

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-4
December 8, 2015
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-4 [Start: 11:20:43 a.m.]

A Resolution amending Ordinance 2015-17, as amended, waiving all City permit fees for solar panels and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Cason: We have another time certain at 11:30, I think we can get in F-4, which is resolution amending Ordinance 2015-17 waiving the City permit fees for solar panels, Commissioner Lago's.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you Mayor. I think we've discussed solar panels and the idea of potentially reducing or eliminating as-a-whole the permit fees which will hopefully spur people to go in and consider getting solar panels on their residence. I'm currently in the process of doing that myself, hopefully in the near future, in the next few months I'll have them installed. Just so people are aware, the PACE Program now is offered for both residential and commercial owners, and it's an opportunity which allows you to really do some serious home improvements that are

sustainable, energy efficient, from roof hardening to windows, to solar panels, air conditioning. Again, things that will not only increase your property value, but will make you extremely more environmentally friendly.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Can you remind people what the PACE Program is?

Commissioner Lago: The PACE Program and I've sat on the Board for -- the PACE Program is a Board that consists of about seven cities; Coral Gables is one of the founding members. It offers individuals in our community both in the business and residential community, the opportunity to make significant upgrades to the residences or to their building as long as it's associated with earth-friendly and sustainable aspects. Basically, you apply through the PACE Program, you are approved, and then you have a contractor which has to be pre-approved by the PACE Program and they do these modifications or upgrades to you residence. This is not like your standard loan, 30, 15 year fixed; this is basically tied into your note and will be in second position behind the county and the property taxes.

Vice Mayor Quesada: They also give you beneficial rates, interest rates, correct?

Commissioner Lago: Yes, they give you beneficial rates...

Mayor Cason: And you don't have to put any money of your own out.

Commissioner Lago: You don't have to put any of your own money out and it's also, I'm having a blank moment here, it also allows you to place it on your taxes, in the sense of you can deduct that from your taxes.

Mayor Cason: It's a lien that goes with your house.

Commissioner Lago: So when you say a property, if you still have ten years to pay off your PACE loan, it goes onto the next person.

Mayor Cason: This is a wonderful way for people that don't have the cash that want to either save money or make their house more structurally sound because it also helps your insurance rates; you get a lot of these upgrades done.

Commissioner Lago: So you save money not only on your electrical bill and your water bill, but you also save extensively, and say for example, if you put hurricane impact front door, impact windows and a garage, you'll get that credit in your insurance. And for example, I've seen people lower their insurance premiums by three, four thousand, five thousand dollars a year, which is significant. So not only are you saving on your utility bills, but you are also saving on your insurance payments, and again, you have a safer home.

Mayor Cason: And it's great – a lot of these homes probably have very old air conditioners, very inefficient, you can save a lot of money and reduce the carbon footprint, all kinds of good things from this.

Commissioner Lago: If you have any questions, I know that we have information on our website or you can also reach out to Chelsea and we'll be more than willing to help you out and lead you in the right direction so you can see if you sufficient equity in your home to become part of the PACE Program. So basically, here what we are doing is, not only are we pushing the PACE Program, but we are also stating that if you have an interest in solar panels, we are going to make it as easy as possible. We are going to work with you to expedite your project, we are going to now eliminate permit fees that are associated with your project, and hopefully push people to start adopting solar as a real opportunity and as a real option.

Commissioner Keon: Can we include that funding on the PACE Program, and this in our newsletter that's going out, maybe an explanation of the PACE Program for the residential community in the newsletter?

Mayor Cason: Why don't we put it in our own weekly Miami Herald that's a good way...?

Commissioner Keon: So people are aware of it.

Mayor Cason: Focus in a little bit on how you do it and what it covers.

Commissioner Lago: I don't know yet, I could probably speak to staff, maybe they will know better, but we are really breaking ground by pushing this ordinance through because the City is making a statement that, again, we need monies to run this government, but at the end of the day

the environment is just as important as anything else out there, and I think we are putting our money where our mouth is.

Mayor Cason: And the loss fees are not that high.

Commissioner Lago: The loss fees are nominal right now and I don't know if anyone from, maybe Matt or Jessica like to come up and say a few words, but this is an important aspect to what we are trying to do in regards to our sustainability plan.

Mayor Cason: I sense there is support for it so do we have a – somebody is going to make a motion.

Commissioner Keon: I'll make the motion.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Keon makes the motion.

Commissioner Lago: I'll second the motion.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Lago – City Clerk.

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes

[End: 11:25:46 a.m.]