic is the safety. We've all seen or people have told us their car at night when they pull in to go to somebody's house to a party and boom, they go down...

Commissioner Lago: I'm actually dealing with that in regards to a resident right now.

Commissioner Quesada: I actually helped get a car out of a hole once.

Mayor Cason: Plus the fact when you get out of your car and you fall into one.

Commissioner Quesada: And the problem too with that resident is the issue of insurance. Who is going to pick up the tab, is it going to be the City's responsibility?- is it going to be the resident's responsibility?- so they are actually asking you to look into it.

Mayor Cason: I think the key thing is that we don't have those holes anymore, whatever the solution is. So I think the worst is what we have now. I don't see any down side. It seems to me that the asphalt....

Ms. Keller: It's also much more expensive, I want to put that out there.

Mayor Cason: This asphalt seems, from the looks of it, \$500, not even counting labor, which will give you 500 pits a year, it doesn't really – that's not very cost effective.

Ms. Keller: The \$500 does include labor.

Mayor Cason: It does – OK.

Ms. Keller: All of the figures that I gave you will include the labor.

Mayor Cason: With a quarter of a million dollars that we already have in the budget would that fill the 3700 holes?

Ms. Keller: It will fill about 60 percent of the holes. So we would need to budget money next year and then continuing maintenance.

Mayor Cason: And this would be an option for the residents to say, I like my hole or I want...

Ms. Keller: We would prefer them all filled.

Mayor Cason: I would assume most of them wouldn't want it, but you never know.

Ms. Keller: So what we are recommending is that we move forward fill about 250 holes and we would like to see what the community's feedback is. We do get a lot of complaints about the white lime rock and so we would like to get the feeling of what the community thinks, so we would need time to bid any of this out, and so in the meantime we could fill some holes see what the feedback is.

Mayor Cason: You plan to do it yourself?- or go to a contract?

Ms. Keller: Initially we could do it ourselves.

Mayor Cason: And could you make it green to start off with, which is the best option and see...

Ms. Keller: That may hold us up because we would want to make sure that any sort of additives are OK'ed by the County and also, of course, we would want you to agree with whatever color that we move forward with.

Mayor Cason: Something that's not intrusive. See if it's possible.

Ms. Keller: Yes.

Mayor Cason: So you want to test some out – are you going to ask the neighbors would you be a Guinea pig for this?- how you are going to pick the 250 or whatever you are doing?

Ms. Keller: We would just start in a part of the City and go, but we can split it up however you would like to.

Interim City Manager Olazabal: We should have enough in this budget to do 60 percent of the holes...get some feedback and then continue.

Mayor Cason: Yes, moving forward, but when you do your test, I would think at least knock on the door and ask, do you mind we are going to put this in, we think it's better than what you've got. If you don't like it, I supposed it can be taken out, I don't know, rather than just doing it. What do you guys think?

Commissioner Keon: I would tell them. It would be an opportunity to get input from your residents as to whether they like it or not, you know or whether they....

Mayor Cason: How long would your experiment be? What's your test period to know that other than the reaction of the neighbors after a couple of times it's not breaking, there is no hole, then is it – when do you come back?

Ms. Keller: What we are really looking for is the reaction of the neighborhood. We are very confident that this material is going to perform better than the lime rock, and as soon as we could put the bid out that's what we would do, we can move forward.

Mayor Cason: Anymore discussion?

Commissioner Keon: Is there another way to pick up yard waste other than with that bucket?

Ms. Keller: We can move onto that part of the discussion now.

Commissioner Keon: OK.

Ms. Keller: We have looked at a number of alternatives as far as how to remove the waste. As far as efficiency goes, right now this is the most, the quickest way we can remove the trash. If we were to change the type of equipment and the type of equipment that we take a look at, it would slow down the operation and we would need additional resources in order to be able to keep picking up at the rate that we do currently.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Lago has a quick question.

Commissioner Lago: So we talk about lime rock at \$129 per pit, the plastic between \$300 to \$500; this mix what are we looking at in regards to cost?

Ms. Keller: About \$111 per trash pit.

Commissioner Lago: Per trash pit.

Ms. Keller: Yes.

Mayor Cason: And you think that will be good – any idea how long you expect this to last?

Ms. Keller: Our expectation is at least five years.

Mayor Cason: So...a year?

