

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C
April 26, 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
Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro**

Public Speaker(s)

**Maria Cruz
Emilie Liberatore
Jamie Sheehan
Jackson Holmes
Al Fresa
Pedro Morales
Jose Rivera Font
Matthew Hale**

Agenda Item C [10:08 a.m.]

PUBLIC COMMENTS

During this portion of the meeting, an individual may address the City Commission on an item that is on the agenda or on a matter which is not on the agenda, but

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within the scope of the City Commission's jurisdiction. If the individual wishes to address the City Commission on an item that is on the agenda, the individual shall not be given an opportunity to speak again once the item is called. An individual who wishes to speak during a public hearing where the City Commission is sitting in a quasi-judicial capacity, must speak during the public hearing for that item.

Individuals who speak during the open public comment portion of the meeting shall be given three (3) minutes during which to address the City Commission. At the conclusion of one (1) hour, if the open public comment section of the meeting has not ended, it shall end automatically, in order to proceed with the rest of the agenda.

Mayor Lago: Moving on to public comment. How many individuals do we have so far?

City Clerk Urquia: Right now, ten, sir.

Mayor Lago: Ten?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker today is Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: I guess you all heard it. It's Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, Coral Gables, Florida. I have two items today. The first one, I brought a visual. Remember that I'm a retired schoolteacher, and I think people learn more sometimes when they see things. For about a month, I've been complaining about something that bothers most of us, excessive signage. And as you know, in the City of Coral Gables, if you want to sell your house, you have a tiny little sign that you can put in front of your house. If you want to have a garage sale, you cannot post signs around because that would make our city not look so beautiful. But I want you to know that there is a

park -- and I've checked several parks -- there's a park near us -- I'm sorry that the Mayor is not here because I'm sure he's seen it too -- that has been beautified by one of our departments, I guess. I am sure that it was not a private company that's doing it, and I wouldn't mind if it was a private company putting up a sign to get credit for their doing, but our park has five of these signs. There were two facing Alhambra. This is one of them. I borrowed it so you could see it. So, there is one on each street on the side, one in the middle -- because our staff, the people that we pay, the people that benefit from our tax money, the people that do their job were resodding the park. There's no new equipment. There's nothing that we were promised before. But they -- I guess they were resodding, and they wanted everybody to know that it was being done. There is no sign "Don't walk on it." There's no sign "Keep it nice." But this sign is there for everybody to see, five of them. If any of us were to put five signs in our property, we would have an outcry. If you remember, we discussed signage before. Well, if you want to see signs, go up to the Garden Club -- I don't know the full name.

Vice Mayor Mena: Betsy Adams?

Ms. Cruz: Betsy Adams Park on Alhambra. And you can see that our public workers are doing their job and they're making our city beautiful, okay, except that overdoing the signs. Okay, that was the first one. And I'm sorry, but I have to borrow the sign for you to see it. I didn't steal it; borrowed it.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just take a picture next time.

Ms. Cruz: Just to make sure. Okay, the next item. Last Commission meeting -- two items -- last Commission meeting, we were presented with the 640 -- 640,000 request for the mobility hub. As I've said before, you know, I'm a retired teacher, so I still think, still research. I did a lot of research, and one of the things that I researched was the sunshine meeting that was held in December -- here's the verbatim minutes -- where in several places, the people doing the design very clearly

stated that this was a quick review of the design itself. Design was done, finished. This is the design, very clearly. Everything that we heard last month is included in this report. Now, the teacher side. Since I did not understand -- because you every time we ask, we get a whole process, a whole explanation that's very confusing for some of us. I took the time to ask people. And I know what the 640,000 is going to. There is a directive, some document from the State that connects construction price with design price. This is the amount of money that Gensler is going to be paid because our construction price went up, okay, simple. That's a simple explanation on where this -- it has nothing to do with change orders. It has nothing to do with anything else except that the price went up, and they're entitled to get paid more. So, I'm here with one question, only one question, and I want a yes or no answer. When we're ready to build -- as we know, construction is going up. If and when we're ready to build, the construction price has gone up again. Are we going to have to pay Gensler another amount of money because the building is more expensive now, even though nothing has changed, they get more money.? Yes or no. That's all I want to know. No explanation.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Manager, as Gensler has moved towards CDs...

City Manager Iglesias: Let me clarify, Mayor. The change was from 35 million to 40 million because of the enhancements we did in the project. The \$40 million was based on prior construction costs, not on current construction costs, and they've agreed to -- that that is the final cost of the building to finalize construction documents in about six weeks.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Ms. Cruz: Okay, so no more for design.

Vice Mayor Mena: For construction documents.

Ms. Cruz: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Correct.

Mayor Lago: For construction documents.

Commissioner Menendez: And Mrs. Cruz, if in the future you have an issue with our stop signs, leave them in place, just asking.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, just to give you an update also on that issue since you did bring up the mobility hub, I will be traveling -- I will be meeting with the congresswoman in two weeks with Naomi and individuals from my office. And I recommend that if any of my colleagues would like to attend like they did on multiple occasions in Tallahassee, and it was very successful, as you're going to see once the Governor signs -- once -- the budget is going to be the most successful, hopefully, budget in the City's history. We're trying to track down money for the mobility hub at the local level in regards to our representation in the federal level. And I will also be going to Washington to hopefully be as successful as we were in Tallahassee at the federal level to get some of that funding for the mobility hub.

Ms. Cruz: And by the way, your quest for money, there's a little over a million dollars in the contingency fund that maybe can pay for the 640 and we don't have to take more money.

Mayor Lago: We'll see. Thank you very much.

