

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-19
May 31, 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

Finance Director, Diana Gomez

Public Works Assistant Director, Paula Rodriguez

Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item I-19 [3:30 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission relating to the collection and disposal of solid waste in the City of Coral Gables, Florida; determining the Solid Waste Cost and the Solid Waste Service Assessments for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2022; directing the preparation of an Assessment Roll; authorizing a Public Hearing and directing the provision of notice thereof; and providing an effective date.

Mayor Lago: I-19.

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City Attorney Ramos: A resolution of the City Commission relating to the collection and disposal of solid waste in the City of Coral Gables, Florida; determining the Solid Waste Cost and Solid Waste Service Assessment for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2022; directing the preparation of an Assessment Roll; authorizing a Public Hearing and directing the provision of notice thereof; providing for an effective date.

Finance Director Gomez: So, this is the required resolution to set the maximum solid waste assessment for the upcoming fiscal year. This resolution also allows for the billing of the early payment discount, which allows for the discounted payment if paid by August 15th. If not, the full assessment is put on the November tax bill. There are three components included in this year's recommended fee increase. The first is the annual pass-through of the County and waste management tipping fee. The fiscal year '23 estimated increase is at 4.5 percent. In order to cover this amount, there's an additional \$8 increase to both the early payment discount and the regular fee. This will bring the early payment discount from 770 to 778 and the regular payment from 902 to 910 for single-family homes. The second component will cover costs to hire temporary help to offset those full-time employees on light duty or out on sick leave. This will help to alleviate the use of overtime as well as maintaining services during absenteeism. And there has not been an adjustment to the waste fees to cover temp services for over seven years. This increase -- this will increase the annual payment by an additional \$10. The combined total will take the early payment to 788 and the regular payment to 920. The third component will cover the cost to adjust the annual budget for holiday related overtime given the annual cost of living increases provided to employees. And there has not been an adjustment to the waste fee to cover holiday overtime for over seven years. The required additional cost will increase the annual payment by an additional \$6. The combined total will take the early payment to 794 and the regular payment to 926. As you can see, the recommended increase for the solid waste fee is \$24 for both the early payment and the regular payment. This increase will generate approximately \$260,000, all of which will be used to cover the increases to providing the services as discussed before. This increase does

not significantly change or lessen the subsidy that the City is current -- continues to cover, which is about 27 percent.

Mayor Lago: Okay, so quick question, Mr. Manager, how are we in regards to the efforts for the cardboard? This is intertwined with one of the items under the G section, which I have put under an item that I wanted to discuss because, obviously, the reason why we embarked on the cardboard process was to reduce the amount of cardboard that was going to obviously -- through the disposal...

City Manager Iglesias: That is correct, Mayor. If the -- all the cardboard is going to the recycling actually reduces our tipping fees because our recycling is under 10 percent contamination, so we don't have a cost as far as recycling from a tipping perspective. There's a cost for picking -- for trucking actually picking the material up, but not for that. So, we have our assistant director. It's happened shortly, so it's hard to put a figure on it. But...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: So, I can tell you that we have continued our efforts along with Code Enforcement to continue enforcing it. We do see an impact on the ground, so we do see less cardboard in the trash pits, and we do see a significant amount more of cardboard in the recycling collection. Like the Manager said, it's difficult to pinpoint, but we have seen a decrease of about 8 percent in our trash tonnage, and we've seen an increase of about 7 percent in our recycling tonnage. That does -- that is taken into account in our projections for next year's tipping fees. We do take the tonnage that we project based on our current trend and multiply it by the new rate. So, we are seeing the efforts make a difference. What the exact dollar savings is, and impact is hard to gauge because we don't track the disposal of one or -- of one piece or article separately from another, but we do see an impact in the decrease of tonnage.

Mayor Lago: So, we don't have a number?

City Manager Iglesias: That would be an 8 percent reduction in tipping fees for trash, which was approximately that increase in recycling, Mayor, which would not be a -- which not be subject to a tipping fee. So, it's...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: I can say it's about \$1,000 from Decem -- a thousand tons from December to now that the trash has gone down. And I can say that recycling has gone up by about 74 tons. The cost of disposal obviously for trash is significantly higher than recycling because we don't pay to dispose recycling, and so we can make an assumption that there's a significant savings in that, but it's not tracked separately.

Commissioner Anderson: That's one of the items that I had asked for numbers on, as well as, you know, hiring temporary help versus using overtime. Overtime usually costs more.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, so...

Commissioner Anderson: So, the first two items don't make any sense to me.

City Manager Iglesias: Using part-time help also allows -- the part-time -- the part-timers are a part of the program, so they can be hired in case we have any issues as far as help is concerned. Those can be hired directly. Those can be a direct hire and not go through the normal HR procedure, which will help -- which really does help Solid Waste quite a bit because you're not wait -- you don't have to spend two or three months in hiring. Those can be a direct hire because they have gone through all the HR procedure.

Commissioner Anderson: I understand.

Vice Mayor Mena: But we...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: It's been a very effective...

Commissioner Anderson: Go ahead.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Recruiting ground for us, the temp labor because you -- number one, the employee gets to see whether this is the type of work they want to do, and the operations gets to see the performance of those employees, especially employees that go, you know, door to door, house to house, and we expect a high level of performance from.

Mayor Lago: So, let me go back to my point. So, on G-8, which is an item that talks about cardboard -- which I'm going to scratch off the list now because we're dealing with it on I-19 -- we don't have a number for the cardboard.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: The particular amount of savings that the -- that has been generated, we don't have a specific dollar amount, but we do see the effects. We do see a decrease in trash tonnage and an increase in recycling.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, it's 8 percent, so we can assume that that's 8 percent savings.

Mayor Lago: Well, it should be a lot more, and I'll tell you why. Because something that I'm catching on, and I don't know if you all also are, people are finding other ways to not recycle their cardboard. So, what they're doing is -- and you can see it. You can see it because since we allow in the trash pits for black garbage bags to be used, they're just jamming all the cardboard into the black garbage bags, and they're dumping them out there. But obviously, a black garbage bag that's full of leaves looks completely different than a black garbage bag that's full of cardboard. So, my point is that they're finding ways to circumvent the process because they don't want to recycle. New York doesn't do many things right, but what I've seen lately that they've been doing, which I was very impressed by, was like I mentioned, was obviously they're starting -- they're cleaning

-- the streets are a lot cleaner. You're seeing a lot less homeless activity. You're seeing a lot of - a lot more flowering plants being planted, which is something beautiful. There's -- you know, there's a kind of a revitalization of New York now coming out of COVID. They were in some dire straits. One of the things they do right is very interesting, is in the commercial areas, they require all bags to be clear bags so you can see what's inside. You can see whether it's cardboard, whether it's food, and then you have to put it in different areas, and those areas, obviously, are -- those things are recycled. I know that people don't want to infringe on people's rights, but I'm voting no on this again for like a fourth year in a row, and I'm going to continue to vote no on this because this is a tax, and this is the worst form of tax. This is a lazy tax. This is a rich person's tax, which really bothers me because we're incapable of doing the simple things that save money, we are. So, we have a trash pit, and we just dump everything into the trash pit, and then it just keeps going up and up and up and up and up. When I got onto this Commission it was \$600. We're like at 900. We're going to be a thousand dollars pretty soon. Who knows what it'll be in five, six years. We have to be more disciplined than this. And all it takes is just -- you could use clear bags to throw your garbage away, which will force everyone to have to use -- to be able to recycle their cardboard so that 8 percent really should be 25 percent, 30 percent. And then that will taper down our garbage costs. It's the environmentally sustainable thing to do, number one. And number two, it will reduce costs. So, when Keith or Diana tells me, "Hey, Vince, there's no money to do this project --" let me give you one last point before I go -- and I'll get off this diatribe. When somebody calls me and says, "Hey, Vince, why don't you pave my street?" And then I got to talk to the Manager. And I say, "Mr. Manager, this family would love to have their streets paved." Or this manager would love -- excuse me, this resident would love to have their sidewalks done, or why can't we fix this historic building that's dilapidated, or why can't we do X, Y, and Z? I would love nothing more than to have more money on our side. And this is not money that needs to be produced through more tax revenue. This is just money that can be produced by us being more efficient and not being lazy. And I think that throwing your cardboard away in a black bag and not recycling it, to me, it's just -- it goes against everything that we value here in the City of Coral Gables, the City Beautiful. So, I can't vote for a tax -- even if it's \$8 -- because eventually,

