City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting Agenda Item I-21 May 31, 2022 City Commission Chambers 405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

<u>City Commission</u> Mayor Vince Lago Vice Mayor Michael Mena Commissioner Rhonda Anderson Commissioner Jorge Fors Commissioner Kirk Menendez

<u>City Staff</u> City Manager, Peter Iglesias City Attorney, Miriam Ramos City Clerk, Billy Urquia Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro Assistant Parks and Recreation Director, Carolina Vester Asset Manager, Zeida Sardinas

**Public Speaker(s)** 

Agenda Item I-21 [4:35 p.m.] Update regarding Country Club improvements.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead, Fred, Carolina.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, we're going to -- if we can pull the presentation. We want to kind of give you some updates. You know, as we talked at our last meeting, there's a lot of moving pieces, and we're trying to get the building to a position where we can operate the way that we need to to provide the proper value for our customers and our residents. So, we're going to show you the stuff that's happened in the last two weeks since we were here, a couple of exciting announcements as we're getting closer and closer and closer to the reality of what we want, which is to be open and to have people in there enjoying themselves.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, as you guys mentioned, we had our open house. We did a two-day kind of white glove, red carpet registration process to make it as comfortable as possible. We didn't want to take any registrations right there on site where we had people waiting, so we did it all on paper, took everybody's information. In the last two weeks, we've been entering households and putting balances on accounts. And we've had about 150 registrations and the number is growing.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: More photos.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes, more photos. We did have some, you know, special services there. We had some popsicles. We had...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Italian gelato popsicles.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes, Italian gelato popsicles

Commissioner Menendez: Special flavors too.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: For grownups.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: For the adults only.

Commissioner Menendez: By the way, the young man that is doing the chiropractor -- or the stretching, as we all know, I coached him when he was a kid at the Youth Center. Just...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes. We thought it would be a nice little...

Commissioner Menendez: I actually did.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: It'd be a nice little -- add value that day for people to come out since they couldn't physically use the fitness center to at least get stretched out and get ready for what's to come. So, we've had about 500 visitors during that, you know, two-day weekend. And then we're looking at now -- within the last week, we've added registrations, so we have about 200 memberships, and again, we're getting calls every day and emails every day. If you weren't a past member, people are eager. I mean, the news is out there, and people want to be a part of this, so people are calling us left and right and wanting more information.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, we're going to go into some of the improvements that we've made. And just to show you -- so, you know, I think it's important because, yes, we're closed to the public right now, but that doesn't mean that things aren't getting done. And I think it's very important to illuminate a lot of the different improvements that we need to make. So, as you can see, the before picture, we removed a lot of the kitchen equipment that was out of there, and you could see the state of the floor and the surface for that equipment. So, what we -- we did a complete epoxy floor of that entire kitchen area, that back area, which is what you need as we move forward closer to our concessionaire agreement, as we move towards the caterers. We need

to make sure that we had an operational kitchen. And as you can see, there's a marked difference in the before and after.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And these are items that we just couldn't wait on because they relate back to the food claims that happened before with the previous establishment. There were violations, so we wanted to make sure we addressed those and not reopen with those items that were previously identified. The café space in the front, we gave it a facelift. We decided to work with what is existing, so our staff has been amazing. We acquired the maintenance manager that was there before. His name is Ely (phonetic), and he's been doing most of this himself with some of the staff. And they basically retrofitted all the equipment that's there, put in new glass, new plexiglass, changed out gaskets, fixed electrical, repainted the other frontier fascia to give it a nice little facelift. We did the tile work in the back, and then we just had new countertops installed last Saturday.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: As you continue to see, there's some of our café spaces behind the counters or under the subway tile that we just showed you, and then you can see what it is afterwards with the new countertop and the new cabinet doors that we put in, and it changed out that space pretty dramatically.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And these are things you don't really see until you go in and you see what is behind the...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: When you remove the sink, and you remove -- and then you see the conditions of the area.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah. And funny story with the cabinetry, we were trying to get new cabinetry, and everything was two weeks to two months lead time to get cabinetry, so our staff went and got the wood themselves and they built the cabinetry so.