Ms. Cruz: You're welcome.

City Clerk Urquia: Emilie Liberatore. Emilie Liberatore.

Mayor Lago: Emilie, good morning. How are you?

Emilie Liberatore: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. The floor is yours.

Ms. Liberatore: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: No worries. If we can try to limit our comments to two to three minutes, just try to be -- if we can, whatever we can. No worries.

Vice Mayor Mena: And if you don't mind, if you could stand in front of the microphone so...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: The mic.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's two.

Commissioner Anderson: One of the podiums.

Mayor Lago: No worries, no worries, no worries.

Commissioner Anderson: We all forget too.

Mayor Lago: Please state your name and your address.

Ms. Liberatore: Right. I am Emilie Liberatore. I live at 427 Santander Avenue, in beautiful Coral Gables. And am very -- and have lived here for three years happily until a little while ago when a little understood rule started to be reinforced at the pet friendly park on Catalonia Avenue. Now, myself and other dog lovers who use this part every day are surrounded by at least two to three Coral Gables Police Department and Code Enforcement officers -- they, on the perimeter outside the park, and us, on the inside, too intimidated to even move through the park. We are forced to not only keep our dogs leashed while inside the park, but have to secure the leash in our hands. We are unable to let our dogs run and play. There are kids there sometimes. They enjoy the dogs as much as the dogs enjoy them. As a faithful user of the park, my little dog and I have never become aware of the dogs being a bother. A very reasonable complaint has to do with dog poop left on the ground in the park. It's unforgivable that people don't clean up, but it happens everywhere in my area of Coral Gables. Uh-oh, I lost my spot.

Mayor Lago: No worries. Please take your time.

Ms. Liberatore: I clean other people's dog poop in the park every day, not exaggerating. Those who want to ban dogs in the park don't realize the poop will always be there. People will still allow their dogs to defecate in the park and not clean up, even if dogs are banned. Fear of kids with dogs? Absolutely no threat to the kids. Oh, I lost my spot again.

Mayor Lago: No worries.

Ms. Liberatore: Oh, here we are.

Mayor Lago: Take your time. Fear of kids, blah, blah, blah, blah, and parents who keep -- if the nannies and parents would keep an eye on them instead of looking at phone screens and looking elsewhere, that would be the answer. Last night in front of officers outside the park, I realized there was a child mingling -- the mother was mingling with Code Enforcement people and police

officers. I kept an eye on this seven-year-old child while he laid next to my dog on the ground for at least 10 minutes, and this woman, this mother, she's adamant about banning dogs as they are a threat. Really? Try staying next to your child. Let us have the use of park from 5 PM to 7 PM every day, just two hours, without the threat of \$150 ticket to be issued. Just two hours without leashes. We have no recourse. There are no other places to take our beloved pets. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here. Thank you. I imagine, I think, we're going to have so several comments in regards to this topic, so we'll address them after they speak, or would you like to talk about it now?

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question for our City Attorney. Does our Code make mention of dogs leashed/unleashed at our parks? Is it in our Code?

City Attorney Ramos: It is. Section -- excuse me. Section 10-33 says that no dog shall be allowed upon a public thoroughfare, street, avenue, alley, public land, or parks of the City in a public place, such as restaurants, theaters, et cetera, or upon any other property other than that of its owner unless the dog is fastened to a suitable leash of dependable strength not to exceed eight feet in length.

Mayor Lago: So, I know that -- Commissioner, you want to say something? Please.

Commissioner Anderson: I do.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead. Because we're going to have multiple people, I think, that are going to...

Commissioner Anderson: We're going to have multiple people. I, like you, own two dogs that used Catalonia Park when it first opened before the signage went up that they had to be on leash before it became worn out due to overuse. It greatly pains me to try to make these decisions on

excluding dogs from that park, which was never really designed well for dogs as well -- either. But if you don't know, we are working on -- to have done before the end of the year -- a true dog park at Salvadore Park. And the Mayor is working on it. The full Commission has support on it. We truly believe we need a true dog park because if you had a toddler or grandson, or child, the poop in the park is a serious concern. And we need a place where the dogs can run free. You also will have a park in front of Villa Valencia when that opens for the smaller dogs if you don't want to have them mingling with the larger dogs. I do have large dogs. My big boy is 85 pounds, and he runs fast, and he doesn't mean to knock over kids. But when they get excited, they can. So, for the safety of the children and for the safety of the community, this decision has to be made and we need to fast-forward the park at Salvadore. And City Manager, I'd like to see that on the next agenda so we can move this forward.

Mayor Lago: And if I may just very quickly because I know we have multiple people who are going to speak on this issue, the item in regards to Salvadore Park was on the agenda in the last Commission meeting, and the entire Commission was 5-0 in support of the dog park request. The Vice Mayor has been working on this for five years, and he has been committed to delivering a dog park, which after this, we should name it the Mike Mena Dog Park under the Underline, which would be another opportunity for residents to have a park that is strictly dedicated and is pet friendly. So, that's -- again, it's an issue where you have to balance interests in the community. And I want to hear from the rest of the residents, so if anyone -- unless anybody has anything else they want to add. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Jamie Sheehan.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Sheehan, good morning. Thank you for being here.

