

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item J-2
July 10, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Senior Sustainability Analyst, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

Mark Trowbridge

Agenda Item J-2 [0:00:00 p.m.]
Presentation of Coral Gables Green Business Recognition Program.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, procurement of Coral Gables Green Business Recognition Program,
J-2. Presentation, I'm sorry. J-2, hi. Good afternoon.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. Excited to bring this program forward to you today for your input and your feedback. It's a program that myself, the Sustainability Advisory Board, the Economic Advisory Board and Development Office and the Chamber of Commerce have been working on. So, we wanted to bring it to you today for your input. There is a PowerPoint. And I'll run through it really quickly. So, basically, what we've been working on is the vision of this Green Business Recognition Program is to recognize, reward and certify our businesses for all their amazing sustainability efforts. We've passed, you know, legislation in the City on plastic bags, expanded polystyrene, and our businesses are doing a lot of great things within our community and we wanted to create this certification program to be able to recognize them. And I'll go through a little later, on in the presentation, ways in which we want to do that. We also want to use this program to help educate our businesses on additional sustainability initiatives they can do within their own individual businesses and really encourage them, you know, to reduce their electricity consumption, their water consumption and so on and so forth. And as I said, we've been developing this in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, the support of Mark, the Economic Development office, and the City's Sustainability Advisory Board. And all entities are very excited to be a part of this process. And, this aligns also with the City's sustainability goals of reducing our energy, water, fuel consumption, waste and our greenhouse gas emissions, while increasing our recycling efforts. So, basically, how the application would work is a business could apply online. They submit their application to greenbusiness@coralgables.com. City staff, myself, maybe somebody from the Chamber of Commerce, the Sea Green Committee, the City's Sustainability Advisory Board would follow up on the application and the information and then schedule a site visit to actually go out and verify with the businesses that everything that they're putting in the application that they're doing, we're going to go out and verify on-site that they're actually doing that. Once that's complete, staff will review with feedback from the businesses and place them in a different tier based on how -- let's just say how green their business is. And I'll go over that in the next slide. And then, obviously, the benefits of that, enjoy not only helping the environment, but also, your bottom line on saving money when it comes to saving energy and water and going to more sustainable alternatives. So, the tiered

system that we came up with was similar to kind of how LEED works, which is bronze, silver, gold and platinum. Now, there are a total of about 75 activities that we've included that a business can conduct, and we broke the tiers off into 25, 35, 45 and 55 to be able to break off, obviously, going up to platinum, which would be our greenest of green businesses. The focus areas that we focused on are solid waste reduction and recycling, energy conservation, water conservation, pollution prevention, transportation alternatives, and general environmental policy and education. And basically, the goal, obviously, is to -- for not only the City, but also, our businesses to create a more resilient and sustainable Coral Gables. As part of the program -- I know there's a lot of stuff listed there, but some of the required -- basically, the baseline of activities that we're requiring businesses to engage in if they want to be a part of this process is not only using different online forums to calculate their carbon footprint not only for them, but also, educate their employees on sustainability. Post signs encouraging conservation, energy conservation, water conservation around their businesses. Obviously, complying with the City's expanded polystyrene and plastic bag legislation is a baseline. Have a recycling program in place. We know that that's a Miami-Dade County requirement, but we still want to have that as a baseline is they have a recycling program and it's regularly scheduled pickup. Another one is eliminate the use of single-use plastic straws and stirrers and make straws available only upon request. And if they are -- if there are straws, that they make them a sustainable alternative, whether it be bamboo or sugarcane or paper straws, or something of that nature. Another one is track their -- similar to what they're doing with their energy use -- track their water use from month to month, because some businesses -- they may not know. They just pay the bill and they're not looking at ways in which they can reduce their water consumption. And then, obviously, complying with a few others -- and then, also, doing an energy evaluation. Having -- you know, whether it be a utility company or someone to come out and do an energy evaluation on their business and then it can help identify additional possibilities for them to come out and increase their energy savings. So, the incentives. Some of the incentive ideas that we've come up with and we're wide open for input from the Commission and City Administration is we would -- the -- each business would give a -- that participates that gets certified would get a window decal to put in their window on their business to advertise that they are a Coral Gables