it just keeps going up and up and up and up and up. And for people who were on fixed incomes - - I can afford it, but people who are on a fixed income that are trying every single day -- you have food that's gone up. You have electricity that's gone up. You have gas that's at \$6. I just can't continue to compound the issue. Taxes are going up this year because property values went up, and I think that we could do a lot more, even though I think we're doing a lot -- and it's not an indictment on your department. Your department's doing a great job. All of those people are doing a great job. But every single person here make sure that we recycle the cardboard. And we passed that legislation. And now when I drive by, I send emails, "The following home has their cardboard in a plastic bag." And then it just sits out there because we allow plastic bags to be in the trash pit because we're assuming that it's green matter when we know it's not green matter. What we should do is if you want to keep trash pits, I don't have a problem with keeping trash pits. But do not allow for there to be any garbage bags in that green matter.

Vice Mayor Mena: Why do we treat the --? I just have a question on that.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, of course.

Vice Mayor Mena: Why don't we treat the --? If there's a garbage bag and it's self-evident that there's a cardboard box in it sticking out, or you could just tell it's like protruding or whatever, why don't we -- why do we treat that any differently than if they had just put a box? Why don't we just treat that bag like...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: So, we...

Vice Mayor Mena: "Hey, you have a box."

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: We do. I have seen cases that we've enforced the black bags. We actually open them and inspect them like we would cardboard when it's evident that there's cardboard. You know, we do reach...

Vice Mayor Mena: That would be perfect.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: A good amount of houses, so we do enforce it. We have talked about the black bags before, and you know, it's silent as -- it's a practice that's been going on, so I understand you guys -- your comments on the black bags. But it is a practice that has been allowed in the City for as long as I know.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: But we do enforce it when it's obvious and when -- you know, especially if it's sticking out, we do enforce them. Maybe not every single one, but certainly, I have seen enforcement on those bags.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, if I may, before Commissioner. The moment you go to a clear bag is the moment this all ends, very simple. So, you don't want -- so you want to continue to have the trash pit, which I'm perfectly fine for if we can't find a solution for getting rid of the trash pits -- and I've offered many different solutions where we could reduce garbage fees incentivizing people to do it. I don't have a trash pit, and I pay my landscaper to take away his green matter. So, I pay more in trash than most people on this dais do, and I don't even use my trash pit because I don't have one. I have a beautiful swale that I planted. So, I pay my landscaper to take it away, which is fine. That's something that I want to do because I don't want to have my swale full of green matter for an entire week, or to have -- like I've had in certain instances where people have illegally dumped roof tiles and garbage and all kinds of things, you know, on my swale illegally in the middle the night. So, if we can't find a solution for this, but we can find a solution for so

many other things, it's just painful to have to deal with the facts that we should only allow clear bags if we're going to continue to allow a trash pit. What is the problem with that? I think people would comply, and that way you would basically force enforcement, and you would make it a lot easier for Code Enforcement officers or neighborhood safety aides to basically see as they drive by, "Hey, it's a black bag. Here's a warning. You can't use a black bag." We could allow a six-month window for people to use all their black bags. We're very lenient, and we give a lot of education. Case in point, the sidewalks, and case in point, the cardboard. But I think -- honestly, in your opinion, do you think that we could do a lot more and we would see a lot better results financially where we potentially wouldn't have to raise rates if we went to a clear bag?

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: I could certainly see the benefit of a clear bag. If that's something that you'd like us to explore, we can speak with, you know, the Manager and explore changing the ordinance. I believe right now the ordinance is silent on bags, so it would certainly require an ordinance change. And if we wanted to enforce it, likely, you know, by a penalty that we would need to write in. But it would certainly change the dynamic -- right? -- because the bag does not allow us to see what's inside.

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: We would need to be able to enforce it as well, right? So, we would need to be able to have the additional resources to be able to enforce it.

Mayor Lago: And it takes two things. It takes political courage to do it through us. By the way, I'm hearing from multiple different developments like Cocoplum, you know, Journey's End, you know, little areas, pockets in our city that are moving away from trash pits. As new owners come in, the associations will speak to that owner and ask them to remove their trash pits, and I think that's, obviously, benefitting the City. Think about it, we don't have to go into those neighborhoods and -- with the claw and remove those -- that trash. I'm more than willing to

explore that if my colleagues are willing to go down that route with me. It just takes a little bit of political courage to say, “Hey, you can keep your trash pit if that’s what you think is beautiful, but let’s at least move down the route of using clear bags.” I think that’s...

Commissioner Anderson: So, I’m going to take you a step further because we all drive different streets, or walk, or jog different streets, or bike different streets. But I’ve seen routine, repetitive violations of a box, a box with a paper, a box or whatever in the trash pits. But I’ve also seen a decrease in the amount of cardboard, which to me -- and I’ve dealt with waste on behalf of some of my businesses that I represent -- reflects lesser tipping fees. But I don’t see any reduction here from last year in the tipping fees, even though I know that there’s a lot more cardboard in the past what -- it’s been six months? -- that has gone into these trash pits. It’s higher.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: You won’t see -- in this particular item, you’re not going to see a reduction in the fees because we anticipate the fees to increase. However, the tonnage has decreased, and so the calculation for the total dollar amount has decreased. It would go up significantly more next year if for not the decrease in tonnage.

City Manager Iglesias: I think one of the issues is that we don’t know what that target number is as to what the reduction in tipping fees should be for cardboard. We just did it a relatively short time ago, so we don’t know what that ideal number is. Certainly, we can go to clear bags and so forth, but...

Commissioner Anderson: Well...

City Manager Iglesias: We don’t know, is it 8 percent? Is it 12 percent? Is it 14 percent?

Commissioner Anderson: That’s why I asked for the backup numbers.

City Manager Iglesias: Right, so we do have a significant change. It's 8 percent, an 8 percent change in the reduction of trash, 7 percent change in the increase in recycling. What that target number should be, we're still working on it because we've done this a short time ago. But we can...

Commissioner Anderson: I understand.

City Manager Iglesias: Do all these measures right now to try to increase that and get to some type of target number that we feel is going to be appropriate. But we do...

Commissioner Anderson: That's fine, but I did ask for the backup numbers because in our pre-agenda, I discussed my recollection was last year it was a \$4 increase. Now, we're at an \$8 increase which is double. It makes no sense. The other thing is the concept that we're hiring temporary staff, which means we don't have to pay time and a half, but yet, we're going to have to charge more. That doesn't make any sense to me either.

City Manager Iglesias: We've had -- we have had increases in salaries. This is to -- this is for recruitment or turnover, and to be able to direct hire staff so that we don't...

Commissioner Anderson: At regular...

City Manager Iglesias: Have to go through...

Commissioner Anderson: Hours. Sorry to interrupt, but at regular hours. When you go 1.5 times that regular hourly amount, it's more money than having temporary help. Where am I missing the point?

City Manager Iglesias: The -- garbage, they run about 10 to 12 miles a day. There are some accidents. There are some issues. And what we have found is that we are able to better maintain the workforce having a temporary -- some temporary help, which assists with the daily issues. It also -- again, from a recruitment issue, from a turnover issue, it's a -- we can direct hire those and have less downtime, two or three months downtime.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, I understand that temporary help is better and more efficient. But if I'm not having to pay overtime, which is time and a half as opposed to regular time, you know, it should be less money, not more money.

Finance Director Gomez: So, currently, we are absorbing the costs of the overtime. And so, then the subsidy just grows larger. So, now we're saying instead of the City just absorbing that overtime, let's hire the temporary staff in order to be able to...

Commissioner Anderson: Into our...

Finance Director Gomez: Not have as much overtime. So...

Commissioner Anderson: Well, I have no...