Mayor Lago: That's awesome.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That was great.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: They did it.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: This kind of area we showed you a little bit before. This is the area where the rafters are that were -- had immense termite damage. And we went first through the fill beams, realized that they were pretty damaged, then went up and found that the rafters were even more severely damaged. And we're really grateful that we had an amazing assistance from the Manager's office and the Building Department. And they turned over the permit within 24 hours. We got electrical inspection, building inspection, structural inspection done within a week's process. We got structural drawings within 48 hours, so it's, you know, a race for the last two weeks to get all this done on a rush job, and we had immense help.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And in the after pictures, you can see all the new beams and all the new wood that had to be put in, so that's where we're almost there. We've covered it. Now they're painting, and we will have that ceiling complete, and it'll look -- it's going to look really nice when it's completely painted, so we're almost there.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: This seems like an easy feat, but to close up that space within a span of two and a half weeks, it's pretty hard to do and get all the inspections passed, so we're really grateful. And the inspectors have been great working with us as well.

Commissioner Anderson: Nothing short of amazing, quite frankly.

Commissioner Menendez: Absolutely.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, one of the things that we had to work on after we tented the building, remember there was ivy along the side of the building. And then we had to -- you know, once it was tented, that was something that had to be removed as it was now officially dead once it got sprayed. So, we were able to look at that and we really did an exterior painting. And as you can see, we started re-landscaping the exterior, and we painted the walls. We painted the exterior fence, and it looks really great.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah. And the vine does extensive damage, not just to the walls, but also, the roof. When they removed the vine, they actually had to grind the walls down.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It started to be stuck over.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, it's a good idea not to have it come back. So, the pool, we knew initially walking the pool deck and all -- as well as the pump room underneath that there were some things that would have to remediate. We were hoping to remediate those later down the road. Unfortunately, the requirements with the Health Department for the operational permit for the pool license does require certain conditions to be met prior to inspection. One of the main issues is since it's a public pool, you can't have any sharp and exposed edges because you're walking barefoot on the pool deck. So, the issue here is the coping that runs throughout the entire perimeter of the pool deck. It's cracked, it's not level. You have areas that look like they've been patched over times that have sharp and exposed edges. You have little drain gutters of the coping that are missing, and then you have, of course, the paved area that's also unlevel and has sharp edges. So, all those items unfortunately have to be remediated before

we are allowed to operate the pool. In addition to the pool deck, we also need to look at what's underneath, and we have to have certain water quality issues. There's currently no existing acid pump or feeders. There's no operational computer, which is okay if it's your home pool, not okay if it's a commercially used public pool.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And...

Commissioner Menendez: What is the agency that oversees the approval?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: This would be under the Health Department for the spas and pools.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And there was not a current permit in operation before we took over.

City Manager Iglesias: And I believe you also have structural damage in the...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Expired.

City Manager Iglesias: Pool room that we're currently taking care of.

Mayor Lago: So, could you put that on the record again? Explain to us exactly what was happening.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes. There was no...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, we did a transfer of permit. We transferred from the existing operators to the current operators, which is the City of Coral Gables. We have

received the transfer, but that doesn't allow you to operate. That just says we've transferred the ownership of the permit, and it had previously not been paid for the year before, so there were some violations on record. Now, they've moved over. We have looked at some of those violations, and we now know what we need to be able to operate. So, before we have an inspection with the inspector, we need to address these items so that we can go ahead and open the pool.

Commissioner Menendez: These aren't cosmetic.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: No.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: They're very harsh when it comes to the life safety items, and the main two items is the sharp and exposed edges, as well as the water quality because you're dealing with a commercial pool, not a residential pool.

Commissioner Menendez: Life safety.