green business, and then also, a digital link that they can place on their website to help promote that. Recognition on the City's website. We'd be creating a website, coralgables.com/greenbusiness, where people can go to -- residents, visitors, if they're interested in seeing where the businesses are around -- and on the Chamber's website -- where they are situated around Coral Gables. Also, recognition in the City's eNews, Economic Development and Coral Gables Chambers newsletters, and maybe even doing a green business of the month or quarter for our higher-tiered businesses. Also, creating a City -- we already have an existing City Green Map that highlights all of our sustainability initiatives, where our bike lanes are throughout the City, you know, all kinds of initiatives. So, including that in there, where it's kind of a "Find a green business near you," if somebody was interested in visiting one of the green businesses as well. And then, also, what we talked about is recognition on social media and recognition even at a Commission meeting. I know we do the queue for the restaurants, so something maybe similar to that, where we bring the businesses up to a Commission meeting and they can get recognized for their efforts as well. And then, also, we started exploring potential financial incentives. And, what we've looked at is maybe a discount on the business tax renewal license. That's something we're still discussing. And, maybe a potential discount for our businesses that are platinum green businesses. So, basically, our greenest of our green businesses, maybe providing an additional financial incentive via that mechanism or a discount on a Chamber of Commerce annual membership as well.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Did you know that Mark Trowbridge is green, sustainable and recyclable? He should be platinum.

Mark Trowbridge: And 90 percent butter.

(LAUGHTER)

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: So, some of the next steps -- and again...

Commissioner Lago: (INAUDIBLE)

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: We're wide open for recommendations from the Commission -- is I've already -- we've already taken this program before -- obviously, the Sustainability Advisory Board has been engaged throughout this entire process. They're in full support. Our Economic Development Board, I took it to them. They were very excited about it. And also, the Sea Green Committee, on the Chamber of Commerce, has been really behind this effort, and I want to commend all their support on this.

Commissioner Lago: Can I just add one thing?

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Sure. You've done a -- you've had an exceptional presentation. I just want to put my two cents on boards and committees. Someone brought this up to me and I hadn't even given it any thought. Why don't we have our Disability Services Board take a look at this because...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: If we're going to move in the direction of trying to limit the use of straws, I had not even given it any consideration.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: Have them...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: Kind of take a look at that and see...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Definitely.

Commissioner Lago: What other alternatives and make sure that they buy in, just like we did with the Chamber...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: And the BID, when we discussed plastic bags and polystyrene two years before we even implemented it.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: That buy-in made the transition...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Of course.

Commissioner Lago: So smooth.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Definitely. And that's something that we definitely want to do, and I think that was a big success that we had with our plastic bag and our expanded polystyrene.

Commissioner Lago: That was the reason why it was successful, I think.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Exactly, so I think that's definitely something that we want to incorporate into it. And then, obviously, just the next steps, just to finish up real quickly, is continuing to work with the Finance Department and seeing if there's a way of doing a BTR discount, whatever that amount may be, finalize our marketing materials. And then, what we're looking at is aiming maybe -- get through the summer and maybe, in the fall, officially launching

this program, maybe in an event with the Chamber of Commerce or however we decide to do that. But, we wanted to bring it to you guys now for your input and we think it's a program that I know we're really excited about and a way where we're doing a lot of great things and we're really leading an effort from the City's perspective and really getting those businesses and the private community buying into this, which I think is going to be really, really successful.

Commissioner Lago: And, I think that you made a -- what you put up there in reference to incentivizing -- I know that we banned -- I know that we banned polystyrene and plastic bags. We're fighting a massive uphill battle and that we've made it a lot easier for other cities to follow our...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Correct.

