

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C – Public Comments
March 9, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Mark Trowbridge
Roberta Neway
Mr. Jackson Rip Holmes
Jerry Proctor

Agenda Item C – Public Comments [Start: 1:20 p.m.]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Public comments, Billy.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, right now we have three people who have three people who have requested to speak.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: How many?

City Clerk Urquia: Three at this point. But before we move forward, I just wanted to remind all those participating via telephone that they can raise their hand by pressing the star-9 on their phone, because they are unable to see our chat messages through – so star-9 to raise your hand to speak during the public comments.

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The first person three minutes, five minutes.

City Clerk Urquia: The first speaker is Mr. Mark Trowbridge.

Mr. Trowbridge: Good afternoon Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, members of the Commission, Mark Trowbridge from our Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, located at 201 Alhambra Circle. I just want to thank all of the members of the Commission for recognizing and honoring Women's History Month. It was great to have our County Mayor join us, but I want to celebrate all of the incredible women who have served, not only our City Beautiful, but continue to serve in a variety of capacities and our elected leadership, and our senior leadership, our volunteer boards. It is an incredible opportunity to work collaboratively with such incredible women who care much about the City Beautiful as each and every one who is here on this call today. I also want to thank the County Mayor for the work that she is doing in the Renew 305 Program and I'm hoping that its something that we can work with our City Manager, of course Julian Perez and Economic Development, and make sure that we are a very, very focused part of that renewal related to economic recovery that was unveiled last week. And the last think I'll mention is that we are hosting, along with the University of Miami and several other partners, a hybrid Candidate's Forum this Thursday, March 11, starting at 6 p.m. with Group II Candidates. It will be taped by the City of Coral Gables. So, thank you to Martha Pantin and Mike and the entire team for making that happen. There will be a limited in-person audience of about 65 folks and we will be carrying it live on Zoom via the University of Miami's Zoom account, linked to our Facebook live accounts. So, I know we have some of the candidates on the call today. I want to thank all 13 of them for committing to be part of that, and to be part of that program. So, you can Zoom in, you can tune in, and you can watch it on demand beginning on the 12th. So, thank you to the Commission for leading the way to make sure that we can continue to inform and update our electorate about the candidates, the issues, and the opportunities ahead of the election in April. So, thank you all very much. We look forward to seeing many of you live and in person on March 11th this Thursday.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you, Mark.

City Clerk Urquia: The next speaker is Ms. Roberta Neway.

Ms. Neway: Hello, can you hear me?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, we can.

Ms. Neway: Okay – great. I'm Roberta Neway, 1236 South Alhambra Circle and in 2018 I had asked the city about getting cycle lanes on my small block on South Alhambra Circle. At that time
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in November of 2018, Mark Brown and Jessica Keller came to my home and they met with some of my neighbors and I about a cycle lane plan. Owners of 7 out of 11 residences attended and all who attended was positive about the idea. As you know, Mark Brown left the city, the process was delayed. However, last year I again asked about the possibility of cycle lanes. At that time, I prepared a petition expanding the area from U.S.-1 to Triumphus Street, which is three blocks, the first three blocks of South Alhambra. Here is what I ask people to agree or disagree to. The undersigned property owners support the concept of bicycle lanes on the portions of South Alhambra Circle, in front of their homes or properties and request a meeting with the city to review, discuss the feasibility of, and provide feedback on a tentative plan. Twenty owners or their representatives out of 29 signed the petition, in a couple of cases they gave verbal support. Three said no, we don't want cycle lanes. I was not able to contact or they couldn't make up their mind in six cases. Then the pandemic hit, and everything went on hold. I think 20 positive responses out of 29 properties, with only three stated negatives justifies staff presenting a plan to us. These three blocks are the most dangerous blocks on South Alhambra, and they have direct access to the future Underline, the Metrorail, and the University of Miami. This could be used by a lot of people. It is already used by a lot of people. In the interest of safety, the environment, public health, and community, I respectfully request that the Commission ask staff to present a tentative plan to me and my neighboring property owners at their earliest convenience. Thank you for your time and please stay safe.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Neway. Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: The next speaker is Mr. Jerry Proctor. He stepped away for a second, so our next speaker is Mr. Jackson Rip Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you all very much. I want to say hello to Kristen Castillo, not that you'll have time, but if you do, say hello to our new Mayor is really a great uplifting experiencing to see her here, and that's one of the things that I found about Coral Gables City Hall. I come down largely because I have a desire for the city to help Miracle Mile with the department stores, so I've been doing this for a long time. One of the fringe benefits is to get to see people like you, and its great. We get a lot of really incredible people now, including your wonderful uplifting message. But you'll see what I'm about to say, so please don't be shy for what I'm about to say, which is that we are in the middle of a battle over zoning rewrites. So, you're going to see some intensity from me. Mayor and Commission, I have been attending City Hall meetings, about two-thirds of them over the past 22 years and I've never seen – I guess its an indirect complement, but I've never seen so much dishonesty as right now over the zoning code rewrite. I mean, this is a shock. You know, I've been around. I've seen more Commission meetings than some of the Commissioners, that's how old I am. So why is that happening? My analysis – because I have a stake in this, you know. I'm not going to talk about Miracle Mile, but I have an economic stake on Miracle Mile. This