Finance Director Gomez: It's just something that -- we just in the past had never asked for the increase to the fee for that purpose. It's been over seven years that we've asked for increase for other purposes other than the pass-through of the tipping, so we haven't really asked for increases, except for the pass-through tipping. And for example, the reason that it's double this year, last year's percentage increase was maybe 1.5 percent that the County was going to raise it, maybe 2 percent. This year it's 4.5 percent. So, it's clearly that it's just more expensive and their -- the tipping fee is going to be larger this year, so that's the delta between last year's \$4 increase and this year's \$8, which is attributed to the tipping. For the overtime, in the past, we would just absorb

it and have to fund it with other City funds, so we're saying, you know, that the budget is tight. We're asking for the increase in the fee to cover its own costs, not even to 100 percent cover the cost. We're still subsidizing about 27 percent of the operations, so that's kind -- that's where -- that's why you see the increase because now we're asking for that increase to be absorbed in the fee to generate that revenue to cover those expenses.

City Manager Iglesias: The holiday work also is -- Solid Waste works every holiday, except Christmas.

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: So, there's that holiday pay increase, which has now been...

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: Which has not been adjusted for the past seven years.

Finance Director Gomez: But normally you just absorb it in the budget.

Commissioner Anderson: That's the third item, not the second item.

Finance Director Gomez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: I was just talking about...

Finance Director Gomez: Correct, but...

Commissioner Anderson: The second item.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, I'm just mentioning all three.

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: I mean...

Finance Director Gomez: It's just an...

Commissioner Anderson: The third item I don't have a problem with; the first two I do.

Mayor Lago: So, listen, I mean, the clear bag will resolve the issue. People are -- you know, you have certain people that insist on having their trash pit for one reason or another.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: I think the...

Mayor Lago: And I think the clear bag will resolve it. I would love -- with support for my Commission -- just that our staff can come back maybe in a month or two months with some ideas of what other cities were doing. By the way, we're one of the last cities that I know in Miami-Dade County that have trash pits.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: That's true.

Mayor Lago: I mean, I think we're maybe one or two. I understand that people love the idea of going out there and throwing a palm frond, but it's not only the palm frond. It's the doggy bags. It's illegal dumping. It's a lot of money.

Commissioner Anderson: If we had a tipping mechanism for the yard waste, the palm fronds and stuff, I think we could conquer it but...

City Manager Iglesias: They're not too many...

Commissioner Anderson: I have no objection to clear trash bags.

Mayor Lago: The Vice Mayor -- then I'll put it out there. The Vice Mayor disagrees with me. I could see it in his face but that's okay. It doesn't matter. I still love him anyway.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, listen, listen. I...

Mayor Lago: He's more libertarian than I am.

Vice Mayor Mena: We're all trying to solve the same problem.

Mayor Lago: I'm just trying to save money for the City. That's all I want to do.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no. You hit the nail on the head with the last point, which is, you know...

Mayor Lago: It's millions of dollars. How much is --? Look, watch this. How much is the delta, the 20-something percent, that we're paying right now out of the City's pocket? Yeah, how much are we falling negative?

City Manager Iglesias: But I -- but Mayor, I think sometimes that we forget that we have two garbage pickups in the back of the house a week.

Mayor Lago: I know.

City Manager Iglesias: We have one trash every week, and you have one recycling.

Mayor Lago: I understand.

City Manager Iglesias: That's four times 11,000, that's 44,000 touches a week.

Mayor Lago: But that's fine though.

City Manager Iglesias: And that is a very expensive thing to do.

Mayor Lago: I understand, but that's fine though. But if we had a little bit of oversight in regards to our guys -- again, guys (INAUDIBLE) do an incredible job. This is not an indictment on them. This is that we have a little bit of -- we have a little bit of -- we're not trained correctly because we have too many options. And for example, a personal like myself, who has gotten rid of my trash pit, I don't have any other options. I have to recycle. My landscaper takes away my green matter. And if I want to throw anything away, it has to be properly disposed of on my driveway the night before after 6 o'clock. There are -- those are my only three options. Or I can go to the dump, which is my fourth option.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's -- the issue I have is like you have people that are subsidizing everybody else.

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't have a trash pit. I don't put clear bags or black bags. I don't put any bags.

Mayor Lago: That's two of us.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, I'm paying whatever the current price is, \$900, whatever it is, 902 I think you said.

Finance Director Gomez: 902 was last year's rate.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I'm not getting a bang for my buck.

Finance Director Gomez: Or 770 if you paid early.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, no, no, but I'm not getting the full juice out of my 902 because I'm not tapping into that service.

Mayor Lago: And your landscaper's paying to remove the (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Mena: But then the people that are and that insist on having trash pits -- because if we don't have trash pits, it's like the end of the world, even though nobody else really has them - - aren't willing to pay another \$20. So, like there's a conflict there, you know what I mean? And I feel the -- no, no, I feel the...

Mayor Lago: Four million dollars a year.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, I feel the pain in another assessment like this, I do, trust me. We've bent over backwards not to increase taxes, not to add additional assessments. I also think we're going to drive people crazy. People are already upset about the cardboard thing. Now, we're going to come back with clear bags, and I'm not saying they're not...

Mayor Lago: How upset are they? How upset are they?

Vice Mayor Mena: I get a lot of messages about -- especially from seniors, and you know, my grandmother. You have a service for people to cut her boxes. She can't do it, and I'm okay with that. We did it. We made a commitment, and we're doing it, and we're getting there. I'm just saying, now you're going to come with now the next level of...

Mayor Lago: So, can I answer your question though?

Vice Mayor Mena: Complication relating to a trash pit.

Mayor Lago: So, let me answer your question, Vice Mayor. If it becomes the status quo...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: Because I can already tell you, when I drive down from my house, I drive down Alhambra. I can already tell you that half a dozen homes down Alhambra that literally religiously you drive by them, it's any day of the week, black cardboard -- excuse me, black bag full of cardboard.

Vice Mayor Mena: But it seems to me like...

Mayor Lago: And all you do -- Code Enforcement goes over there, stops by, and somehow -- they come, they take it back, and then they go, and they basically put it back out the next day.

Vice Mayor Mena: But it seems to me like, in most instances, you can probably tell that the black bag is filled with cardboard and address it, whether the bag is black or clear.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's my thing is like if...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Obviously (INAUDIBLE)...

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm not saying we're doing that, or maybe we can do a better job of that. Maybe we should do that more. But whether the bag is black or clear, you could tell if there's boxes in it.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, not necessarily, not if it's Styrofoam, you know, and the tape-cutting stuff. If you can open the top of the box, you can cut the tape at the bottom of the box. And I've seen big boxes out at my neighbor's house -- because they've got young kids -- just flat. And I got our guys taking it.

Vice Mayor Mena: Look, I get it.

Commissioner Anderson: They're a fairly good size. You know, if it's enough to...

Vice Mayor Mena: I get it but...

Commissioner Anderson: Five, six feet long.

Vice Mayor Mena: But we're getting -- but you do get to the point that you are effectively kind of a nuisance to your residents. It's like, I got to cut the boxes. Now, I got to get clear bags and I can't use Styrofoam, and I can't do this. And I'm not saying each one -- if you look at it in isolation -- is not a worthwhile effort, but I -- we've heard the complaints about this stuff and like we keep adding more. So...

Mayor Lago: But I haven't...

Vice Mayor Mena: My -- but...

Mayor Lago: Gotten a complaint about cardboard in a long time.

Vice Mayor Mena: Here's my point.

Mayor Lago: Have you gotten one, or no?

Vice Mayor Mena: But part of the political courage we're talking about is should we have trash pits at all.

Mayor Lago: I'm willing to vote on that.

Commissioner Fors: Yeah, I mean...

Vice Mayor Mena: Because let's be honest.

Mayor Lago: I'm willing to vote on that.

Vice Mayor Mena: Let's be honest. We all know the objective answer, but we don't do it because we know it would upset people.

Mayor Lago: But I'm okay. I'm willing to vote on it.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no, I'm just saying. So, like that -- and I think that's where we're like in this conflict.