Jamie Sheehan: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Sheehan: Jamie Sheehan, 1222 Bird Road. I'm here for Finn, our 10-month-old golden retriever pup. The park on Catalonia and Anderson has allowed me to meet some incredible Coral Gables residents. We meet daily because our dogs have become the best of friends. This very simple park comes to life when our dogs play with one another. Sadly, for the last two weeks, the park has been empty, and still every time I drive by because we have been harassed by police officers on -- and on several occasions, threatened. How does this meet community desires while providing excellent care and customer service as our mission and values state? In fact, just yesterday, there were four police cars outside the park. We are all aware that there are a few unhappy residents, one claiming her child has eaten feces, that prefer our dogs remain leashed, which brings me to two important points. This is the same parent whose head is down staring at their phone, fully aware and allowing their child to play with our dogs. And two, a dog will release their feces leashed or unleashed. It is the owner -- it is on the owner to clean up just as much as a parent to not leave their child unsupervised. Even this week, despite several officers patrolling the area, there's feces found in the park as well as sidewalks too. There are 63 parks in Coral Gables and not one allows our dogs to play freely. We're not asking for a park in the noisiest area in all of Miami, which is by US 1, nor do we want our dogs in the same play area with screaming children, like in Salvadore Park. All we ask is for a simple agriculture suitable fenced park without a playground for dogs to roam free and play, or better yet, allow the park at Catalonia and Anderson to fit our needs, which wouldn't cause much funding. Parents will have 62 areas to take their children to while we're -- all we ask for is just this one.

Mayor Lago: So, in response to your statement, and listen, I completely agree, and I understand that you would love nothing more than to have a place. We're not working on one. We're working on multiple locations which are going to be more than suitable, and it's going to be fully pet-friendly. There -- we have to balance the law, and we have to balance the interests of all residents. And I think...

Ms. Sheehan: How is our interest being balanced at the moment?

Mayor Lago: Well...

Ms. Sheehan: How has it been balanced in the last few years?

Mayor Lago: Well, the issue is -- that's why we're addressing it currently, and we're moving forward. It was in the last Commission meeting, and we've given direction to the City Manager and to staff that we want this addressed immediately as soon as possible. But there are laws in place in the City of Coral Gables, and we have to abide by those laws. I think that's critically important. If we put laws by the wayside, then we become like every single other community. So, I'm not saying that your interests are not important; trust me, they are. If they weren't important, you wouldn't have this on the Commission agenda, and we wouldn't be discussing it over and over and over again. We are taking money out of other projects to make sure that we can deliver on a dog park just to meet your needs, and it's not just one dog park. We're talking about potentially three for sure that are in the books that are forthcoming within the next year. And if I can -- I'm working on something else also that hopefully I'll be bringing before the Commission, which could potentially be a fourth option for dogs in the north area, and potentially, a fifth option near US 1 adjacent to the park that the Vice Mayor has been working on. This would be a larger, much more significant park that I've been working on for the last few years. So, I'm just asking you to do me a favor. Trust me, you're not falling on deaf ears. Just be patient. I want to deliver on your needs along with the needs of all the residents, so I think we can find a resolution. I just ask you for a little bit of patience if you don't mind.

Ms. Sheehan: I just think that -- just remember that like any parent with a five, six, seven, eight, 10-year-old, a dog requires a lot -- has a lot of energy. So, that patience is like going through the pandemic again, where you have to keep your child indoors all day.

Mayor Lago: I'll put it to you...

Ms. Sheehan: It's difficult.

Mayor Lago: Just so you know, just so you know, this is just as frustrating for us as it is for you, and we're going to get this resolved.

Ms. Sheehan: I hope so.

Mayor Lago: But if it was as simple as just putting up a fence, trust me, we would have put up a fence last week. There -- it's a little bit more complex. We're trying to deliver on a little bit of -- we want to make it so that -- so it's sustainable, so that we don't have to close the park in a week because we have drainage issues, because we have issues with the turf that we're using, because we don't have enough shade, because there isn't an area for people to park. Those are all things that are being considered with Public Works, our City Manager, and all the other departments that are working on this right now. Trust me, I just want you to understand, please, you and everyone else that's here is a priority, we're going to deliver on this. Because it comes to the point that we have -- not saying it's not important, not saying that it's not important, please. I want to make sure you understand this. I have a saying in my office that I want to get a win every single day. I want to win, and this is a big win. I want to win, check this off, and move on to the next issue. So, Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to -- again, perspective. In three years, the City is 100 years old, and over that time, I don't think we've had a dedicated dog park. But thanks to this Commission, we're talking about two or three dedicated dog parks. So, in 100 years, all of a sudden, we're working on multiple dog parks to -- because we realize there's a need. So, after 100 years, we're finally working to get it done, so I agree with the Mayor. Just trust us. If you listen

to the meetings, we've had more discussions on parks and dog parks than probably any Commission's ever had because we really want to get it right for everyone so everybody can go home and feel free -- and feel that we've responded. So, we're doing our best.

Ms. Sheehan: I'd like the City to be modernized. Most cities already have dog parks, so it would be great if you guys can do that. Also, if -- take into consideration time. So, if this is a project that you say six months, let it be six months. If it keeps extending, that's fine, but at least offer a temporary solution for us.

Commissioner Anderson: I completely understand. And with regard to the screaming children, the end of the dog park is not going to be right next to the children because we don't want children reaching through the fence and trying...

Ms. Sheehan: I doubt...

Commissioner Anderson: To pet the dogs.

Ms. Sheehan: It happens in the Grove, and it's not pleasant.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's going to be...

Commissioner Anderson: No.

Vice Mayor Mena: A separate area completely.

Commissioner Fors: And just a...

Vice Mayor Mena: It'll have tennis courts in between one area and the other. I mean, it's very...

Ms. Sheehan: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: Separate.

Commissioner Anderson: It's lengthy. It's much bigger.

