



**City of Coral Gables
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
July 13, 2010**

ITEM TITLE:

Landscape Beautification Advisory Board Meeting of June 3, 2010

SUMMARY OF MEETING:

Chairman Maricris Longo stated that the order of business needed to be adjusted to accommodate the guests present. They are citizens of Coral Gables who have attended to discuss the project for the greening of Segovia Street median and swale trees, that the Landscape Beautification Advisory Board previously recommended to be completed. Maricris stated that the project has been postponed and they want to share their comments about how they feel regarding the project.

SEGOVIA STREET UPDATE: Mr. Moscetti asked if the Commission had approved the plan proposed by the Board. Dan Keys stated that the City Commission had received the minutes from the board with the motion of recommendation. Since there was no objection from the Public Service Dept. staff, the item was not included on the Commission Agenda as an item needing action by the Commission. Mr. Moscetti stated that at a recent public meeting the question came up as to what is happening with this project. The answer was that it was in the process and was going out to bid.

Maricris asked Mr. Menoyo to explain how project funding came about. Mr. Menoyo reviewed the project history noting that the purposes were to calm traffic and to create a safer environment for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles. He is in favor of an approach that takes the entire street, median and 2 roundabouts into consideration, noting that the addition of the two roundabouts have already made a positive affect on traffic through the neighborhood. The median project will also calm traffic and impact the safety of the street. This project was funded through impact fees from a developer, Armando Codina, received by the City and allocated to the project. He stated that the project was to be started when it was stopped by the City Manager who was contemplating changes which would add curbing and irrigation, change the median trees to royal palms and would leave Segovia St. with 4 lanes. Mr. Menoyo noted that the bids came in under budget and the City Manager wants to use this extra money for the curbing and irrigation.

It was also noted that the charter school being proposed by University Baptist Church and possible conflicts with their project and the Segovia St. project was another reason for delay. Mr. Moscetti indicated that the church is in favor of the Segovia St. project. Their traffic studies, found that there were no conflicts. He believes that the project is mutually beneficial for the school and the neighborhood.

Kendell Turner stated she felt the area would be much safer with the median and curbing is not needed. She lives on Alhambra Circle where the large median with no curbing is used by pedestrians frequently.

Mr. Menoyo stated that since the original plan included the swale trees and the bid only had the median on it, that the extra monies should be used toward planting the swale trees. He was also concerned that if the Segovia project timeline was linked to the UBC project that it would cause an undetermined delay.

Robert Parsley asked if the project was a formal project with construction drawings and documents. Mr. Keys stated that drawings produced by the Public Works Dept. were utilized for the bidding process, which incorporated the Board's recommendations and had provided for alternate trees for the median.

Discussion took place regarding the maintenance of the St Augustine grass that was included in the bid. Mr. Parsley and Mr. Keys commented that rain would be depended on to maintain the grass and that as a result the turf would become thinner and it is likely that some weeds would grow into the area.

Mr. Parsley asked the visitors what the board was being asked for. Mr. Menoyo stated that he would like to see the Board pass a motion that it continues to be in favor of the project as designed and that the board would like to allocate the difference in funds towards completing the project in full.

Mr. Parsley stated he did not think that the project had been thoroughly designed and would like to see the design completed with an overall landscape plan showing a boulevard effect including trees in the swale, which really changes the character of the street. He would like to see a complete plan with any alternates that might be brought to the table. He stated that Royal Palms are not necessarily an incorrect choice of tree. He would be interested in hearing the reason the change to Royal Palms is being contemplated.

Barbara Katzen and Mr. Parsley referred to the role of the Board as an advisory Board regarding aesthetic landscape issues only.

Maricris Longo asked what the board could do to validate the opinions of the citizens who have attended. Mr. Keys reiterated that the Boards previous motion was honored by the administration through the bid process. In the process, additional ideas surfaced regarding the possible inclusion of irrigation, curbing and alternate trees species. Mr. Parsley stated that irrigation was a very cost effective way to speed the growth of any tree species that would be installed and would not necessarily need to be continued in the long run. Mr. Menoyo expressed environmental concerns regarding the use of irrigation. Mr. Keys mentioned that there were offsetting environmental benefits of the trees that would benefit from irrigation.

Kendell Turner stated that she felt were the goals of the groups of people represented by Mr. Moscetti, Mr. Menoyo and her personal views noting that medians without curbs exemplified a more peaceful garden city appearance as opposed to that represented by Miracle Mile or Bird Rd. She felt the intent was to have a pedestrian friendly environment for people crossing the street and otherwise using the roadway.

General discussion regarding a motion took place culminating in a motion made by Robert Parsley, the final wording of which was "That the Landscape Beautification Advisory Board recommends that the Segovia Street project go forward as soon as possible as previously recommended by the board; that shade trees on the swales be included in the project as a priority; and that any changes to the project come back to the board for review." The motion was seconded by Jack Elmore and was passed unanimously.

Ms. Fulks, representing the Garden Club, stated that she was concerned about the tree choices for the project. She was assured that the trees that were selected had been researched and were appropriate.

ARBOR DAY: Dan Keys reported that Arbor Day went very well. He noted that the Commission has requested that future Arbor Day celebrations be held in April when it is generally cooler. It was agreed that the junior program was a good addition and would definitely be considered for next year.

Board members agreed that unless a special meeting is needed, that meetings will not be scheduled for July and August.

Janet Carrasquillo thanked board members for their support and enthusiasm through the years. She will be retiring the end of July.