Mayor Lago: Wow.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, this is a checklist of the things that we've completed. We completed the assessment. We've done some pool and fountain -- just plumbing, the plumbing short-term repairs, removal of all the waste and the perishable goods that was left when we the takeover, demolition and repairs to the café seating area, the ceilings and the rafters, the installation of our IT infrastructure. We did the building re-keying. We did the security of the exterior access points, landscaping, and tree trimmings in preparation of tenting, tenting of the entire building with the subterranean termite treatment, and pressure cleaning of the exterior walls, the service entrance, the walkways, and the pool deck, then the exterior painting and repairs to those walls and window trims, and the new landscaping.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We've also done -- like we've showed before -the epoxy coating on the delaminated kitchen floors. We've degreased all the kitchen walls, replaced ceiling tiles throughout the kitchen space and the hallways. We've degreased and repaired the kitchen appliances, and we've also identified and removed damaged kitchen appliances, also appliances that didn't have motors inside of them. It seemed like it was mainly just a storage space for some of the kitchen equipment, not actually in use and functional. We're also performing repairs to the refrigeration and freezer units and systems that are in the kitchen. We've gone ahead and re-certified the kitchen hood, exhaust, and suppression system. But we also found that when we inspected the hood, there was corrosion inside leading to the roof and holes, which can lead to a grease fire so very dangerous. So, we're addressing those items as well. We've done our recertification for the fire extinguishers throughout the building. And then the fire alarm panel turns out the auditory alarm and PA system were nonfunctional, so we're also...

Mayor Lago: So, the fire alarm was red.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: You only have the strobe lights. You don't have a way of communicating or the auditory alarm. We're also doing the window restoration and the door replacements on the walkway, and we finished with the pool elevator repairs for ADA. And the surveillance cameras are just about done on the exterior and interior so that we can remove the four units that are currently there at the country club that I know our police department, you know, wants to...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: (INAUDIBLE) back.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Reposition in different areas.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, this is some of the stuff that we still have pending. We still have some IT infrastructure. We also, as we talked about, we still had some repairs that we needed to do with the pool, including the coping, the bottom, the acid wash, and the deck resurfacing, also the new chemical feeders and the computer that will help with that. We still have a few interior painting areas that we do -- especially once we finish that hallway there. We have some electrical repairs that we're working on. The next what I consider big repair that we need to do is the ballroom, the hardwood floor. As we have told you with the termite damage, we had seen that they had taken over...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: The subfloors.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, the subfloor, so we have to redo that ballroom hardwood floor. And then we are still working, the roof is going, and the air conditioning repairs, we're still working. We'll landscape the café entrance. We're working with our team. There's the 40-year building recertification, and there's the fitness equipment, which we'll talk about in a second, and the new pool deck and seat furnishings, which we'll get to once we get that pool deck completed, and then the addition of AV and sound equipment for the Merrick Room, which is going to be our programming room. So, what we're looking at is -- for our athletic club, as we discussed, we have gotten a date for the delivery of our new equipment. It's a window. You know, the window starts June 6. We're hopeful, but as -- with companies right now and equipment and installation, they just give me a window. They don't give me an exact date. We're trying to get them further buttoned down to a date. But what we are going to do is on Monday, June 6, we are moving forward with the plan to have the exercise rooms open and start classes. Although we might not have the equipment and might not be able to use equipment, we'll at least be able to open and start classes. We do have some fitness instructors that we've brought on from the previous service in the club, so we're excited to have them on board. And at least we do have a lot of members that do take classes, so we're going to be able to start classes and then get the

equipment that's there, which is not the property of the City, get it out and get that new equipment in. So, we've been in extensive talks with the company. It's the same company. It's the same manufacturer. We're just getting brand-new updated equipment. And there's a lot of moving pieces because it's an old lease and it's owned by the former tenant, and we're trying to get the removal and the installation at the same time. And what's really important is the date for installation, and that's what we're trying to get down. It starts -- the window is from June -- either the week of June 6th or the week of June 13th. That's what they've told us, so hopefully...

Commissioner Anderson: Is there any reason why the old equipment can't be used in the meantime when you open up on June 6?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

City Attorney Ramos: We can't get permission.

Commissioner Anderson: From...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: The nature of the agreement that they had was basically like a lease, but not like a rental month-to-month. They basically own it, so they have to repossess the equipment unless we want to take over their lease, which we don't. So, that's the problem. We've tried for a couple weeks. They strung us...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes.

City Attorney Ramos: Along. We thought we were going to be able to do it, and then they ultimately said no.

Mayor Lago: But by the way, Madam City Attorney, it is my understanding that they haven't paid their lease for some time in regards...

City Attorney Ramos: Right. There's money owed on that, right.

Mayor Lago: Also, I wanted to put that on the record. The DiDonatos owed...

City Attorney Ramos: A least a couple months.

Mayor Lago: They owed money to the gym company that was leasing them the equipment.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Just...

City Manager Iglesias: I think (INAUDIBLE) is that...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I think just to clarify...