Commissioner Lago: I ran the numbers and when we were talking about the lime rock, you can say it lasts two years and you put about a six-year – I'm using a six-year window because I'm comparing it the plastic plate. You are talking about a \$387 expense over six years and that doesn't even include man power that just includes the lime rock itself. The plastic plate between \$300 and \$500 for six years and this for \$111 for six years is pretty significant savings. One last question in regards – I'm in favor of doing the testing with the mix material. Do you have anything sustainable?- anything green?- have you seen anything out there that maybe could offer us a different outlet, something that's being tested somewhere else in the community?- maybe in another state that could offer us something?

Ms. Keller: Many people would say that the recycle asphalt is actually a very sustainable source for producing quite a bit of asphalt from our millings.

Mayor Cason: So that's where it's going to come from?- it's not that we would dump somewhere...?

Ms. Keller: It's not going into the landfill, its being used.

Mayor Cason: You are going to get it and liquefy it and pour it over and it will harden?

Ms. Keller: No, it's actually ground up and it's washed and ground up, and it is placed back into – well it will be putting it back into...

Commissioner Lago: They'll probably add some sort of additive to it which will cause it to join, to adhere to each other, to adhere to each other.

Mayor Cason: While you are going through the test, do check about whether you can make it a color that's less visible in case you find out that the residents say they like it, except they don't like the black.

Ms. Keller: OK. And I'll also follow up and make sure that we get you the locations of the existing, where we filled it recently.

Mayor Cason: And check before you do it, tell them what you are doing, what it's all about.

Commissioner Lago: If you'd like a great test site, I can give you one it's about a seven-foot deep hole right now; it's like a small village living inside a hole.

[Laughter]

Mayor Cason: About \$500 to fill the hole.

Commissioner Lago: \$500 – it's probably going to cost like \$5,000.

Mayor Cason: OK. Do you think – do we need a resolution? I think you've got your guidance, does anybody disagree?- move forward.

Commissioner Lago: I'll make a motion to move forward and test option 3, which is the mix, the asphalt, recycled asphalt mix.

Mayor Cason: OK. And we have a second?

Commissioner Quesada: And incorporate the color.

Commissioner Lago: And incorporating the color as the Mayor had stated. Do you know how many test sites we are going to do or that's just up to...?

Ms. Keller: We were going to move forward with approximately 250.

Commissioner Lago: 250 – OK. Perfect.

Mayor Cason: So we have a motion by Commissioner Lago, Commissioner Quesada seconds it.

City Clerk

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes
Commissioner Lago: Yes
Commissioner Quesada: Yes
Commissioner Keon: Yes
Mayor Cason: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Did you have something else to discuss?

Ms. Keller: One other item to discuss and it was related to the possibility of exploring an amendment to the City Code related to the trash holes; and we would like to explore the possibility of having landscapers remove the yard waste themselves other than putting it into the swale and if you are an occupant of the residence you may place it in the swale. Currently the City of Deerfield Beach operates that way, they do not have a trash hole problem, they do not have the type of canopy that we have either, but its working very well for them, and we would like to explore that.

Commissioner Keon: What is that?

Mayor Cason: What do you mean? What do you mean by – are you talking about...

Commissioner Lago: When you have your landscaper come over to your home, your residence, basically what they would do is instead of taking the waste material or the clippings with them, they would use the pit.

Ms. Keller: I'm going to use an example.

Commissioner Lago: That's what they currently, you want to get away from that, but there is an issue with that though, I'm not in the landscaping business. They would probably pass the cost on to the resident by saying; if I'm going to remove this waste and not use your pit I'm going to charge you an extra \$20.

Mayor Cason: And there are a lot of people that come, one person and cut your grass and do all the stuff and put it in the pit, they have no vehicles, they have no...

Ms. Keller: And that is something that we actually discussed and if we were to pursue this it would be something we would want to implement over time to give the landscapers the ability to

prepare for that. The Village of Pinecrest that's the way that they handle it, if you live in the Village of Pinecrest, your landscaper takes the waste with them and no one can place it on the parkway unless you schedule it through Miami-Dade County.

Commissioner Lago: I'm in favor of that. I received several e-mails from residents who are having that issue currently.

Commissioner Quesada: That's tough. Explore it...

Commissioner Lago: We should explore it. I don't have an issue with that.

Mayor Cason: The bigger problem is people driving by and dumping their stuff across the street in the neighbors and then you have to fight Code Enforcement, who is in charge.