Commissioner Lago: You know, follow our lead. But, what I want to see now is -- and we've been discussing this back and forth on email with the Manager. Let's incentivize it.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Of course.

Commissioner Lago: So, when you talk about the BTR, if we can really give them some sort of incentive -- I know it's money and I know there's a lot of businesses, especially -- what do we have, like 200 restaurants in the City?

Mr. Trowbridge: Pretty close to that.

Commissioner Lago: So, if we can do something that, again, impacts them and saves them money where they may spend a little bit more money to find a product, which is more sustainable and -- obviously, not more because plastic's probably not sustainable, but an alternative to plastic straws and doesn't hit their bottom line, I think it's well worth it.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: I want to try to go the incentive route than just saying we're going to ban plastic straws. There's already -- I just want to recognize two...

Vice Mayor Quesada: I'd rather just ban them.

Commissioner Lago: Okay, whatever you want.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I mean...

Commissioner Lago: I just -- hold on. I don't want to be the banners of everything. You know, ban, ban, ban, you know. Just -- we just get a bad name after a while.

Vice Mayor Quesada: But it's for a good -- listen to me.

Commissioner Keon: For a good reason.

Commissioner Lago: I agree.

Vice Mayor Quesada: You understand it better than anyone.

Commissioner Lago: Hey, I'm with you.

Vice Mayor Quesada: You're the one who's pushed it.

Commissioner Lago: I pushed it. Trust me. I'm the one...

Vice Mayor Quesada: I know.

Commissioner Lago: But...

Vice Mayor Quesada: Starbuck's just announced that they're getting rid of all the straws...

Commissioner Lago: Nationally.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: By 2020, yeah.

Commissioner Lago: So -- and by the way, before we...

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: I don't -- Star -- and I'm happy you brought that up. I want to mention just two firms that have taken the step now in Coral Gables. John Martin's has done it voluntarily, along with Nordstrom's, the restaurant in Nordstrom's. I forget the name; it changed. It used to be Bistro; now, it's something else. They've been doing it for a while already. They offer paper straws. And, I think there may be another restaurant that's gone out of their way and said, hey, we're going to do it now. We're not going to wait for some incentive program. So...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's right.

Commissioner Lago: We -- you know, we...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And that's...

Commissioner Lago: If we have to ban it, fine, we'll ban it. But, I would love to see some sort of incentive program that gets away from that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I mentioned this, you know, some time ago and I think it's a very, very good idea.

Commissioner Lago: What do you...

Mr. Trowbridge: I was just going to say, you know, first of all, thank you very much. And, I want to thank Matt for his leadership. We've had a lot of input here not only from City staff, but the City board and our Sea Green Committee. And I think, you know, from a collaborative approach, what you see is quite a few months of diligent work. And so, I think for a lot of businesses, that sort of portal of entry into doing maybe the first sustainable activities is at that, you know, sort of first level. And, there are enumerable ways that they can qualify. I think we've tried to be rather exhaustive. But, it also leaves that option open that if they bring ideas to us...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Correct.

Mr. Trowbridge: You know, we could reevaluate that, figure out which tier that they could belong in and what makes sense. And so, you know, I think, you know, if we come back in six months and look at the number of businesses that have been certified or recognized, and again, going back to Commissioner Lago's comment. We love the idea of incentivizing. I think, again, that's a way that you get folks to buy in much more easily and be much more collaborative in that. And so, maybe that's the first sort of hurdle on plastic straws is that that's listed here, but moves us to, you know, a higher level of conversation.

Vice Mayor Quesada: And maybe we do Burgerlicious with...

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Paper straws and pasta straws.

Commissioner Lago: Don't forget the Mayor loved those plates that were edible that taste like rabbit food, remember?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah. They were great.

Commissioner Lago: Remember we had that, with the cookies and the straws that were made of candy?

Commissioner Mena: I can't -- I...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, and at John Martin's you can drink beer with straws -- with...

Commissioner Mena: I just...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Paper straws.

Commissioner Mena: I just can't believe that you just had this like Kumbaya moment and you're not going to ban; you're going to incentivize. And this guy comes along...