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doesn't disqualify me from talking about that item when it comes up. Anyways, as I intensively analyze all of this, what I found through Commissioners who have been sympathetic to me, but couldn't quite get themselves to vote what they believe, and I said what's happening, what's happening? Its Citizens United unleashing the floodgates of money from developers and in my opinion taking really control of City Hall. So, this is going to ruin you if this stuff keeps unfolding. So, then I take it to the next step. I say why? This is just my logic here. This is my opinion which hopefully you'll respect my ability to express my perception, if it's wrong, it's wrong and I apologize.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much Mr. Holmes. Please finish up.

Mr. Holmes: Okay. So, then you're putting me on a short leash here, so I'll just blurt this out. My perception is we are getting lies from the City Commission, first time ever, in order to get money from developers which you need if you are going to get reelected. Its not that you have a choice, but is that defrauding the voters, and that will be something I'm looking into, because my survival depends on it. Is all of this somehow and upsetting...you are defrauding the voters.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you very much. Next.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, we are going to go back to Mr. Jerry Proctor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Proctor.

Mr. Proctor: Hi, Jerry Proctor, can the board hear me?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir.

Mr. Proctor: Good afternoon, Jerry Proctor, attorney, office at 9130 South Dadeland Boulevard, together with my colleague Diana Gonzalez. I'm here, Mr. Mayor and Commissioners, to ask for your support of item F-12 on your agenda, transferring control of special taxing districts, specifically for the Coco Plum Civic Association Phase I of whom I represent. Asking for your support of the item. This item went to a public vote and was approved by an over 70 percent support by those voting in February. The item is largely ministerial and I'm sure your City Attorney's office can help explain it, if need be, but I'm here to help answer any questions that you may have when the item comes up. Again, its item F-12 and I thank you for your time.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor the last speaker is Ms. Maria Cruz.

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Can you hear me? Yes?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

Ms. Cruz: This is Maria Cruz, and you should not be surprised because I sent an e-mail last night about sanitation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ms. Cruz, we are only seeing half of your face, from your nose up.

Ms. Cruz: Oh, let me move.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can you sort of focus the camera?

Ms. Cruz: I don't want people to miss my whole face. Can you see me now?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, that's much better.

Ms. Cruz: Alright. You didn't want to miss my face. Okay. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, and this wouldn't be a surprise to most of the people listening, but this has to do with sanitation. I discussed it at the Town Hall meeting last week or a few days ago, and much to my surprise Mr. Santamaria spoke about the wonderful way that sanitation has worked during the pandemic, it's fabulous the way it is, that's why I wanted to make sure that you all know that today is Tuesday, and there are trash cans by the curb, there are recycle bins all over our neighborhood. The whatever was supposed to be picked up from the swale is still out there. We look wonderful this morning. I'm so glad that I was able to purchase the same glasses that Ed Santamaria wears, because I do not see anything wrong with what I have described. The only problem is this is not the Coral Gables that we are used to. This is not the Coral Gables that we expect and I'm sure that we are going to hear the sad story of Covid 19, but Covid 19 has been around for almost a year. And other departments have been able to come up with solutions, but sanitation can't. Sanitation is always late or absent, I shouldn't have said that my glasses moved a little bit. We are still expecting, I am expecting some answers as to when we are going to fix this, other than Commissioner Lago, most of you ignore the issue, because you never answer and I never get any answers, and if I get answers I get the answers that I just described, the wonderful, wonderful job that Mr. Zamora and Mr. Reyda, have done supervising sanitation and that's why everything is wonderful in the City of Coral Gables, and if any of you could come over with a little truck, you could help us pick up the

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recycle bins and the trash cans and maybe do a little picking up of the trash that hasn't been picked up, because we certainly would like to live in Coral Gables. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you ma'am.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor one more speaker is George Washington Elementary PTA.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Not the whole PTA, who is going to speak?

Ms. Lockhart: Hi, my name is Estelle Lockhart, I'm President of G.W. Carver Elementary PTA. I just wanted to announce to those of you on the Commission and then all of the people listening that Carver PTA, Elementary PTA, Ponce Middle School PTA, as well as Gables High School PTA, PTSA as well as the Gables Insider are all co-hosting a candidate forum next Thursday on the 18th from 7 to 9 pm. This is a family event. We are encouraging children and families to submit their questions ahead of time and the candidates have all been invited, all have RSVP'd, so we are super excited about getting more involvement really from the youngest all the way up, that this is our community, so we are doing a lot of educating. And as you know, PTA's cannot sponsor or endorse the candidate. Our role is to encourage and inform voting. So, we look forward to seeing you all there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you very much ma'am.

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

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. The public comment part of the meeting is closed.