Commissioner Fors: And just as a public service announcement -- this isn't in response to anything Ms. Sheehan said. As a public service announcement for the folks that are experiencing increased enforcement and compliance efforts at Catalonia Park, please understand that the Police Department is simply doing what they were instructed to do by the Commission and by Administration. None of the police officers out there explaining the rules to you, or potentially warning about potential citations, made the decision to allow dogs there or not, or on leash or off leash. So, as we try to usher in this more conforming use of Catalonia Park and discuss this issue in general, please be respectful to our police departments and staff who are merely just doing their job and didn't make the policy decisions that led to it.

Mayor Lago: And if I may add something. I know the Vice Mayor wants to make some comments, and I would like for him to make some comments about what's happening on the Underline because he's been leading that charge for years now, and I think it's coming close. Madam City Attorney, what was that --? When did that piece of legislation about leash versus unleashed go into effect? Because I want people to understand that because I don't know that date, and I don't remember it, and I've been here eight years.

City Attorney Ramos: It seems like it's been in the Code since 1958 and amended last in 2005.

Mayor Lago: Okay, so that was before anybody was even -- some of us were in law school and college back then. So, you know, in 2005 so...

Commissioner Anderson: Well, I was born.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. So, to make a long story short, something is coming, I promise, and it's sooner rather than later. Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Mena: With respect to the Underline dog park that I set into motion I don't know how many years ago now, nobody's more frustrated than me, frankly, that it's not done yet. It -- to use a term of art -- really pisses me off actually.

Mayor Lago: Vice Mayor, how long --? I don't want them to hear it from me. How long have you been working on this?

Vice Mayor Mena: I can't even tell you at this point. Since I was first elected... Commissioner Anderson: At least four years.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because residents told me exactly what you said, which is, it's unacceptable that the City doesn't have a dedicated dog park, and you're right, and I accept that as a fact. And so, I got to work on trying to find a location. We identified a location. We had community meetings. We have a full-fledged...

Mayor Lago: Drawing.

Vice Mayor Mena: Very nice renderings of what it's going to look like. It's going to have a section for large dogs, a section for small dogs, all the amenities that you would like to see at a dog park. Is the location the perfect ideal location? No, I'm not going to lie to you and tell you it is. It's near US 1. I understand that's not ideal. It was a large piece of land that we could get and deliver on, at least that was my understanding. The delivery part has been more challenging because it's

associated with the Underline and because the approvals that are necessary to bring it to fruition run through the County, there have been delays. It will happen. It will be the rendering that this community had input on and the quality of a dog park that I think, hopefully, you would agree is the type of quality you would want. I'm not going to hide my frustration that it hasn't happened yet, and I'm not going to tell you that that park is going to be done this year because it's not, that one. We're going to talk about it later today. Again, I'm frustrated on that one. So, what are we doing in the interim? We're trying to deliver on another one near Salvadore Park that will frankly not be of the size and quality of the Underline version, eventually, because it's going to be smaller. It's not as ideal of a size as you would like to have, but it's at least centrally located, I think. It'll be accessible. It will be exclusively for dog use. It'll be fenced off.

Mayor Lago: Shaded.

Vice Mayor Mena: And so...

Mayor Lago: It'll be shaded.

Vice Mayor Mena: It'll be shaded. So, it has a lot of good features, and we will deliver on that more quickly because we don't need County approval, and we don't have to deal with all of the bureaucracy associated with getting the other one done. So, to answer your question, I'm hopeful that, by the end of the year, we'll have that one done, and that then in short order, hopefully after that, we'll be able to finally deliver on the bigger and more substantial one, and hopefully, other ones as well. Because if we take nothing else from this, you are 100 percent right that it's unacceptable that we don't have one. Nobody up here will look you in the eye and tell you otherwise. But we need to deliver, or otherwise, it's just a lot of talk and not a lot of action. And that's not something that I pride myself on. I like to deliver on things, and so that's why I'm frustrated about not having delivered on it yet, but we will. I hate to see what's going on at Catalonia Park because I recognize that, you know, we never like to see neighbors pitted against

each other, and they're complaining about the dog owners, and you're complaining about the parents looking at their phone. You know, it devolves into stuff that nobody wants to be in that situation. And so, we're trying to mitigate everything that's going on the best we can, and again, hopefully we'll be able to deliver soon on having an alternative option that everybody can enjoy and not have those issues.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Vice Mayor. Quick point, just once we finish these comments, I'm willing to take Item G-8, which is an update -- providing an update in regards to the Underline dog park, if you'd like to stay for that. That's the first thing we could take. I'll take it out of order. Mr. -- no, not yet, not yet. Hold on. Mr. Clerk.

Vice Mayor Mena: Oh, we still have more public?

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes, the floor is yours.

Jackson Holmes: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, thank you for Commissioner Menendez who reminded me that that item, G-8, is on the agenda. I had completely forgotten.