Commissioner Lago: You know what's even a bigger issue than that is an issue that Commissioner Keon brought up a long time ago, I think we are talking about almost a year ago – cardboard, and I said on this dais at one point that we could not recycle cardboard and I was made very clear that that is incorrect, that we can recycle cardboard, but it's an issue of more man power or retrofitting our existing trucks.

Mayor Cason: It's like 10 percent of the waste; it can't be more than 10 percent or something of what we give to Miami-Dade.

Ms. Keller: Correct – cannot be...

Commissioner Lago: I think we should revisit that again. I would love to see if maybe staff can look into it and give us a real answer in regards to recycling cardboard, because I am the biggest offender of putting my cardboard into my recycling bin and my wife tells me every day, you know they are not going to recycle that. So I hope that they take it and they recycle it.

Ms. Keller: If you place your cardboard in your bin cut up and place in your bin, we will take it, your cardboard.

Commissioner Lago: But no one wants to cut it up.

Mayor Cason: Whether you just moved in. So what do you want to explore mean?- what are your steps?- what are you going to do?

Ms. Keller: Well what we would like to do is basically bring back answers to some of the questions you had. What would the impact be on residents and the landscapers? There is possibly the opportunity that if we reduce the amount of waste that we are tipping, we will save money and will be able to pass that back onto the community.

Mayor Cason: Are we getting money – are we getting money back...?

Ms. Keller: We pay to dispose of our trash.

Interim City Manager Olazabal: The amount that we give to Miami-Dade, the charges depending on the volume.

Ms. Keller: It's by ton.

Mayor Cason: Look at the question of whether or not, if you have a company that comes and they do it and they take it all with them, how do we measure whether or not they are going to charge the residents another \$15 because they have to go to the dump instead of....I don't know the impact – there are a lot of people especially in the north that are not doing so well economically.

Ms. Keller: And we'll look into all of that.

Commissioner Keon: Will you look into recycling too?

Ms. Keller: I'm sorry?

Commissioner Keon: Can you look into the recycling of cardboard if people don't break up those boxes, can they just put them inside one another?

Ms. Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: I hate seeing pizza boxes in the front of the house.

Ms. Keller: I agree with you.

Commissioner Lago: Can I give you one more. You came here with like two items; you are leaving with like five. Can I give you one more item to look into? Can you look into recycling in downtown?

Ms. Keller: Um huh. In what specifically?

Commissioner Lago: I have two restaurants that called me that they say that they take the recycling home with them so that they don't throw it into....so it doesn't co-mingle in the trash?

Ms. Keller: I recall you had mentioned a restaurant on Ponce...

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Ms. Keller:....and we did provide them a recycling bin.

Commissioner Lago: I commend you guys for doing that, but what I would like to do is I would like to see if we can offer all restaurants and any business in the downtown area that's interested in recycling the ability to recycle just like we offer the residents.

Mayor Cason: And another one, but one of the things that from time to time people will come to us with a solution, companies for electronics, for batteries, things of that sort that some cities – you go to Home Depot or something and they have a bin where you put the batteries. What do we need to do; maybe this could be probably part of the sustainability plan – electronics, batteries.

Commissioner Lago: All that's going to come under the sustainability plan. They are basically going to tell you is that we are lacking the ability to recycle large computer systems, batteries, light bulbs, which you can go to Home Depot and take all that, they have bins where you can submit that for recycling, but there should be two locations in the City, if not three. One example could be the back of City Hall, we could have a location where people could bring their computers and printers and that gets picked up basically on a monthly basis or a quarterly basis, when we notify the residents. Instead of throwing that in your trash pit, bring it to City Hall and it can be recycled.

Mayor Cason: And there are some companies that have come to me over the years saying, we will come every month to X church, you would advertise it and bring all your stuff and we'll take it all for free.

Ms. Keller: Yes – and we have actually talked to individuals who have offered that to us and it's something that we were going to take to the City Manager very soon.

Commissioner Lago: I want to mention one last thing. I don't know if I mentioned it before since we are talking about recycling, I wanted to commend you and commend staff for really putting,

working hard and making sure that we start recycling here in City Hall, that's a big step, that's a big policy step and I think it's going to pay dividends in the future.

Ms. Keller: We will be rolling it out at the public safety building in the next couple of weeks, so we are expanding.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you. Great work.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

[End: 4:02:21 p.m.]