Commissioner Lago: I'm a good Republican.

Mr. Trowbridge: Well, he just came back from vacation. He's very well rested.

Commissioner Mena: I mean, you know, so...

Commissioner Lago: Frank wants to drop the hammer on them.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Drop the hammer, man.

Commissioner Mena: Vince is trying to, you know...

Commissioner Lago: I'm trying to -- you know, I'm trying to find some common...

Commissioner Mena: No, I agree.

Commissioner Lago: Ground here.

Vice Mayor Quesada: We have...

Commissioner Mena: I agree with you. I do agree with you, though.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I disagree on that. We have more waterfront in South Florida than any other municipality. We have a lot of...

Commissioner Lago: Twenty miles.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Fishermen, people that love scuba diving, and straws kill, you know...

Commissioner Lago: Do you know...

Vice Mayor Quesada: I don't know what the number is...

Commissioner Lago: Do you know how many straws...

Vice Mayor Quesada: But a lot of fish a year.

Commissioner Lago: Do you know how many straws are used every day? From what I've read, 500 million straws are used every day.

Vice Mayor Quesada: That's why we should ban them.

Commissioner Lago: And a great majority of plastics -- I think it's like 6 percent...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Commissioner Lago: Of plastics are recycled. So, it either ends up in a landfill or on the side of the street or in the ocean, because it goes through the catch basins, and then, obviously, it goes out into the bay. So, I agree with you. I think we did something drastic. We're at the Third DCA waiting for our final -- you know, we get that solidified. We're going to hit a home run and a bunch of other cities are going to see and...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They're going to do it.

Commissioner Lago: Are going to fall in line. But, I just want to -- I want to see if we can find maybe an alternate solution. If we have to ban it, I'm all for it. I'll go with you on that issue. But, maybe we can incentivize people to do like what John Martin's did.

Mr. Trowbridge: But I think you'll see, and we'll get really great feedback as we roll out this program, where folks kind of pick and choose to get their points, if you will, to pick what level they're going to be certified at. So, I think we'll get really good feedback. And, if we suddenly see that that area isn't being addressed or folks aren't making a migration away from that...

Commissioner Lago: We'll see.

Mr. Trowbridge: Then we could address it separately. But, I would just like to give this an opportunity to really roll out in the way that the committees and those where...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: Can you...

Mr. Trowbridge: Everyday business leaders.

Commissioner Lago: Since you're talking about feedback -- since you're talking about feedback, do you what the alternate prices are? Because I don't even know.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: So, with a...

Mr. Trowbridge: You're talking about straws?

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Specifically, the straws. A typical straw is half a cent, a plastic straw. And, a paper straw -- when I was looking at the research -- is about two to two and a half cents per straw. But, a business could if you -- and what we're encouraging as part of this program if a business wants to get certified is where they would do -- you would ask before you just...

Mr. Trowbridge: Right, on demand.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Give.

Commissioner Lago: That's the biggest issue.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And I think that's where you see it...

Mr. Trowbridge: And there are a number of...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: I think that's where you see a huge...

Commissioner Lago: That's the biggest issue.

Mr. Trowbridge: Restaurants that already do this.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yeah, that makes a big difference.

Mr. Trowbridge: If you go to BrickTop's...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah, that makes a big difference, because you're not buying -- you don't have to buy them in such large quantities...

Mr. Trowbridge: Right.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: If you're not just giving to everybody that comes through the door.

Commissioner Lago: Your margins come down.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Exactly.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: It makes it a little more cost effective.

Commissioner Lago: Great work.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anything else? Thank you very...

Commissioner Keon: I thought I saw...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Much, Matt.

Commissioner Keon: On the news this morning that McDonald's was doing a pilot program to do away with...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: Plastic straws. So, they're doing it also. So, it seems that the industry is...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Oh, no, the industry...