Mr. Holmes: Can you --? You think you can get that slide up?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mr. Holmes: So, what a thing of beauty here, the mobility hub.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Mr. Holmes: I picked the worst time to be ill last Commission meeting because, you know, I understood -- I reviewed the City's deliberations on the cost -- the rising cost of construction and the need to delay the mobility hub start date accordingly. I want to just start out -- for the people at home who may have questions about this, I have adjoining property to the mobility hub. This is a God-send for me. It's doubling the value of my property, and I'm immediately abutting that thing. This is a God-send for three reasons. The most important is parking. The alternative are developers who are always hostile to parking. For them, it's their worst bane. If they could provide no parking, they would. Indeed, with that Zoning Code change, there are places that will provide no parking, which just augments our problem. If you have a retail store like I have, and they can't get parking, they ain't going to sign up for a five-year lease paying half a million dollars -- alright -- because no parking, no customers, no business. The City loses big money. Mr. Lago, Pat Keon held on and said the City can run its own parking. Thank God, and we need to do this. And we can't let it lapse into the hands of developers. Secondly, safety. When you look at this picture here with this building, you can see that it's transparent. People want to criticize that it's very avant-garde and so on. Well, we are the City Beautiful. This is a beautiful building. I think it's going to win -- I know it's going to win awards and architectural magazines. We're going to have probably -- certainly, the safest parking garage in the state of Florida. Now, what does safety mean? Safety means that people don't get mugged. Unfortunately, the FBI statistics showed that the second-most dangerous type of property are parking garages and lots, and people do get mugged. Some people in other places get killed in parking garages, and it's because they're dark. Darkness breeds crime. This garage is a spectacularly safe thing. When you look at this -- and if you're down on the street, you could see somebody getting mugged, call 911, and save somebody from being victimized, right? So, we want safety.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: No, thank you. Have a wonderful day. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Al Fresa.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Fresa, how are you, sir?

Al Fresa: Good.

Mayor Lago: Good to see you, my friend.

Mr. Fresa: Mr. Mayor, my name is -- Commissioners, Vice Mayor, hello. My name is Al Fresa. I currently reside in 3031 Segovia Street, 20-plus year Coral Gables resident. Let me piggyback on some of the things. It's great to see some of the earlier comments. I'm here -- oh, I'm here to speak about the Catalonia dog park, I'm sorry. Some of the previous comments you all already made, that is wonderful news to hear that we're going in that direction. So, may I make a couple of suggestions in the interim, maybe of somehow until those actions are actionable and tangible for us to use. Can we do a temporary or provisional solution? For example, using the existing Catalonia Park. Right now, there is a strong Coral Gables presence of police or code enforcement or whatnot, utilizing them, and maybe we could do peak hours, off hours, supervised, unsupervised, something that maybe you could all discuss amongst yourselves to give us -- because I recently got a puppy a couple of months ago. And I came across that as I'm walking the neighborhood, as you well know, the neighborhood, I was -- she was just pulling me to get in there, and she's so attracted. And what confused me was the lack of architecture for kids to play in, you know, the toy house, the treehouse, this and that. It was an open -- so, I -- honestly, I didn't read the sign. I just came in and my little blue, she was like, let's go, go, go, go, playing with little Theo and Finn, and you know, all the other dogs. So, that being said, we seem to be moving in the

direction that we need to be. Can we possibly discuss a provisional, a temporary solution until that actually takes place and happens? Thank you. Thank you for your time, Commissioners.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Applause.

Commissioner Menendez: Part of -- well, the reason it doesn't have playground equipment because when they -- the City moves forward on creating parks, they do countless meetings with the neighborhood and ask them what they want to see in the particular neighborhood park. So, that's why some neighborhood parks, you'll see playground equipment because when they did the survey in the town hall meetings, they said we want playground equipment. Then you go two miles further in a different direction, and those neighbors don't want it because they don't want to attract kids to it, so that's why you -- yeah, and the only reason why some parks have playground equipment and others don't because the neighbors around it either requested it or said they didn't want it, so that's why you see the discrepancy. And I understand why, if you don't see playground equipment, you might think...

Mr. Fresca: If was...

Commissioner Menendez: It's not...

Mr. Fresca: A bit confusing.

Commissioner Menendez: Made for -- yeah. I think going forward, I think the City needs to revisit that because it's creating a lot of confusion.

Mr. Fresca: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: The other part is, I -- when we discussed it, I said, I'd like to see, you know, the Commission as a whole expedite whatever permitting, whatever's required to get these parks online. But I'm more than open -- I discussed about the possibility of temporarily splitting part of Catalonia to make the north side the dog, you know, area, and they can run, and then the other part for the kids because the Anderson -- on Anderson, there's an entrance already.

Mr. Fresa: There is.

Commissioner Menendez: So, you can go there if you split it in a certain way. You can have the dogs and the kids, and it buys us time, and it creates a safer environment.

Mr. Fresa: That would be wonderful.

Commissioner Menendez: So, I'm more than happy to perhaps have the Administration come back to us on a temporary basis, obviously limiting costs because we want to move funds towards the permanent solution. So -- but I'm more than happy to find a temporary solution because I think, like the Vice Mayor said, and the Mayor said, we can't have neighbors against neighbors. It's not what we're about. And it just shouldn't be that way. So, let's see what we can do.

Mr. Fresa: There's such a sense of community over there. I've met people. I mean, it's -- the oxytocin dumps that you get into your system, you just feel so good. And we've kind of like lost that, and we've lost our sense of community. If we could somehow bring that back temporarily as we move forward. There's also -- I don't know if you've walked the neighborhood. There's a lot of people with a lot of dogs.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mr. Fresa: There really is. It's surprising.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm one of them.

Mr. Fresa: So...

Commissioner Anderson: And prior to the signs going up, I was one of them using the park as well, so I totally agree with you. You know, as far as having the whole thing open for dogs to run...

Mr. Fresa: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: It's a problem because I don't know about your dog -- my dog doesn't always put out a gem.

Mr. Fresa: You have a bigger dog.

Commissioner Anderson: You need to hose it down. You need to hose it down, you know, and puppies too will do the same thing. We are committed to moving forward on the parks, walkable parks throughout, especially the North Gables where the greatest need exists. And I can tell you that we have the determination to push this forward as quickly as possible. I don't know that splitting the park's the best solution because it turns the place into a small one.