Mayor Lago: I'm willing to vote on it. And then tomorrow the articles come out and all that stuff. I'm willing to vote on it. I'm willing to vote on it. That's why I tried to incentivize residents by reducing their garbage bill if you didn't have a trash pit. I'm willing to have a serious discussion...

Vice Mayor Mena: I am too.

Mayor Lago: About garbage pits because we're not talking about \$500,000. We're talking about almost \$4 million. Four million dollars, right? You said -- no, no, but -- I'm saying me.

Finance Director Gomez: But I'm saying I'm not sure what four million.

Mayor Lago: You said 27 percent.

Finance Director Gomez: Oh, is what we're subsidizing.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, almost \$4 million.

Finance Director Gomez: A little -- yeah, three, three and a half-ish, yes.

Mayor Lago: Okay, three and a half. That's coming out from the general fund. That's not coming out of the...

Finance Director Gomez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Nine hundred and...

Finance Director Gomez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Three dollars?

Finance Director Gomez: 902 was last year's.

Mayor Lago: 902. I mean, that's a lot of money.

Finance Director Gomez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: It's a lot of money. So, when people call and they say, "Hey, how come we don't have money to do this? And how come we don't have money to do that?" Well, because we're basically paying...

Finance Director Gomez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: To pick up all of Miami-Dade County's green matter because I've caught my landscaper years ago and my neighbor caught his own landscaper dumping his entire days' worth of green matter. I have videos that I've shown on this TV of people coming across 57th Avenue and dumping. But we just like the comfort of being able to, for some reason, be able to have a trash pit and dump our one palm frond there and say we can do that. Where there's so many different options, where you could have a rolling cart that's in the rear of the house, that's in the rear of the house, and you could put everything into that. If you need three of them, you could have three of them. If you need four of them, we'll facilitate it with a fourth, and we could keep track of how many people -- how many carts they have, and they can pay for it, just like Miami-Dade County does.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just like everybody does.

Mayor Lago: I'm not saying -- again, and please, before anybody says that I'm advocating for a -
- the carts to be put in the front of the street and the machines that come and pick them up, that's
not what I'm asking for. I will never do that. I would always have rear pick up because that's
something that makes Coral Gables special. But the idea that we just continue to do things the
way that we do them and just -- I mean, you're going to look back in five, ten years and the garbage
rate's going to be at \$1,500.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: So, to both of your points, as long as we have the
trash pit service, there is a cost for service. And so, while you don't use your pit, I still have a cost
to go down your street.

Vice Mayor Mena: Of course.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: And so, even if you're -- even if you have contributed
to the decrease in our trash tonnage, I still have to have personnel and equipment drive down...

Vice Mayor Mena: Understood.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Your street. And so, for as long as that service exists,
there is a cost to the service and the City has to dispose of their trash somewhere. And so, our
options are Miami-Dade and Waste Management. We do try to be fiscally responsible. We try to
go to Waste Management where the green is clean and we can take it to Waste Management, which
is a significant reduction in cost for us. We try to make sure that we don't go to the facility next
to us, which would be much more convenient, but costs almost \$20 more. And so -- but while the

service exists, we still have to pay for it. And so, I'm happy to look at all the options that, you know, the Commissioners would like us to look at and Administration. But while the service exists, there's still a cost for it. And so that's what we're here today for.

Commissioner Fors: For the record, I have trouble getting behind the transparent garbage bag requirement for philosophical reasons. I think I'd be quicker to ban garbage bags in the trash pit than I would to require transparent ones. Let me ask you a question. I mean, if you're -- in discussing that, if you're talking about trash bags in the garbage pit, ostensibly, somebody could put something in a garbage bag that's not lose leaves -- loose leaves that they're allowed to put in the trash pit, right?

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Small household furniture is an item that's allowed in your trash pit. I don't know that we open the bags to look at it all the time. I don't -- if you've seen my guys work, I'm not necessarily asking them to stop on Coral Way to open a bag and see what's inside of it. We'll probably take the contamination, but yes somebody has to (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Fors: And that's the conflict for me. So -- and I don't know -- it probably didn't happen that often, but when you're analyzing it in terms of, you know, the implications of what we're doing is I don't want to take away somebody's right to dispose something in the trash pit that they can lawfully dispose in there but may not want their neighbor to know about, whether it be a medical device or God knows what, and then be forced to then not use their trash pit, which they pay for, because if they do put it in there, it has to be in a clear bag. Now, we do know that probably the intended point of trash bags and garbage pits -- or we hope that the majority is loose leaves, right? So, if we don't have -- we don't allow garbage bags at all in garbage -- in trash pits, then what happens with the loose leaves really? It becomes impractical to really put them in the garbage, right? -- in the trash pit, right?

Commissioner Anderson: Not necessarily so because...

Commissioner Fors: Not necessarily? That's what I'm asking because my...

Commissioner Anderson: I mean, the green matter is the green matter. They...

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Anderson: Scoop it up.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: So, Ms. Rodriguez, I'm going to turn the question to you on the suggestion that we have rolling carts for yard waste.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Anderson: Do we have a way to tip them?

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: We don't have a way to collect the rolling carts. If we were to go down that route, we would look at the appropriate equipment to be able to do that if that...

Mayor Lago: Yeah. So, I just -- because I was getting some text messages from one concerned resident. I just want to put it on the record. I'm ready to vote. I'm ready to vote on trash pits, so I want to -- even if it causes me my next election, I'm ready to vote on it because I will not be intimidated by anyone, anyone. So, that's one thing, number one. Number two, we need to find a solution. I'm voting no on this across the board, and I will continue to vote no on this, number

two. Number three, the carts work. They work at every other municipality, every other municipality has them. You know what the carts do? They stop the illegal dumping. I wanted to ask you a simple question, and I would love your most honest answer, and this is why I respect you and every member of staff. They give me the truth when people don't want to hear. How --? I know you can't give me a number, but it's clearly obvious with the growth of the green matter how much illegal dumping is happening in our city, and that we are the refuge haven for all the landscapers that don't want to drive to the pit to pay for the disposal, to pay for the gas, which is now at \$6. It costs a lot of money to get over there, the labor to get rid of all the green clippings for their entire day. They just say, "Hey, Coral Gables picks it up." They dump it into the trash pits. We're talking about immense amount of money that we have to pay as a city for other municipalities who basically are not paying for their own clipping removal. Is that true or not?

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: I believe that to be true, yes.

Mayor Lago: Okay, good. So, I'm just -- I mean, that's a true, honest -- that we as a city are paying millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars because we're incapable of finding a solution. They're saying, "Hey, well, you're drastic. You want to get rid of trash pits." Obviously, I want to find a solution for inefficiencies and taxpayer dollars that people work so hard for, that they should deserve to keep in their own pocket. And if the City's going to get this money, we should put ourselves in a situation where we can use that money in the near future, like I've said before, in regards to our unfunded liabilities. I hope that one day we don't have to use those \$7 million for the unfunded liability and we can use it for a litany of other things that we have to do in the City. This is a prime example of us as a city not finding a solution. And that does not mean that I want carts where the resident has to deliver the cart to the street. That's not what I'm saying. It's going to -- I will never vote for that. But a cart would restrict illegal dumping and the continued habitual disrespect and illegal practice of landscapers in this community. It's everywhere, it's everywhere. It's prevalent, it's pervasive.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: I do believe though that some of the efforts that we've already done have curbed the illegal dumping. Well, we know that we haven't gotten rid of it completely because some of you are aware of it yourselves, but the efforts that we've done with making sure that we're charging for excess trash debris, we believe that that has made the residents even police their own properties. Where they might have ignored it before, now they're getting the bill for it, so we do get reports and we do see that curb in those properties. Once they've been billed for it, we don't see those properties again unless it was truly their own landscaper or a shared pit with their neighbor. So, we do see that. We do see that the reduction of pits on 57th Avenue and on some of the major thoroughfares have reduced that.

Mayor Lago: But guess what. Can I add something? And I'm sorry to interrupt you. By the way, those are all great things.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: But the trash pits on 57th Avenue are back because the neighbor across the street -- I live there.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Is starting it.