City Manager Iglesias: Nothing seems to be straightforward.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: That's the problems that we're having.

City Attorney Ramos: So, I think that the issue is...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Just -- yeah.

City Attorney Ramos: That it was for a term of time and then they would own it outright.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, just to clarify. I think they were...

City Attorney Ramos: They left...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Paid up...

City Attorney Ramos: And they still owe what's left.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I think they were paid up through May, but there's still a period...

City Attorney Ramos: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That -- because they're leaving early, so there's that extra money, and it's at lease to own. So, they own the equipment. We don't, and we tried very hard. We've had many talks with their attorneys to try to get use of that equipment, and we haven't been able to. So, our...

Mayor Lago: We move on, we move on.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Our stance is to just get that new equipment in as fast as possible.

Mayor Lago: Move on. Let them take the equipment. It's fine. Okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So -- oh, go ahead.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah, a couple updates. Since we did have the open house, we had extensive feedback from the community on some of the fees, some of the provisions, so we wanted to take this back to you because we did make some adjustments. The main adjustment here was the silver, which is the senior rate. Originally, it was set at 65. There was heavy discussion on reducing it to 55, which is kind of the standard. AARP starts from anywhere from 55 to 65. It's also what we were doing for our tennis memberships and our Youth Center membership, so we went ahead and reduced it to 55 to get more people in that bracket for the silver membership. And then there was a big input to have a couple of silver membership, so it's -- you know, certain individuals have fixed incomes. They've been at the club for many years. They really wanted to continue staying at the club, so we looked at adding a couple's membership for those individuals as well.

Commissioner Menendez: When I was there, they're very passionate about the City bringing that package.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: So, there's a lot of passionate residents about that so...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Another thing that we got as feedback from the open house is a one week guest past for people that come in and stay with them over the summer or whatever it may be, so we looked at a guest fee that would be a one-week guest fee, and we added that in as well.

Mayor Lago: That's great.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's a good idea.

Mayor Lago: That's a bargain.

Commissioner Anderson: Very good idea.

Mayor Lago: That's a bargain.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, it is.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Just one week though.

Mayor Lago: You go...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We're going to have some rules. You can't do week, and then next week do another week. It's got to be one week. One week only.

Mayor Lago: I mean, you go to -- you get a guest pass at any hotel for a day rate, it's like 25, \$30 just for gym use anywhere you go.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And this was geared more as the friends and family. You know, I have my daughter, my son coming from college. They're spending the Christmas break with me. I want them to go to the gym with me.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, we also have some updates -- you know, we've worked with Neighborhood Tennis to get that agreement signed up until the end of the fiscal year so they can do their summer camp and their programs. We've looked at the exercise schedules.

Like I said, we've got our agreements with our instructors, so we're moving forward, and we're moving pretty quick.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And we've also made a priority to do the annual block out. So, we want to make sure that as we go start renting the rooms, we don't forget our membership and our social events. So, we already blocked out the dates for that so that we can start leasing and renting out the space when that becomes available.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: But we're going to call up Zeida now. She'll give you more information on the concessionaire agreement for the café.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Good afternoon, Mayor, and Commissioners. Zeida Sardinas, Economic Development, Asset Manager. So, it's been a pleasure working with Parks and the Legal Department in getting this done. The City has entered into a concession agreement for the soonto-be-renamed Le Parc Café, which will be run by Ahmed and Veronique Ubi (phonetic) from Fresh (INAUDIBLE) LLC. The Ubis are seasoned professionals. Ahmed Ubi has had more than 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry. He was educated in Switzerland and Montreal as a pastry chef and has served in that capacity at the Biltmore Hotel and on Fisher Island. Veronique is a registered nurse by education and trade, having held numerous healthcare management positions throughout her career. After many years of hospitality and management experience, some 20 years ago, the Ubis successfully pursued entrepreneurship first at the La Crepe Bistro by Sunset Place and later at Café Bonjour in South Miami. They have a strong loyal customer base. Their experience at the bistro and the café gives them that base and established presence in our community. The online reviews for their previous locations were highly favorable, and they were also favorably reviewed by local publications over the years. What they bring to the table is high quality. They have a reputation for providing high quality, traditional affordable food. The proposed menu includes many classics with occasional flourish, such as quiches, sandwiches, and soups, as well as in-house baked pastries and ice cream, which we know is so