Mr. Fresa: Yeah, I don't know if it is either...

Commissioner Anderson: I've talked to the neigh...

Mr. Fresa: But something temporary, if not that location, maybe another.

Commissioner Anderson: I don't know. I'm...

Mr. Fresa: Something to be discussed maybe.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm happy...

Mr. Fresa: Suggestion.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm happy putting up a chain link fence, but you know, some people have a different opinion.

Mr. Fresa: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: As long as it keeps the dog in and keeps them from running in the street, that's the key.

Mr. Fresa: Correct.

Commissioner Anderson: But we have to have a, you know, way to clean it up with a hose, et cetera. I've talked to the neighbors there. They never wanted those rocks in here. They're dangerous for the kids, they're dangerous for the dogs. They've talked about wanting some play equipment in there. I mean, so...

Mr. Fresa: Are there a lot of residents/neighbors complaining? Or is it a small group?

Commissioner Anderson: I cannot walk, I cannot run, I cannot jog through that neighborhood without being stopped. I don't care what disguise...

Mr. Fresa: By a lot of...

Commissioner Anderson: I put on; they spot me.

Commissioner Menendez: And I'm just saying...

Commissioner Anderson: Of course, the dogs...

Commissioner Menendez: I have the same experience.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: There are people I've known for years that reach out to me with small kids, two-year-olds, grandkids.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: And if Rhonda Anderson -- Commissioner Anderson's Greyhounds at 80 pounds run full speed into me, it's like Lawrence Taylor hitting me, so you can only imagine parents or grandparents. So, that's the issue, they're concerned.

Mr. Fresa: It's become very divisive, yeah.

Mayor Lago: So, let's...

Mr. Fresa: We should be a little bit more inclusive. I don't know...

Mayor Lago: But let's...

Mr. Fresa: How it's gotten to this.

Commissioner Anderson: Fear.

Mayor Lago: I think it's gotten to this point because there's laws in the books that are not being followed, and then you have people who call us and say...

Mr. Fresa: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: You're not following the rules, the rules that you set forth. So, it kind of pins people against each other, and that's what we're trying to avoid. Vice Mayor, did you want to say something, or no?

Vice Mayor Mena: No, I was -- unfortunately, Fred just walked out. I'm not sure if he can hear me if he's outside. But Fred is our Parks Director, and I was hoping he might be able to address whether there's any options as far as a temporary interim...

Commissioner Menendez: Here comes Fred.

Vice Mayor Mena: Solution. Fred, look, I just wanted to see if you had any thoughts on whether there's an interim temporary solution, whether it's -- until we deliver on the Salvadore dog park. Whether it's -- I've heard the idea of having hours, you know, dedicated to dogs, certain hours of the day.

Mr. Fresa: Alternating days.

Vice Mayor Mena: I've heard the idea of...

Mr. Fresa: There's so many ways you could go with it.

Vice Mayor Mena: I just heard the idea from Commissioner Menendez of possibly...

Commissioner Menendez: The fence.

Vice Mayor Mena: Fencing an area off. I don't know how realistic that is. What are your thoughts generally on an interim solution until we're able to deliver on Salvadore Park?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, I think the splitting of the park, because of the size of that park, I think it becomes problematic. And also, for it to be a cost-effective splitting, you know, unless you're going to use a temporary chain link fence and not worry about the path that cuts across, it's a little -- it'd be difficult because you'd have to cut it -- and anyway, you'd have to cut through the path.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: In terms of looking at operational, you know -- if you're going to do it, I would think you'd look at one day on or, you know, a dedicated day because that five to seven, you know, that's the primetime for everybody.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's primetime for everybody, right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, so...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: If you want to have some sort of equality, that's what you'd have to do, but I think you'd have to do it on a pilot basis or something, where you'd look at it and see what the wear and tear is on the park, as we've talked about. I mean, you know, if the...

Vice Mayor Mena: Well, that's part of what I'm asking you because that part of it is more technical than...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It is.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know, I understand we could figure out a solution -- a compromise that...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, we...

Vice Mayor Mena: People are going to like and not like, but as far as...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, we...

Vice Mayor Mena: What's the impact on the park, in other words, from you...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, yeah. It's -- I mean, if you have, you know, Tuesday, Thursday, let's say, for dogs, then obviously, you're cutting that wear and tear. I mean, we've had to re-sod it, I think, two or three times already in a short span, and it gets beat up. The grass gets beat up pretty heavily. So, you'd have to look at that.

Commissioner Menendez: The concern with...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: If you want to try some sort of pilot, we'd have to have an education, you know, component, and informational component. You'd have to get it out there to say, "Look, only on these days," because what happens is...

Mayor Lago: People show up.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: People show up every day.

Commissioner Menendez: You're still going to have to enforce it.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And there's going to be enforcement. And I think it's -
- as we all know, it's a frustrating issue because I understand both sides.

Mayor Lago: But I think that -- I think that we have to...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: But we can do that.

Mayor Lago: I think what we have to really focus in on is delivering...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no doubt.

Mayor Lago: Let's deliver...

Commissioner Anderson: No doubt.

Mayor Lago: The park. Let's deliver the parks, plural.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, we should.

Mayor Lago: And let's find the resolution. Okay, I want to deliver something right now, but obviously, we can't do that today. So, let's work on this, let's work on this moving forward, and we're going to hear now in a few moments, if we get to it, on G-8, which is going to give us an update in regards to US 1...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yep.

Mayor Lago: And the Underline dog park, okay?

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Fresa: Thank you for your time.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Pedro Morales.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Morales, yes, sir.