Mayor Lago: The neighbor across the street enjoys the free -- look, think about it. Imagine not having to call Miami-Dade County for a special pickup. All you do is just dump it across the street and Coral Gables picks it up. And then when you have a situation where the green matter across the street from the neighbor does not belong to the Coral Gables resident, your team goes there and says, "Hey, look, is an oversized pickup. You know, is this yours? Is this your landscaping?" The resident says, "Obviously, it's not. I don't have palm trees, or I don't have this type of tree." We, as a City, do a courtesy. We're not going to charge them...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Right.

Mayor Lago: Because obviously somebody did illegal dumping, so it's everywhere. It's throughout the City. We catch them on a continual basis. I have tons of videos where I've caught them. You know, no matter what you do on 57th Avenue or 37th Avenue, it's -- the neighborhood landscaper who has gone through five different municipalities and ends their day in Coral Gables and dumps all their landscaping at the end of the day, it's just common sense. They don't have to drive to the pit, which is far away. They don't have to spend the gas. They don't have to pay the fee. There's two options here. The Vice Mayor mentioned one of them, either increasing for people who want to keep trash pits and reducing fees for those who do not, or B, get rid of trash pits and find some sort of containers where people say, if you need five containers, you can get five containers, but you got to pay for them.

Vice Mayor Mena: If you...

Mayor Lago: And you roll it -- and it gets rolled by City staff from the rear the day of pickup. You will curb and you will stop, and you will have millions upon millions of dollars in the coffers every single year because you will not have illegal dumping. That's the reality of our situation.

Vice Mayor Mena: If you had a -- in the hypothetical world where you had a system where all the costs for the trash pickup were charged to those that use it and all that don't use it opt out of using it don't get charged, and the cost for the people that do use it were to go up to what it would be, nobody would want this. But we have a subsidy system...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Where you're basically taxing everybody the same for a service that not everybody uses or cares for, and that many people don't like. And so, we bend over backwards to

try to make this antiquated system work, and it's almost comical honestly. I don't want to say comical. That's not the right word. But it -- to drive around the city and see the stuff you say in trash pits and then brand ourselves as the City Beautiful...

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, it's laughable.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's laughable.

Commissioner Anderson: (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Mena: It's -- you know, the City Beautiful with sofas on the swale and all this stuff. It's kind of crazy honestly.

Mayor Lago: Put it to you this way -- I'll put it to you this way. All of us here run private sector businesses -- right? -- along with most of the people who live in the City Beautiful. Imagine you owned a business and every single day your neighbor was using your electricity and your water with an extension cord.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: And you were okay with it.

Vice Mayor Mena: Exactly.

Mayor Lago: Until eventually you realized, hey, the bill's getting a little egregious.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: You know, you'd pull back on that extension cord from your neighbor. That's exactly what's happening in regards to the trash pits. And every single -- and some people are going to think, "Wow, you know, Vince, is really kind of enamored with the idea of getting rid of trash pits." Wholeheartedly, I am, in one way or another. We either can incentivize them like the Vice Mayor said, or we can move in the route of having carts, which can be filled and held in the back. But we need to find a solution because the idea of not having millions of dollars on our side to fix parks, to deal with the community recreation center, to deal with swales, to deal with public safety, to deal with issues, you know, like ADA issues, sidewalks -- you want a bike lane. You want this, you want that. -- that we can't fund those projects because we had to turn a blind eye because trash pits are that important. Which by the way, how many trash pits are installed when we know they're against the Code against giant live oak trees and...

Commissioner Anderson: Or down a block...

Mayor Lago: And they're crushing the roots of the oak tree. And how many fines have been given by Code Enforcement and nothing happens? The owner continues to basically eat away at that beautiful tree and the destruction of that tree, which eventually will cause its death because we need to have a trash pit. And by the way, to the Vice Mayor's point, how many times have you been driving or walking down our city, looked at somebody's front yard and seen a trash pit and there are 50 doggy bags in the trash pit, you know?

Commissioner Anderson: Talking about water pollution. Now, this does dovetail in with G-5, which is talking about commercial waste in the trash pits.

Mayor Lago: Can I take it off?

Commissioner Anderson: You can take it off. I mean, the -- we do have a presentation because staff, you know, has been working with Waste Management.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner Anderson...

Commissioner Anderson: As long as there is a trash pit there...

City Manager Iglesias: Before we leave this item, I just wanted to clarify that the overtime is not because they can't finish. This is because of light duty and sick leave, not because it's really overtime. The -- this is a very intensive job. They run 10 to 12 miles a day. So, this -- that overtime is to cover sick leave and light duty, so it's not overtime per se, just to clarify it.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, the devils in the details a lot of times, and I wanted some of the details on this.

City Manager Iglesias: So, it's not overtime per se. It's to cover light duty and sick leave. Instead of using overtime, use temporary help.

Vice Mayor Mena: We need to take...

City Manager Iglesias: There are positives in recruitment turnover and the direct hire process there also.

Vice Mayor Mena: We need to take a vote on this item, no?

Mayor Lago: Before we move on to the next item, would somebody like to make a motion?

Vice Mayor Mena: My problem is we're almost like rewarding the bad behavior by not increasing.

Commissioner Anderson: You know the...

Vice Mayor Mena: The real -- to me, the real thing is, if you want this, this is what it costs. And if you want to curb it, that's the most effective tool. So, I'm having a hard time because isn't that the real answer?

Commissioner Anderson: Well, proportionately, the people that...

Mayor Lago: No, because then they...

Vice Mayor Mena: You got to pay for -- if you want a service, you got to pay for it, right?

Commissioner Anderson: The people that get proportionately hit the worst usually are the ones with the smallest properties. The ones with the smallest properties can least afford it. So, there's attention here on this issue that we really need to address aggressively if we're going to resolve it because we have the drive-by dumping. We have...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: The commercial waste and the trash pits. We have the damage to the trees several on my block.

Vice Mayor Mena: We invite all of it.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, we do. We have a neon sign out.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, that's the thing. And until we own that, like the complaints about it are tough. And I'm the first one complaining about it. Trust me, I'm -- you know, and I think we need to have a real discussion about -- maybe this is something that should be put to a referendum, you know. This is a tough issue. Everybody says that people will be out with, you know, pitchforks if you have the audacity to take it away.

Mayor Lago: That's okay though.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's okay. But maybe you come up with a proposal that's an alternative proposal, and you put it out there. And you ask residents, "Do you want to pay X a year for the service you have now, or do you want to pay Y for this other service?" But...

Mayor Lago: With a rolling cart...

Vice Mayor Mena: Whatever the...

Mayor Lago: That's taken out by staff.

Vice Mayor Mena: Proposal is. Yeah, whatever the proposal is, we work on it, but...

Commissioner Anderson: I think that's a way forward.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know.

Commissioner Anderson: Put it to referendum rather than just the noisiest one in the room being heard.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right, right.

Commissioner Anderson: Let the people vote.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: We could certainly look at different options and look at what other cities are doing, looking at the -- you know, three times a year, or quarterly bulk pickup, things of that nature, look at the carts. There's different options. Other cities are...

Vice Mayor Mena: You should have plenty of options...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Doing other things.

Vice Mayor Mena: To survey because we're the only ones that do it this way. So, every other option out there is an option...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because we're the only ones doing this.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, Miami Lakes is pretty green. Okay, my father had a home there with six to eight mango trees, oak trees, et cetera, et cetera. Somehow, he managed with trimming all those trees to be able to do it with a cart and a couple bulk pickups.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: But based on what we're seeing in CPI, this is the increase that we're anticipating next year. So, whether we pass the fee today or not, we're going to see the increase of the percentage on the disposal costs. The tonnage may continue to go down slightly, but it's not going to go away. We do average about 30,000 tons of trash a year, even though it has gone down. And I believe that we'll continue to go down. We continue to enforce. We continue to have different ways of addressing those things. The fee is still going to go up.