popular with many who visit the café. They also have strong relationships with suppliers and vendors, so that's always great because they are able to obtain the best pricing for the foods and beverage products, as well as to procure any equipment that may be necessary to run the café. In addition to that, they're putting together an experienced team who's going to work in unison with the Community Recreation staff at the country club to provide the highest level of customer service for Coral Gables residents and visitors. With respect to the concession agreement, it was drafted based on a sales revenue split. The City will provide, own, and maintain the interior setup and equipment. The City will oversee quality control, including menu selection and pricing structure at the café kitchen space, and the concessionaire will also assist in supervising catering events. The agreement is for one year with continued oversight and evaluation. Provided that the concessionaire is not in default under the agreement, they will have the option to negotiate terms and conditions for an additional five-year term that will be with Commission approval. In conclusion, we believe that the concessionaire will contribute to the department's ability to deliver high-quality food and beverage services at the country club for members, residents, and visitors. Their experience in food service should -- and their relationships should also -- and the revenue split should also result in generating increased revenues for the City. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Commissioner Menendez: How's their coffee? Because that's part of the experience, a good latte, cappuccino. That's what parents and...

Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Families love.

Asset Manager Sardinas: And we are going to be getting equipment because the one that was there was obviously from the previous, and it was leased as well, so it's been taken away. So, we're working on that as well. But we're very happy with the choice. They had reached out to us last

year in the middle of some of the advertised services that we had, and they have an excellent reputation in the community for over 20 years, so -- and we'll have oversight and regular meetings with them to make sure it's working out properly.

Vice Mayor Mena: What are we doing to get this information out there? Because I think there's a lot of positive things here that we're hearing about, but I'd like for the community to know everything that you guys have been doing, what's going on...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah. We're going to work with...

Vice Mayor Mena: Before and after photos as we go along.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We're working with Communications. Of course, we're updating our website. Now, the website -- the City website is in transition right now, so as soon as the new site is up, we'll have more of an expansive site with all the information. Right now, it's kind of putting a band-aid on what's left on the existing website, but we're going to get the information out. Just keep in mind that this was really rushed executed as of end of last week to get you this information at the presentation so...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, but I think it's great. I think the presentation is really good, and I think the before and after photos kind of speak for themselves honestly.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, like getting that out there on social media or whatever network you have...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We also had it at the open house on foam boards displayed out by the pool deck.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And people just loved watch -- you know.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: They needed to see that.

Commissioner Menendez: Could you provide with the help of, you know, Marta and everybody else, maybe some simple one-pager with certain -- that I'm sure we all can circulate as elected officials to our -- you know, the people in our email lists and things like that and newsletters? I think it'd be phenomenal.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I was actually going to -- we -- I had spoken with Commissioner Anderson about it actually yesterday at the Memorial Day thing. And we're going to put something together for you, so you'd have -- so you'd...

Commissioner Anderson: That'd be great.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Know what to tell them.

Commissioner Menendez: Do you still have your, I think, seasonal...?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We don't do the magazine. We have the Rec News, which is an email newsletter that goes out monthly now.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, because I agree with the Vice Mayor, like this is something that people will be very, very, happy to...

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, they'll be terribly excited, yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, very much so.

Mayor Lago: One of the things that...

City Manager Iglesias: We will be getting everything out now that was just done this week, and so it's moving so...

Mayor Lago: Great.

City Manager Iglesias: Quickly that we have our Communications Director making sure that everything gets out.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We literally purchased the domain name this morning to make sure we got it secured before the name was announced at Commission, so we're moving very fast.

Vice Mayor Mena: Gotcha.

Commissioner Anderson: No. Yeah, no, you guys are doing an amazing job.

City Manager Iglesias: Signed the contract today, so it...

Mayor Lago: So, one of the things I've heard from...

City Manager Iglesias: It's a moving target.

Mayor Lago: From multiple people in the community is that Tuesdays used to be half off gelato. Come up with something like that.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We'll bring it up.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We'll bring it up.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: They're very amenable...

Mayor Lago: Alright.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Working with whatever the needs are. And this is the nice deal with this agreement is we have direct oversight.

Mayor Lago: Good.