

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-7
August 22, 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
Communications Director, Martha Pantin

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-7

Discussion regarding trash pits
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item F-7 – trash pits.

Commissioner Fernandez: F-7. I sent the Clerk a video. This issue came up during the previous Commission when it was voted to remove the trash bags for green matter. This is a video I took. Unfortunately, it's not very clear because it was on the cell phone, but the leaves are flying across the street and that was an issue that was brought up by a resident at the time. The Commission decided not to take it up. I think its something that going forward we may want to consider what options we have to ensure that by collecting the leaves, we're not creating, a lot of our streets are wind tunnels, because of the trees, and it's causing the wind to scatter the leaves into neighboring yards creating a problem for the rest of the residents. So, I wanted to put it on everybody's agenda. I'm not going to move for any action today. I'll be bringing it up in the coming meetings.

Mayor Lago: Can I add something to that.

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Commissioner Fernandez: Sure.

Mayor Lago: So, I'm the one that passed that legislation, and I think it's a beautiful legislation, but if the Commission wants to change it, I welcome it. The key word being beautiful. When I drive through the city every single day, I send to my staff, as the Manager will tell you, I copy him on the e-mails, 40 or 50 pieces of Code Enforcement violations. Before residents were allowed up to seven days a week, get a garbage bag, black, white, clear, fill it with green matter and dump it out there all week. Simple. This is the way the city used to look. They would hide it; they would have a mountain; they would hide it. Next picture. This is the way it should look right here, very simple. This is the way – you see a lot of like dumping that happens all the time. I want to show a better photo, look at some of the ones that – we have anymore photos. That's a better photo. That was permissible in the previous code, to have a garbage bag full of green matter just seven days a week. What I would do, if you want to do that, its very simple. Fill your green matter, just put it next to your property, like adjacent to your side wall or put it in your garage, but I believe that the city is a lot more beautiful without having these bags of green matter filled there. As you can see, its full of green matter, filled there all week long. It looks like there's other garbage in it. I know what the intent is. They want to fill it with green matter and keep it in one place so that it doesn't blow away. Fine. I respect that, but if you want to do that, just put it in your garage or put it adjacent to your property. I think it makes the city look horrible, makes the city look horrible to have plastic bags all up and down the street. It's an eyesore.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm going to share with you, Mayor, the experience I had in the MacFarlane District. I went down there with a resident that I had befriended and wanted a tree planted, and I had to take out some of the stuff, and I was going to put it in a pile for her. Put the grass and stuff that I had removed. No, no. Put it on the side of my building, I don't like anything out in the front. I'll put it out on the day of pickup. Drive through that area, it's a remarkable area. I enjoy their culture, the way that they take care of their curbside. They don't have the piles of the bags and trash all over the place, with a rare exception around there, but most of it is very neat. I know everybody is not me, and I remulch and use all my leaves, it makes wonderful swale...builds a lot of soil, but you can also bag it and keep it on the side wall of your place.

Commissioner Fernandez: A lot of people are actually scheduling as well. In our block, for the most part, everybody uses two or three different landscapers, and they have a schedule where they are normally out there on Thursdays, because the trash pickup is on Friday, so we don't have the yard waste in front of people's homes the entire week. Again, its food for thought. I do think its an issue, because this is in a neighbor's house, and it was scattered all over the block.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's a valid point.

Commissioner Fernandez: And this was on a Friday, before trash pickup.

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Mayor Lago: So, its very easy, very simple. Pick up the leaves, put them in a garbage bag and put them in your side yard. Keeps your front yard and your neighborhood beautiful, not a garbage bag just sitting out there all weekend and addresses the issue with the leaves. The leaves don't weigh anything, literally lift the leaves up with two fingers and bring them over to the trash pit when you have to do it.

Commissioner Fernandez: But that's what I'm telling you, this is on the day of trash pickup, but the wind is picking them up.

Mayor Lago: But you can put it into a trash bag, and you can address the issue. You can have garbage bags the day of pickup. Perfectly fine.

Commissioner Fernandez: Not for green matter, according to the legislation.

Mayor Lago: You can have it. Yes, you can.

Commissioner Fernandez: That's what was put out by staff. I don't know if Martha is still here.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Perhaps we should just review it with staff.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Same thing I've been telling people. You just can't leave them in the trash pits all week long.

Communications Director: In the communications that we sent out with the tax bill, I don't have it with me right now, we did say that you could put out trash bags the day after six. You have to put it after 6 p.m. on the day before. Like for example, my pickup of my trash pit is on Mondays, so I can put it out on Sunday after 6 p.m.

City Manager Iglesias: Similar to other things that you can put out the day before, but green matter can be put out at any time.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I guess, the way it was portrayed was different or the way it was understood. You're allowed to put bags out for regular trash, but not for green matter; green matter cannot be in bags.

Communications Director: No, no. For green matter, that's the only matter that can be put in the trash bags is the green matter. You cannot put boxes, etc. I'll be happy to share with the Commission.

City Manager Iglesias: Boxes are being recycled. If you use a bag, it must be put out after 6 o'clock, the day before your pickup green matter, because those folks can go out at any time. The yard

people can go at any time, or you can do the yard yourself, then green matter can be put out at any time.

Mayor Lago: The purpose of the legislation is very simple and that is, to keep the city beautiful and to stop and to allow for trash pits only for green matter six days a week that's loose. The seventh day or the sixth day the night before you can bring anything you want out there, a nuclear power plant, if you like, you can put it out there and somebody will pick it up. I don't have a trash pit. The most liberating experience ever. Its incredible. I don't have a trash pit. I don't know how I'm able to do, but I figure it out. Trash pits remain. They are part of the City of Coral Gables, but the whole beauty was, it was a compromise. Trash pits remain, green loose matter is acceptable, but if you want to put it in a garbage bag, you put it in a garbage bag, and you bring it out six days, on the sixth day at night, very simple. That's what's acceptable. This is the first time anybody brings it up and I think it's a good piece of legislation, so we avoid having black garbage bags all over the city full of green matter. Are you done Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.