Commissioner Keon: Is addressing it itself. I mean, if one fast-food restaurant does it, they will likely all follow suit, so...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And, one other thing I just wanted to point out as part of this program as well is it's not just for restaurants. We're encouraging any businesses in Coral Gables...

Mr. Trowbridge: Absolutely.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: That wants to participate in this...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Would be -- it's tailored for any business.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And we try to be as comprehensive as possible. And as Mark mentioned, in each category, we do have an other, where, hey, maybe we hadn't thought of something that somebody's doing that really sustainable.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I think we got to as well do a -- we give a lot of press.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Quesada: To people that comply...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And that's...

Vice Mayor Quesada: And we have our ad in the Herald.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Correct.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Maybe we take a full day, you know, ad for that...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah, and that's...

Vice Mayor Quesada: To really -- put them up in City Hall.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Whatever we can do to give a lot of press.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And, that's why we really try to focus on the recognition part of it is because I think that brings so much value to our businesses, that they may be doing all these great things, like John Martin's and others that maybe not everyone knows about, is really bringing that up to the forefront and being...

Commissioner Lago: That's why...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Able to recognize our businesses.

Commissioner Lago: I was going to mention them -- I was going to mention John Martin's at the end...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: Of the Commission meeting, but this is the opportune time to say it.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Well, maybe what we do also is we give like a green award that they stick on their window. You know...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Well, that's -- as part of the -- well, as part of the recognition, we're going to have a decal with each different tier to where they can place it, almost like you would have Yelp or something else on the top -- on the front of your business.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yeah.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: That you could see that. That someone walks by outside and they see, oh, this is a green business. I want to come in and...

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yeah, yeah.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And you know...

Vice Mayor Quesada: Love it.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: And be a part of that business.

City Attorney Ramos: There's also an...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Great idea.

City Attorney Ramos: eComment that was submitted by Rhonda Anderson. This is an excellent program that will help encourage local businesses to be environmentally conscious.

Commissioner Lago: Awesome.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you, Rhonda.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Do we need to vote on this?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: We just brought it to you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's a report.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah, we brought it to you today just for your input. Like I said, if you guys have an opportunity and you want to take it -- look at the application in more detail...

Commissioner Lago: When are you rolling it out?

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Well, we want to roll it out probably in the fall. Obviously, we know during the summertime a lot of people are away or whatever, so we want to -- but we also want to, you know, keep looking at the financial incentive to see if we can finalize that and then bring -- roll it out maybe during the fall...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Is what we're targeting.

Mr. Trowbridge: But, we'll encourage some of the committee members who have businesses to maybe be a part of our pilot program, and the Chamber's going to help with that sort of vetting process. As Matt mentioned, that starts with the application submittal and then includes the site visit.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Can we...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautiful.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I know we can't push any specific vendors, but could we make them aware? If we have a list -- I feel like I've said this a few times and you may have this already, but every business in the City -- at least every restaurant should have a list of, hey, look, these are green vendors. You can get...

Commissioner Lago: Can I tell you what I'm doing?

Vice Mayor Quesada: Biodegradable plates. You can get biodegradable cups or whatever.

Mr. Trowbridge: The City may not...

Vice Mayor Quesada: We should create a list...

Mr. Trowbridge: Be able to do that. We can do that.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yeah.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: The Chamber can do that more easier than we can. I have restaurants that have called me, and I've directly said, look, I cannot, as a government employee, recommend one business over -- one vendor over another.

Vice Mayor Quesada: But, why don't we have a vendor list and invite any vendor who has green products to be on that list? We're not -- you know, we're not giving any preference to anyone. We're just saying, hey, if you have green products that you sell to this type of industry...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Give it to us and we'll put it on the list, so that we can go direct them to website or give them a sheet of paper saying where those vendors...

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: That's...

Vice Mayor Quesada: Just so that they're aware. They don't have to put a lot of work into it.

Mr. Trowbridge: We can help create that.

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. Trowbridge: We can create that for you.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Okay. That'd be great.

Commissioner Lago: Good work. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you.