And so, it's going to be a cost of service. We'll absorb it in other ways. With regard to the temp labor, like the Manager said, our staff has a high injury rate. The summer comes. People start getting injured. You know, the heat begins to affect people. And so, what we've identified is that we need to be able to have that backup staff to step in and to be able to run those routes. Our service is not easy in the sense that the employees need to know where the garbage is. They need to know every house, the entrances, the side gate, you know, which little lady hides her recycling under that cabinet and things of that nature. And so having temporary staff that we can train and have available to us to be able to do that is -- it makes it difficult when we're just moving people from one route to another to help out because they do need to know their neighborhoods. Most of you know your trash guy. Most of you know your garbage guy because he goes to the back of the house. He knows how you package your garbage. And so that temp labor to be able to cover those and to be able to give our guys the ability to run the routes when one or two men are down is really -- it makes a significant difference to our operation. Like the Manager said, our guys work really hard. I know you guys have acknowledged that. They do a wonderful job for our residents. They really care about what they do. Are they perfect? No, we miss something. We make a mistake here or there, but that temporary staffing really has made a difference for us to be able to provide that level of service that our residents expect.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Anderson: You've been doing an excellent job.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: And this is not a vote about...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: I know.

Mayor Lago: I...

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: I appreciate it.

Mayor Lago: I would like to -- Commissioner, I would like to have a Sunshine meeting with the Manager and any of my colleagues that would like to join to find solutions. One of these that we have not talked about is -- I think it's absolutely ridiculous that you have a four-acre site with a forest and you're paying the same amount of money as a person in North Gables that has a 5,000 square foot lot. It just doesn't add up. It doesn't add up. We need to find solutions. You need to find solutions. And again, I'm going to be very, very clear, very, very clear. No fear, zero fear. They can write what they want. They can say what they want. We will find a solution for this. We will no longer continue to kick the can down the curb because that's not why I ran for public office. Just like when they told us they were going to run us out of town with the cardboard, nobody got run out of town.

Vice Mayor Mena: What's -- the \$24, what does it add up to total?

Finance Director Gomez: Two hundred and...

Vice Mayor Mena: For citywide.

Finance Director Gomez: \$260,000.

Vice Mayor Mena: In the entire city?

Finance Director Gomez: In the entire city.

Mayor Lago: So...

Vice Mayor Mena: Alright, so that -- you know, when you make this decision, you know, it's -- we're paying for this, so there's no not paying for this.

Finance Director Gomez: Correct.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, you're taking \$260,000...

Finance Director Gomez: So, it's either (INAUDIBLE) -- yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: From somewhere else in the budget...

Finance Director Gomez: That's correct.

Vice Mayor Mena: To pay for this.

Finance Director Gomez: Or you pass it through.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, you know, I want folks that are against it to -- we're going to have to have a conversation about where we're taking it from because that's the real decision. We're going to have -- we have to pay for it or change the service. But there's no in between.

City Manager Iglesias: That is correct, Vice Mayor. Either it comes from the general fund, or it comes to them a direct cost.

Vice Mayor Mena: Do you need a decision on this today?

Finance Director Gomez: So, yes, because we need to bill -- we need to meet the statutory requirements of the County in order to get the information to them for the trim notices, as well as they have to bill in order to get -- give people time to make their payments between -- the early payment from July 1 through August 15. So, that's why -- when it was on June 14th, we might have been able to wait till then, but now that the next meeting is not till June 28th, it's -- it makes it very difficult for me to meet the deadlines.

Mayor Lago: So, with that being said, the deadline, we have a long agenda to continue. Does anybody want to make...?

City Manager Iglesias: I think the problem was that the meeting was moved to the end of June.

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: Instead of the beginning of June, so it cut our time.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Does anybody want to make a motion?

Commissioner Menendez: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Mena: You want to...?

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Does anybody have...?

Commissioner Menendez: What other options do we have?

Vice Mayor Mena: Does anybody have an appetite to try to, you know, bifurcate out the charges, you know? Like to me, a pass-through is a pass-through -- right? -- like everybody understands that. The County increased fees. We have to pay those fees so we're passing through that cost. And you know, the other stuff, we can have a discussion about. I'm just trying to see if there's somewhere in between. I know it's a tough issue.

Finance Director Gomez: Staff's recommendation is for the full increase.

Vice Mayor Mena: I know, I know.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, I mean, on number one, you have a tipping fee. To me, that's always based on quantity.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay, I asked for backup data on it. I got none. I mean, I feel like I'm voting on something just to vote on it. I can't do that. The second item, again, just mathematically, doesn't make any sense. The third item does make sense. I'm prepared to vote on the third item.

Vice Mayor Mena: Which is the third item? I apologize. I'm not looking at the...

Mayor Lago: Temp -- temp (INAUDIBLE).

Finance Director Gomez: No. The third item is the holiday related...

Commissioner Anderson: Holiday work.

Mayor Lago: That's fine.

City Manager Iglesias: The second item, Commissioner Anderson, is not overtime. It's sick leave. It's to pay for...

Finance Director Gomez: Temp services.

City Manager Iglesias: Sick leave and...

Commissioner Anderson: For temp workers instead of overtime.

Finance Director Gomez: Instead of paying overtime, paying...

Commissioner Anderson: Instead of me paying this amount...

City Manager Iglesias: But it's not...

Commissioner Anderson: I'm paying this amount so...

City Manager Iglesias: But Commissioner, it's...

Commissioner Anderson: Why does it cost more?

City Manager Iglesias: It's not for overtime.

Finance Director Gomez: Because I'm already paying for it.

City Manager Iglesias: It's not for overtime. It is for sick leave and light duty. So, it's not that we're asking for overtime work. It's when they're on sick leave...

Finance Director Gomez: Correct.

City Manager Iglesias: And light duty.

Commissioner Anderson: I understand that.

City Manager Iglesias: But we have to put somebody else in.

Commissioner Anderson: I understand that.

City Manager Iglesias: We need a body.

Commissioner Anderson: So, therefore, it should cost less, not more.

Finance Director Gomez: What we're saying is that we are currently absorbing it, and so we don't want to continue to absorb any of that cost because we need to ask for -- we're asking for the increase because -- you know, in order to facilitate it.

Commissioner Anderson: This is a tough year to be asking people to be paying more on top of -- paying more on top of higher gas prices, on top of the CPI for food increases and so forth. So, why this year?

Mayor Lago: And what does the...?

Finance Director Gomez: Because we're using it much more this -- I guess this is a new initiative that we started.

City Manager Iglesias: Well, I think -- we've got a -- number one is we have a very high premium service.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, I...

City Manager Iglesias: You have backdoor service for garbage.

Commissioner Anderson: That's for the past 35 years.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: I've had that same...

City Manager Iglesias: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Premium service.

City Manager Iglesias: I understand that, but the -- we -- these people, our staff, it's 10 to 12 miles a day. There is some sick leave, and there is some light duty. This pays just for the sick leave and just for the light duty. We rarely have overtime anymore. This is what this pays for. So, instead of having a person working overtime when there's somebody out because of light duty and sick leave, we go to this temporary...

Commissioner Anderson: Right, so we avoid...

City Manager Iglesias: Temp service.

Commissioner Anderson: We avoid the overtime cost by hiring somebody at a regular rate, so again, it should cost less instead of more.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: So, what we've been able -- so what happens if we do it on overtime...

City Manager Iglesias: This is -- one second, one second.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: This is -- if we have -- let's just say, if we have 30 people and we have four people out, that's 26, and we need 30 people for the route. Then we use the temp service for those to make up those four people. We're not asking for overtime. We're asking for a more efficient way of providing the service, so it's not overtime. If we -- we need a certain number of people to do the routes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, wouldn't you -- if you went -- I guess this -- I'm just trying to understand. I understand what Commissioner Anderson is saying. But on the other hand, if I understood him correctly, if you hire full-time people, you're going to end up paying more because you're going to have those full-time people.

Finance Director Gomez: The cost for...

Vice Mayor Mena: You're going to have more people than you need to staff the route on a full-time basis, and yeah, they'll cover the sick leave and all that, but you're paying them every other day too.

Finance Director Gomez: Benefits and everything, right.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, that's a tricky one. What was your concern with the pass-through, Commissioner Anderson? I didn't hear you on the first one.