Pedro Morales: Good morning, Mayor, and the rest of the group up there. My name is Pedro Morales. And I am the Biltmore II Condominium Association representative to the Biltmore Way streetscape. I want to thank everyone, particularly Mr. Iglesias, for following through on the resolution to find a designer to come up with some suggested -- some suggestions for design of

the streetscape. So, thank you for trying to get Dover Kohl and Partners and their planning services for public engagement on this subject. I mentioned before we lived in the Chicago area, and lastly, just coincidentally, in Montgomery, Alabama, where I led the largest recycler of plastics in the world. But the key thing is I was able to see some of the work of these people that they did in downtown Montgomery, the sketches and so forth and what's going on. It's very impressive. I don't know these people, but I just want to let you know, it seems like you picked some good folks. The question that we have -- and again, to give accountability to this project, you guys have been great. Mayor, you said certain things were going to happen on a certain date, they've happened; Mr. Iglesias, you too. So, specific questions, who will lead the project and be responsible to execute after everybody sees the plans, after the public and the City says this is the best option, who will be fathering, mothering this along?

Mayor Lago: Okay, so what I'm a big fan of -- because I know that you want to get to the next step, but we haven't even gotten to the first step.

Mr. Morales: Oh, I understand.

Mayor Lago: So, what we did was we kept up our side of the bargain and our commitment, and that was to identify someone, the entity, which is on today's agenda. I don't know exactly which agenda item it is, but Dover Kohl is here, the funding has been allocated, this Commission has pushed forward. We have followed the schedule that we set forth, and today we're going to ratify, and Dover Kohl will be selected if this Commission approves it. We're moving forward. And I want to be very, very clear with my comments with the Manager. In the proposal for Dover Kohl, you probably won't see this, but I'm saying it on the record right now. There is immense amount of hand-holding, community hand-holding that is provide -- is going to be provided to get the word out, to build consensus, to speak to everybody. But I want to lay the law down really, really quick just so you understand it. We're not going to make everybody happy.

Mr. Morales: Right.

Mayor Lago: So, we have two options. Either we can find the middle ground, or we can stay status quo and leave it the way it is, like it's been for the last 30 or 40 years, and every time we take a bite out of it, it fails.

Mr. Morales: Right.

Mayor Lago: Like I said before, that's going to be the option. The option is we're going to get all this information, we're going to tell Dover Kohl, present the following different opportunities before the community, and the community can either fight and torpedo it because they didn't get a 100 percent, or maybe they got 90 percent, maybe they got 95 percent. But I leave that up to you, and to Ms. Gold, and to the other very nice lady who also comes here all the time -- I forgot her name, I apologize -- to make the decision of whether we work collegiately together and actually deliver on something, or we just don't do anything. By the way, just so you know, if we don't do anything, it's perfectly fine because this is going to cost millions of dollars and we don't have it in the budget, so I just want to be clear. If we don't do anything, it's perfectly fine because to do something it's going to cost a lot of money, and it's going to cost a lot of effort from the City to find the money, to budget for the money, and to do all the things that are going to take time to do. I just want to -- I want to make sure because I can already sense where this is going, where, you know, I want certain things, other mem -- the block -- the other block wants another thing. We're trying to deliver on something, and if we don't get input, and if we don't get the community to say I'm willing to give on this, but I really want this -- you know, we can design a great project, but at the end of the day, they'll never see the light of day because we can't come to some consensus.

Mr. Morales: Yeah, we understand, and please count on us to help, everything from being a laborer, cutting concrete out there, to making sure that there is a compromise, something that is reasonable. We understand that. Every -- you know, that's just the way it has been.

Mayor Lago: The Manager...

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, there...

Mayor Lago: In regards to your question, the Manager is in charge of all the employees here in the City.

Mr. Morales: Okay.

Mayor Lago: The Commission is only in charge of the Manager, the City Attorney, and the City Clerk. Trust me, I would like to have more control...

Mr. Morales: Okay.

Mayor Lago: But I don't. So...

Mr. Morales: Well, one thing...

Mayor Lago: To make a long story short, the Manager will make the decision on who will be leading the charge and who will be the point person in regards to that.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, Dover Kohl has considerable resident outreach in this proposal, and then we've got a budget issue, which is huge because depending on the scope of the work, as you know, it can be substantial, and how we budget it, and how much the residents will have as part of that budget will be something that we need to discuss.

Mr. Morales: Yes, and thank you very much. One last comment. My responsibility is for the Biltmore to represent our association in conjunction with other people that we've met in the area on that segment from Anderson Road to Segovia Street. We understand that the other segment is more commercially oriented, and it affects the City, so I just want to be clear on that. Given the funds that are already, if you would, been budgeted for this year, at the very least, can we consider striping the parking spaces, so people know where to park? Can we put up the speed limit signs of 25 miles an hour? Can we plant 40 trees? Listen, a couple hundred grand after the design services, I think you can do that. So, what I'm trying to say is, if you can't get the whole thing, at least let's try to get a few of the things and get everybody to kind of work together to that.

City Manager Iglesias: I do think we are moving forward without looking to what we're doing. We need to really get Dover Kohl involved, get the planning involved, find out what our priorities are, and then we can move forward.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: But I think we need to plan it properly before we do something.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: And get appropriate resident input.

Mr. Morales: Alright, well, thank you. And again, maybe we don't get the whole apple, but we get a bite of the apple this year.

Mayor Lago: That's great.

Mr. Morales: And that's all that we're encouraging. Many thanks for doing what all of you said you were going to do. Delighted to see this going forward, and please count on us to do everything we can to arrive at a compromise that is the best, the most gooder (sic) for the most people. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Morales: Appreciate it.

