

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-1
April 10, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item I-1: [Start 12:57:48 p.m.]

Request for Commission Action from the Library Advisory Board regarding the upgrade of historic furniture and artifacts.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Request for Commission Action from the Library Advisory Board regarding the upgrade of historic furniture and artifacts.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I don't see anyone from the Library Advisory Board here, but the Library Advisory Board did pass a resolution regarding the historic furniture at the library. Dona, I know you are very knowledgeable even though at this point in time you are not the Board Secretary.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Should we just table this until they can come back?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: No, no. They asked for this day to be on the agenda.

Preservation Officer Spain: They submitted a PowerPoint, so they must have known that this was on this agenda, I believe.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And so, we have...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Excuse me a second, give us a report on the furniture disappearing.

Preservation Officer Spain: OK. So, I can tell you what I know about this furniture. In 1969 Eunice Merrick donated items to the City; the donation was to the City. The City placed them in the library and she was happy about that. She sent a letter saying that she appreciated that they were going to be in the library. She thought that was lovely. The items were a library table, one tapestry, one dining room set, consisting of one round dining table with five leaves, seven chairs, six straight chairs and one armchair and one china cabinet. So on December 9th of last year, I met with the library staff and we tried to locate those items. We were able to locate the library table and the dining table, three straight chairs, one armchair and a china cabinet. We were not able to find the tapestry, the five leaves for the dining table and three of the straight chairs; and so from 1969 until now those items have disappeared.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Terrible.

Preservation Officer Spain: So, it was my recommendation to relocate the existing historic furniture that's in the library to public areas within the City for better safe keep them; and while we were hunting there were two original library chairs that were in storage that were ancient, fallen into disrepair. I'd like the City to pay to have those restored and they can be on display downstairs in the library and I know we had a discussion with the City Manager...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: In the library or City Hall or some other public facility.

Preservation Officer Spain: I think that if they want to have historic furniture they can have those two chairs on display. I don't believe it's appropriate to keep the remaining items that Eunice Merrick donated in the library where they've lost...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Especially if they have disappeared.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And, Dona has come and met with me. We believe the furniture should be restored, we believe whether it is at second floor of City Hall or Merrick House or 2506, there should be an appropriate safe place where the public can enjoy it and then we also agreed to, if there was additional furniture needed at the library, we are so supportive of

the renovations that are happening that we would be happy to pay for it. It was a very positive discussion with library staff.

Preservation Officer Spain: And, in your package you have a list of the items to be relocated.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's a very good solution.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Now the Board does not agree or at least the majority of the Board members do not agree with this recommendation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Fine, but that's too bad if the furniture disappears...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But, that's why they are bringing it to you all and that's their prerogative and we respect that.

Preservation Officer Spain: And, there is a resolution in place that in 1969 they placed those items in the library, so it's appropriate before you, if you want to relocate them.

Commissioner Keon: I think that the library is rented; we rent the building to Dade County to provide the library services, so we are not there to take care of, monitor that furniture, so I think it is more appropriate that we follow staff's recommendation and allow for them to deal with the historic furniture or the furniture...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Historic Preservation come back here, but maybe leave some part of the historic furniture there and we will replace the furniture, but it is too bad for in our emphasis with historic preservation and history for Mrs. Merrick and Merrick's furniture to disappear from the library where I bet 102 percent of the people who go there have no idea who Merrick was or care about the historic nature of this.

Commissioner Keon: I think it's more important that we preserve and care for that furniture.

City Attorney Ramos: So procedurally, the motion would be to deny the request of the Board.

Commissioner Keon: OK.

Commissioner Lago: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Vice Mayor Quesada: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Any other items to come before the Commission?

Commissioner Keon: You know with regard to the library, the boards are up in the library with the renovations, if you go by you may want to take a look at them, if you take the time to just run by the library and look at...They are going to renovate the children's section of the library and other rooms and whatever. We are hoping that once they start that, that they will apply for the budgeting for another sum of money to complete the renovation of the remaining section of the library. They do have a plan, they do have a schedule, they do have it phased. So, we'd like to continue to work cooperatively with the County, so that we get it done. They have been wonderful partners in this.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Absolutely – definitely. Any other items to come before the Commission?

[End: 1:03:30 p.m.]