Commissioner Anderson: We haven't had pass-through in the past for seven years.

Finance Director Gomez: No, no, no pass-through...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no, no.

Finance Director Gomez: Tipping fee pass-throughs...

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, the pass...

Finance Director Gomez: Have happened every year.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay, number one.

Finance Director Gomez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, you're right. You're right. Number one.

Vice Mayor Mena: Number one is pass-through?

Commissioner Anderson: We're...

Finance Director Gomez: Yes, tipping fee pass-throughs.

Commissioner Anderson: Tipping fee pass-through for dumping less. We're dumping less tonnage. It should be costing less, but yet, it was \$4 last year increase. Now, we're \$8 increase.

City Manager Iglesias: Tipping fees are based on the CPI. The CPI last year was very low. The CPI this year is above -- is almost 8 percent, so we are charged the maximum CPI rate by the County, which we have to dump garbage to the County. And we're charged the maximum rate -- not the CPI -- it's 4 percent maximum...

Commissioner Anderson: I understand what you're saying about...

City Manager Iglesias: By the County and 5 percent maximum...

Commissioner Anderson: The CPI, but it's based on tonnage.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Right, so if I could say...

Commissioner Anderson: So, if my fee is \$4 times a million tons, and my tonnage has gone down -- and even if it has gone up some -- there's going to be a balance there somewhere. It's not going to be twice as much money.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: So...

City Manager Iglesias: The tonnage is not necessarily...

Mayor Lago: The tonnage...

City Manager Iglesias: Wait, wait, but...

Mayor Lago: The tonnage didn't go down. What went down was 8 percent in cardboard, correct?

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: No, the actual tonnage of trash has gone down.

City Manager Iglesias: Well, let me just say. We have disposal of two things. We have garbage.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: We have recycling, and we have trash. The trash looks like it went down 8 percent. Our biggest cost is garbage. Garbage has not been affected at all by cardboard.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: That is garbage, and that's about 50 percent.

Mayor Lago: What is gar --? So, we could put this on the record, what --? She's laughing because she knows exactly what I'm going to say. What constitutes garbage?

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, whatever is not in the trash pit.

Mayor Lago: What constitutes garbage?

Vice Mayor Mena: Anything that fits in the bin.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Generally, it is your household garbage. So, how we explain it to residents is what comes out of your kitchen and your restroom. However, anything

that you put in your garbage bag, our guys are not opening up your garbage bag and sifting through it, so -- but it's household garbage. It's anything that comes out of your home, like your kitchen and your restroom. That's how we typically describe it to residents.

Mayor Lago: So, how much constitutes trash inside your garbage pit?

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: So, trash inside your garbage pit tonnage wise?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: It is approximately \$30,000 a year -- I mean, 30,000 tons a year. Your garbage is about 10,000 tons a year. Now, your garbage, however, costs us about \$66 a ton to dispose of while your yard debris costs about \$44 a ton.

Mayor Lago: You guys pick that up?

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Now, last year -- just to address Commissioner Anderson's question. So, last year we anticipated about a 1.5 percent increase on CPI, and our increases actually came in above that. Our increase from the County came in at about 4 percent. And our increase from Waste Management came in at 3 percent. And the reason that we were able to absorb that -- at first, I had Keith a little nervous because I was telling him I'm going to blow my budget because we only anticipated one and a half percent is because the tonnage went down. So, because the tonnage went down, we've been able to absorb the increase that we didn't anticipate from the County and Waste Management. However, looking at the CPI increases that we're currently experiencing, we know that we can anticipate that the County is likely going to come in at their max, which is 4 percent, and that Waste Management is going to come in at their max at about 5 percent increase CPI. And so, although we do anticipate the tonnage to go down, our calculations -- and I'm happy to share them with you, they're in great detail -- is based on that

anticipated decrease of tonnage and the anticipated increase of that CPI. And so that -- this year would be a great example of the way that we were able to absorb it because we have had the efforts of decreasing the tonnage.

City Manager Iglesias: And the cardboard does not affect the garbage side. It affects the trash side.

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Anderson: Which I have no problem...

Mayor Lago: The numbers are still huge.

Commissioner Anderson: Understanding Excel sheets, but that's why I asked for the backup.

City Manager Iglesias: Well, I'm sorry. I thought you wanted the percentage of cardboard. Maybe I misunderstood.

Commissioner Anderson: No, no. I see a doubling of the fee for residents on general residential units, and I talked to you about the tonnage and how it should be decreased not only based upon cardboard itself, but you know, we have to -- we have an accountability problem if we don't have the backup material for understanding why this increase exists.

City Manager Iglesias: Well, as the Assistant Director said, we did have a larger increase last year. We were able to absorb that larger increase because we had a reduction on the trash side only. Garbage, remember, is not affected by cardboard. And this year, we will probably have the maximum CPI increase in either one. CPI right now is at 8 percent -- at over 8 percent. So, we

will have a maximum increase on both sides. We did have a maximum increase last year that we absorbed, and we were able to absorb it because of the reduced tonnage.

Commissioner Menendez: So, where do we go from here?

Commissioner Fors: And you don't mean doubling of the fee. You mean double of the increase.

Public Works Assistant Director Rodriguez: Double increase, right.

Commissioner Fors: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: Doubling of the increase. It was...

Commissioner Fors: Right, right, right.

Commissioner Anderson: It was \$4.

Commissioner Fors: (INAUDIBLE) she said double of the fee.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, it was a \$4 increase if memory serves me correct from last year. Now, we're dealing with a...

Finance Director Gomez: Eight.

Commissioner Anderson: Eight dollar increase on item one.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, just so we're clear, we would -- obviously, if we were able to reduce our tonnage amount in regards to our trash -- correct? -- our trash pit, I mean, the cost savings would be monumental, and it's only going to go up more and more and more and more...

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Mayor Lago: Because the cat's out of the bag already. Everybody knows they can dump in the City of Coral Gables.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, trash is expensive, but it's expensive if you cut out the trash pit because then you cut out trucking and all kinds of issues but...

Mayor Lago: You cut out trucking. You cut out illegal dumping, which is huge. So, that's something that we're going to have to talk about. So, listen, I'm ready to take a vote on this issue. I need a...

City Manager Iglesias: As long as we're clear on what the increases are.

Vice Mayor Mena: But again, if the goal is to get people to stop having trash pits, even if voluntarily, not supporting this is not the way to do it.

Mayor Lago: I understand, but I just can't...

Vice Mayor Mena: What we're doing is subsidizing.

Mayor Lago: I haven't voted in favor of this...

Vice Mayor Mena: I know.

Mayor Lago: In a few years. And I -- to me, it's something that -- you know, it's one of the few things that I just can't -- I just can't. I need -- that's why I asked for a Sunshine meeting to come to a resolution and to use the Vice Mayor's guidance on potentially bringing this to a referendum to let the voters decide and say what would you like to do. Would you like to save X amount of money a year? Or would you like for it just to continue to rise, and then potentially, in 10 years, see your garbage be double what it is today? I think that's unacceptable, especially for the elderly people in this community who are in -- on Social Security or on a pension, especially at this moment. Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir, we do. Ms. Maria Cruz is requesting to speak on this item.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Ms. Cruz, the floor is yours.