City Clerk Urquia: Javier Figueras (phonetic).

Mayor Lago: Next, next speaker.

City Clerk Urquia: So, the next person is going to be on Zoom.

Mayor Lago: This is the last person?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Please close the public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Will do.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: You're here?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

City Clerk Urquia: It says Javier Figueras. That's what I said.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Would you like to come up anyways, and you can fill out a card, or we can find your card later, whatever you like.

City Clerk Urquia: Sorry.

Jose Rivera Font: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Mr. Rivera Font: My name is Jose Rivera Font. I'm a neighbor at 527 Malaga Avenue. Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners, good morning. I just want to comment back on the dog park. I've been a resident of Coral Gables for over 23 years, 21 where I live currently. I also use of this Catalonia Park. I'm here not to repeat, but rather to raise the profile of this issue, something we're going to be really working on because we think it's a community building opportunity for us, not a way to pit us against each other. So, these parks should be helping community, the quality of life and such. So, one of the things I want to support is this idea of out of 63 parks, while we have something planned and something that is potentially other opportunities for building that parks in the City, something temporary I think is a matter of will. Do we put as citizens enough pressure for political will to make this happen, as citizens working to support what we'd like to have done for the City and by the City? So, just going to finish with that. And thank you for your time.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here.

City Clerk Urquia: The person on Zoom is Matthew Hale.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Hale, thank you for being us -- with us. The floor is yours.

Matthew Hale: Hello. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Mr. Hale: Okay. Matthew Hale, 121 Alhambra Plaza. I'm also here to talk about the dog park at Catalonia and Anderson. You know, I don't think it's a side of dogs versus children, but I would like to point out, I think there's some safety issues here. If it's going to be a dog park, it should be set up, cleaned, managed. You know, I think they might need a higher fence, enforcing of the rules, in particular, aggressive, and dangerous dogs that, you know, don't only affect people inside the park, but also those people who walk by. Yesterday, as I was walking by, which it was also seen by several Coral Gables police who were already there, there's three aggressive dogs as I'm walking by with my small dog, who's on a leash, my one-year-old child, who is in a stroller, three large aggressive Dobermans come running all the way across the park, ready to jump the fence, barking, showing their teeth. We have to run out into the street to avoid a potential issue with these dogs, so you know, it seems like it's a major safety issue if they're not going to regulate, you know, in some way. And I don't have the answers of how it can be done, the types of dogs that are being there, so you know, I don't think there's any reason that a child -- you know, a one-year-old child, a small dog, me, or you know, anybody else should be walking on a public sidewalk and with inches of a dog showing its teeth while the owner is on his phone and not even paying attention, only to call the dog off at the last minute. You know, a three-foot fence could easily be jumped by a dog like this, you know, and it's particularly traumatic for a young child, you know, to have this happen. You know, I don't think in Coral Gables it's something that should be happening as you're just walking on a public sidewalk, you know, minding your own business, you know, and there's these type of aggressive dogs inches from where you're walking. So, you

know, as Coral Gables grows, there's more and more families and kids moving in. You know, I think it's a safety issue, and you know, I'm not referring to the people that are here today. I've met most of them. I know that they're responsible dog owners, just like I am, but I think that we've got to find a way, you know, to regulate those who are not responsible so they don't ruin this for everybody because I hope it can remain a dog park, you know, but I don't think it should until it can be properly regulated.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Hale: That's all. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I appreciate it. Moving on, do you have anything else?

Commissioner Menendez: I just, you know...

Mayor Lago: I would have never -- let me tell you, when I found this piece of property...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: And I brought it to the City of Coral Gables, I remember when the realtor was putting up the sign, and I drove by, and I stopped, and I got the number, and I brought it to the previous City Manager, and Mr. Iglesias helped acquire this piece of property. I never thought we would have this issue, and we don't have these issues in any other parks.

Commissioner Menendez: No.

Mayor Lago: And what bothers me the most is just the idea of what you mentioned, you articulated so clearly, is residents against residents. It's very unlike Coral Gables.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Mayor Lago: And Mr. Manager, we need to find a solution for this. I know you're working on it, but we need to.

Commissioner Menendez: Can I...?

Mayor Lago: We need to figure something out.

Commissioner Menendez: Mayor, and I'm sorry to interrupt again, but after hearing that story -- and I've seen it before. And folks, and all of you are here, you're responsible. You know how I know you're responsible? Because you're here, clear as day, as the gentleman said. But I don't want to be an elected official here and have something horrible happen to a little kid, and then we're here kicking the can down the road, okay? So, forgive me if I repeat, I'm going to ask, hopefully, my colleagues join me...

Mayor Lago: 100 percent.

Commissioner Menendez: In the May meeting, I need the Administration to come up with a clear temporary solution. I don't care if it's a chain link fence. I don't care if it's people holding hands. We need to create a safe environment for our kids, grandkids, and residents. Again, I don't care if it's a chain link fence, it's temporary, and it doesn't have to be at Catalonia. There's a property nearby, a park nearby. Let's do it. I don't want to be here sitting on the dais having to discuss a child that was attacked, don't want that.

Commissioner Anderson: Right. One last word. I've tried to get support in other areas of our City within walking distance of where you all live for a dedicated dog park, but the usual response that

we get from the neighbors is "not in my backyard." We need your support. We need your continued support to cause this to happen. And hopefully, if we have an amicable relationship with the neighbors and nearby, we can devise a park that is buffered enough away from the neighbors, you know, with plantings and hedges and so forth, so they don't have to see it and be respectful of each other.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner.