

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-8
December 12, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item E-8 [Start: 12:24 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to Article 15, “Notices,” Section 15-102, “Notice,” of the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code to amend requirement for the Applicants Required Public Information Meeting to occur prior to review by the Board of Architects, providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez) (Co-sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: Moving unto E-8.

City Attorney Suarez: E-8 is an Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to Article 15, “Notices,” Section 15-102, “Notice,” of the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code to amend requirement for the Applicants Required Public Information Meeting to occur prior to review by the Board of Architects, providing for repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. This is a public hearing item.

City Commission Meeting

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*Agenda Item E-8 – Ordinance providing for text amendments to Article 15
“Notices,” Sectio 15-102, “Notice,” of the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code*

[Date]

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City Planner Garcia: So currently, our zoning code requires what's called, an applicant's required public information meeting, and this occurs only for applications that go to Planning and Zoning. So anytime that we change the zoning, or we have a mixed-use site plan, you're required to go to Planning and Zoning and to the Commission. But before the Planning and Zoning Board, 14 days before, they have to have some kind of information meeting. The information meeting is really meant to show the renderings, explain the project, what the requests are, so the residents understand what they proposed, right. So, what's proposed here is to have that information meeting earlier in the process, before it goes to the Board of Architects.

Commissioner Menendez: And I want to thank the Vice Mayor for co-sponsoring the item with me. In the time that I've been here as a City Commissioner, I've noticed that there are projects, investors, developers, whatever you want to call them, that truly do a great job of engaging the community and then there are others that sometimes don't do such a great job and its often those projects that by the time they get to the City Commission, it's a "Baked Alaska." It should be something productive and wonderful but it's on fire, and the recurring theme, no matter what the project is, no matter what it is that we're doing, the community has always said, well, we just found out about it. That may or may not be accurate, depending on the situation, but I honestly believe one way to just try to address it from a legislative side as was mentioned a moment ago was to move the public engagement part early in the process, because by doing that they can give their ideas, their thoughts and sometimes we've had projects that is so far down the tracks that the thing is, well, they already spent \$3 million dollars here and now you're going to have them go back. Why don't we try to get things addressed earlier to avoid the head-on problems later. That's the spirit behind what I'm doing.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to add to that. And I had brought this up when we had a short presentation or short story on what the Med design changes are. That the desire of the Board of Architects was to have residents engaged at an earlier point in time. I've heard some grumblings from staff about that, but we can achieve this. I circulated to you all. By using this methodology here, because I was going to bring it back anyway to try to press to get at the conceptual review stage, individuals involved because the board wants to hear comments earlier before it becomes a "Baked Alaska."

Commissioner Menendez: Exactly.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, by using this notice, we will save a lot of paper, a lot of postage, to be able to achieve the same result by having on the notice a QR Code and a URL where people can sign up for the program, like Commissioner Fors had developed and automatically send out electronic notices. So, this is sort of a marriage of many different ideas accomplishing the purposes that people want more transparency and more notice on the designs that are going into our areas, so they can look at compatibility, so they can look at massing early on and understand how the community feels or maybe see things that are not on the drawings, because oftentimes you have this, what's shown around the building is a bunch of trees and stuff that don't exist, so they need to have that context there at the same time. So that's why I added the language I did.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor, Maria Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I think this is a good thing, but I would like to see something else additional, not instead. Dealing with neighbors' groups, sometimes I've seen after they've called me and they said, we just got the notice the day before. The notice is sent by the developer, correct. How do we make sure that it is sent out in a timely manner, because that happens often. I maintain that you'll know how many residences, how many people should get the notice and I say the developers pay the city and the city sends out the notice, and that way we know that in fact, it was sent, or if its posted, go back to the old way that the city employee posted it, because we've seen posting by developers that they were posted in such a way that nobody could read it, but it was posted, and then it was removed, and then it was upside down, okay. So, I think the city needs to take a little more participation in this, to make sure that the people involved really get the notice and that the notice, if its posted, its fine, but make sure the city post and the city, if I remember correctly in the old times, they took a picture when they posted it and we know that it was posted, because you know, that's not being required anymore from what I understand. Last time I complained about one of those developers and the city did not post it, somebody else posted it, then the city posted it, but they didn't take a picture. No, no, no. This requires doing it the right way.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

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

Mayor Lago: Madam Sponsor, Mr. Sponsor, how would you like to proceed?

Commissioner Menendez: I'd like to move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second it. And I'll ask Ms. Garcia to provide us with a little background on how the notice posting is done.

City Planner Garcia: So yes, the applicant does post the property and mail the notices and they sign affidavit both for the posting of the property and an actual mailing.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And do you have a picture of the posting?

City Planner Garcia: We don't usually require the picture, but we can start to require that.

City Manager Iglesias: And we do require from the Post Office the addresses where it was mailed to.

City Planner Garcia: Correct.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, you have verification from the Post Office.

City Manager Iglesias: Post Office, yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That the mailing was done.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Vice Mayor.

Mayor Lago: And the affidavit has a date, correct.

City Planner Garcia: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Okay. We have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)