Maria Cruz: Okay, I'm here. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Ms. Cruz: Alright. Every time this comes up, I remember when we moved to Coral Gables in 1976. There was no garbage charge. Everything was part of taxes. Nowadays, we have it separate because we like to say we do not increase taxes. But in fact, garbage is a tax. So, please, let's think this out. Last year, we talked about giving people a credit if they gave up the use of their trash pit. I guess we changed that. We're not going to do that. Let me suggest to you all, elected officials, that before you vote on something like this, you should look at salaries. You should look at the vacancy report in the Sanitation Department because there are vacant positions. And the vacant positions is very hard to fill in when somebody is sick or in light duty. If you are full capacity, it's not so hard. But when you have several vacancies, it is very hard. This is just the way we are administering our city. People have gotten raises. New positions have been opened

with different names, same jobs, different names so we can pay more. You all need to look. Please look. You know, I check things like that, and I'm tired of having to say, "Okay, wait. What's going on here?" Because somebody else should be looking. Somebody should be looking at our financial state. And don't believe everything you hear, because you know what, this is another way to bring money. And I'm sorry, Ms. Anderson, that they didn't give you backup materials. I think it's an insult to ask elected officials to vote for something after requesting the documents and not getting them. And now you're getting oral explanations. You're hearing it. You -- they cannot put it in writing because if they put it in writing, maybe somebody will go back and say, "Wait a second." Now when you say it, maybe we misunderstood it, maybe that's not what I meant. But when you put it in writing, you cannot use that argument. Please do not vote today. Get all the documents. Check what I'm telling you about vacancies in Sanitation. Check salaries compared with last year's salary, the same position, and then you will see that perhaps we can save in other ways. And I'm very thankful that some of you are thinking about it. This is not the right time to increase anything. People are hurting. Go put some gas in your car if you don't have an electric car because electric cars are not very inexpensive. You will see close to \$5 a gallon. Please, this is not the right time to increase. And you know what, a referendum may be a good idea, but not now. Let's check everything else before you decide. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Alright. What's the will of the Commission?

Commissioner Fors: You know, my inclination is to not vote in favor of these increases at this time and crash headfirst into some of the larger fundamental reasons why we're even struggling with this to begin with. And I understand the Vice Mayor's point very well that, to a certain

degree, voting against the increase is sort of incentivizing the folks who were insisting upon a particular service, but that's where I'm at right now.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm not...

Mayor Lago: Anybody else?

Commissioner Anderson: I'm not prepared to vote in favor of this right now either. I've already stated my reasons.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, we obviously don't have the votes. I'm moving on to the next item. Today what we have before us is very clear, very clear. I've said it. We will find a solution to this at the end of day. We will find a solution to this. This is -- the status quo is unacceptable, unacceptable. It's not even -- if you told me, it was 5,000, 10,000, maybe I could sleep at night. This is millions and millions and millions of dollars that need to be addressed. We must show courage. We must show courage as a Commission and do the right thing. I know it's a very difficult thing to do, but we must show courage and do the right thing for the environment and for the City. This is tax dollars that are being wasted and we cannot do this anymore. And I agree with the Vice Mayor, it's a very tough decision to make, and he's correct. But I think the appropriate decision is not to vote on this today.

Mayor Lago: Moving on, Item I-21. And if I would like also to, obviously, as the no vote that's happened today, I would like to have that Sunshine meeting scheduled as quickly as possible at the convenience of the Commission, and my colleagues and the Manager, please.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think we just need real proposals though.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, real proposals, something real.

Vice Mayor Mena: Like we're not just going to get together and...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, real proposals, real cost comparisons.

Commissioner Menendez: Have some options.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, exactly.

Commissioner Anderson: So, people can choose between A and B and understand what the cost of the two columns are.

Commissioner Fors: Agreed.

Unidentified Speaker: Welcome.

Mayor Lago: By the way -- can I say something really quickly before you start?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Because I talked about political courage. This took political courage right here. This is something that we've talked about for years. For years, we've talked about it. The Manager took a very strong position. This Commission -- they put up signs that they were going to recall me on trees. This took political courage. There's people who will go -- I will not name them here -- who told me that if I did this and I supported the Manager -- which is the right thing to do. I support the Manager wholeheartedly and staff -- that they would run us out of town. We went there on Saturday and Sunday. How ecstatic were people, Fred, and Carolina? People were like, "This is the best value in town."

Commissioner Anderson: It is. It's great.

Mayor Lago: This is the best value in town.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We hope so.

Mayor Lago: So, sometimes the toughest decisions that we have to make that are, you know, are not the easiest decisions. And this is an example of a decision that costs us millions of dollars, costs us a little bit of legal wrangling, but at the end of day, we're coming out on top, and we're going to do the right thing. And maybe people will forget how difficult it was, but we won't because we had a lot of heartburn. We had a lot of heartburn over the issue. So, I had to say that because it was a good transition.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, absolutely, absolutely.

Commissioner Anderson: It is, it is, and people are ecstatic. I mean, because you guys really rolled out the red carpet, and thank you immensely for all the hard work you did.

[Later...]

Mayor Lago: Can we move on to G-4? Thank you.

City Attorney Ramos: Mayor, actually, if we could go back to waste for a second. So, we know that the increase is not what the Commission wants, but we do still need to specially assess the regular rate that we have been assessing, so we need a vote on those numbers, if Ms. Gomez wants to say what those are.

Finance Director Gomez: Yes, so we still do need to pass the resolution. And so, if the Commission is not willing to increase the fees, then they would remain at the 770 and the 902 for single-family, 770 being the early payment amount and 902 as the regular payment if not paid on or before August 15th.

Commissioner Anderson: This is last year's rate?

Finance Director Gomez: The same rate that is currently in place is the...

Mayor Lago: So, why don't we do this? I thought I had the agenda. For one minute there, I forgot I was the mayor. Why don't we do this at the end? Why are we doing this right now?

City Attorney Ramos: We can.

Mayor Lago: So, I don't know.

Finance Director Gomez: Yeah, okay.

Mayor Lago: I kind of forgot that for a second. Because I don't want to have this discussion now and then not be able to discuss everything else, and then we get tired and then we want to rush through this. So, we'll leave this at the end.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: And then we'll finish the entire agenda, and then we'll come back to that item. That's what we're going to do. That's what we're going to do.

[Later...]

Mayor Lago: What else do we have to talk about today?

City Clerk Urquia: I-19.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Can you start it at 5:30 instead of 5?

Mayor Lago: Well, we're almost there. So, we have one item left. Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Ramos: Yes, I understand that the Finance Director needs a vote for the amounts that were assessed this past year.

Finance Director Gomez: So, on the solid waste resolution, it's a special assessment resolution, which is required in order for us to be able to collect on the tax bill. And so, if there's no increase, then we need to at least adopt it with the current rates, but something needs to be passed in order for me to continue with the process.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question for the City Attorney. So, do we amend the resolution, or do we vote the resolution that's written down, and then come up with a second...

City Attorney Ramos: No, no.

Finance Director Gomez: But we left blanks.

City Attorney Ramos: We can just amend the resolution...

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

City Attorney Ramos: With the correct amount.

Finance Director Gomez: Yeah. We actually left blanks in it because it was going to be determined at this meeting.

Commissioner Menendez: So, I'll make the motion as stated without the increase.

Finance Director Gomez: If that is the will of the Commission, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: So, I guess we have to act, so I made the motion. See what...

Commissioner Anderson: Without the increases in all three categories.

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay, I'll second it.

Mayor Lago: Seconded for discussion, or do you want to take a vote?

Commissioner Menendez: Let's discuss...

Mayor Lago: Any further discussion, or no?

Commissioner Menendez: Let's discuss real quick.

Mayor Lago: Or you're ready to take a vote?

Commissioner Fors: We discussed it quite a bit.

Mayor Lago: Okay, you're ready? I just want to give...

Vice Mayor Mena: You need a vote today, you said, right?

Mayor Lago: Yeah. I just want to give enough -- I want to -- obviously, at the end of the day, I want to make sure everybody has enough time to discuss whatever is the issue they want. Okay, that's it? Then let's get a vote.

Vice Mayor Mena: No.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 4-1)

Mayor Lago: So, with that being said, I challenge staff. So, let's have a Sunshine meeting. I want to see how we can resolve this issue. How can we resolve this issue and really deliver on a program which takes in consideration that fees are going up, but that we have millions and millions and millions of dollars of waste that we can cut out of this budget?

Vice Mayor Mena: You have my full support to move forward...

Mayor Lago: I know.

Vice Mayor Mena: Towards a referendum. We've been talking about this for years. There's this bogeyman in the room. Oh my God if you take it away. If you take it away, let's find out. Let's ask the residents what they want.

Mayor Lago: I'm with you.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't see -- I think if you give a real alternative and there's money involved, then you're going to find out how much it's worth to people.

Mayor Lago: I'm with you, 110 percent.