

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
March 20, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-1 [9:25:09 a.m.]

A discussion regarding volunteer bulk trash pick-up and the consolidation of trash pits.
(Sponsored by Commission Quesada)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Next City Commission Items – Discussion regarding volunteer bulk trash pick-up and the consolidation of trash pits, Commission Quesada.

Commissioner Quesada: OK. So, I was speaking to staff about this, this is just a quick point. I don't want us to lose sight of this. I want to make sure that staff continues to look at this. I know we've all spoken to Jessica Keller about it and we've all spoken up here quite a few times about it. I just don't want to lose momentum on it. Two things is, I had a resident approach me about consolidating trash pits where those situations where it could be applicable. Some neighborhoods in the north area, some of the corner lots, it makes sense. The only problem there is, if there is a fine to be given to an individual for illegal dumping, who does it apply to, one or the other? So, I spoke to staff about trying to address, try to find the answer there, that's the first thing. And then the second thing is, I really want to try to at least have a pilot program because we've talked about it sometime, we haven't done anything, about a bulk trash pick-up where you either e-mail

or you send a, you jump on the app to give notice. So, rather than have the trash pit sit out there you say, OK, well tomorrow if I can get bulk trash pick-up there is some sort of confirmation that it gets picked up. We've talked about a pilot program for a long time. I'm looking at Jessica, because we've talked about this – I'm sorry.

Commissioner Lago: And, I would give a little bit more color to your statement. My understanding was that....

Commissioner Quesada: I just don't want this idea to die, because I'm trying to see if there is an alternative.

Commissioner Lago: There are two things that my understanding they've been waiting, and they've been pending. Number one was the issue of recycling bins that were in the budget that obviously would offer a top, so the recycling wouldn't go to waste; and the second issue was, if you need to have a bulk pick-up, my understanding was after speaking with some Coco Plum residents that they want it to be the first pilot, because they wanted to see how they can eliminate as many of their trash pits as possible, so they were waiting for...

Commissioner Quesada: When can we get it done?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We have hired a consultant, Kessler, who only does solid waste. They are first negotiating some issues with Waste Management and then they are going into operational enhancements, including the pilot projects. Clearly if someone is a homeowners association, a defined area, they are perfect for that trial. We've also received some comments from some of the other homeowners associations off of Sunset that would be very interested in being in the pilot project. So, he has that information and he's going to be evaluating and streamlining that with the departure of John Osgood back to Arizona, we are going to be relying on him for his recommendations on how to implement this.

Commissioner Quesada: OK. So, when do you ballpark when we can start the pilot?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I think he'll be done with – I think we'll be coming to you in two months with that whole thing.

Commissioner Quesada: OK. I just want to make sure we don't lose sight of it. I know we discussed it a lot and here's the thing, the pilot may not work, but I want to make sure we try.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Understand. He actually asked because he's looking at operational enhancements as well. If we could postpone the implementation, which is why we are saying we'll come back to you within that two month period with what the game plan will be.

Commissioner Quesada: OK.

Commissioner Lago: Can I ask you a quick question Madam City Manager? I wrote a memo last week in regards to cardboard and the discussion was, I remember when John Osgood was up here about recycling the cardboard and the benefits of it and how we currently subsidize garbage pick-up. I wrote in the memo that I was requesting a response, because from my understanding was that staff was going to come back at the end of March with an analysis. I know that John Osgood left and he was the one that made those statements. So, I'd like to see if possible if we can include Commissioner Quesada's statements and request, I'd like to see some sort of answer in regards to what can we do about the cardboard.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: That was one of the things we discussed. I personally discussed with Mr. Kessler on addressing.

Commissioner Lago: Again, I just want to remind you, as everybody here knows, that has the highest value when it comes to recyclability and we are already having to subsidize garbage so let's take this opportunity to recycle it and maybe we can lower the delta significantly.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Go ahead.

Commissioner Quesada: I just want to say, can we just make sure it's on the agenda two months from now just to see where we are at, because I just want to make sure...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'll put it as a placeholder right now.

Commissioner Quesada: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'd like to say something. There is a truism which is, "if it ain't broke don't fix it," and I will vote against everything and any initiative that makes the lives of our residents, especially in North Gables, more difficult by requiring them to do things that they are not prepared to do or that they are paying very willingly. I remember before my time, some of you may have been here, when we had a big bru ha ha, a big to do about the possibility or a suggestion or somebody made a comment about the bulk pick-up or the trash containers and there was a huge outcry. I will vote against anything that changes the way things are being done to the detriment of our residents. I will vote against that and all of you, all of us who are up for

election really think what efficiencies or what saving money can do to our residents, and I will vote and speak very much against changing things that today our residents are satisfied with.

Commissioner Quesada: Mr. Mayor the idea behind this isn't to make things more difficult. This stems from residents complaining of having, you know a couch or refrigerator sitting on the swale.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I agree. I agree with that.

Commissioner Quesada: So, the idea behind the pilot and the idea with the overall goal of this is maybe to have a blended system where you can opt into this program or not.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well you've got my comments.

Commissioner Quesada: OK. I think it's important for us to look at it and if it doesn't work and it's more of a burden, this is not a cost saving initiative at all. This is for aesthetics to keep the refuse sitting on the side...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, if anybody has couches or refrigerators that's a Code Enforcement issue and it may not be the fault of that person, because somebody dumped that in front of their house, but they are different issues. That's a Code Enforcement issue I think, anyway.

Commissioner Lago: Again, I don't want to hijack Commissioner Quesada's item, but I want to make sure we remember what we talked about that day in the Commission. This is not about making it more difficult. What I want to do is simplify the process. What Mr. Osgood said that day and again, I know he's no longer here was, we are even going to make it easier for the residents so they don't have to break down their cardboard, they don't even need to walk down to the curb. They would be able to leave it adjacent to the recycling bin and hopefully we would have the technology in place to be able to accept those boxes that have not been broken down. So you are saving time. And again, if we can recycle that cardboard and also reduce our cost, I think it's just a benefit to everybody as a whole. So you make it simpler for the residents, they don't have to walk to the trash pit, they don't have to haul that down, they don't have to break it down. All they have to do is just leave it adjacent to the recycling bin, and I think it's something that's beneficial; and again, it gets rid of that eyesore and all that waste that we are producing. And by the way, like you talked about this – Coco Plum when I mentioned it to them, this is an optional program and I support you Commissioner Quesada wholeheartedly. I think it's a great idea. If it fails and it doesn't work out and people aren't happy with it, then we go back to the previous ways.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright – Commissioner Quesada the next item is yours too.

Commissioner Quesada: This is just a quick item.

Commissioner Lago: I think the Vice Mayor had a comment.

Vice Mayor Keon: This is to do with your cardboard. I do – I agree with you on cardboard. We should be able, there should be a way to capture cardboard that isn't more difficult and is a benefit both to the fees that we pay for tipping, because the residents also don't want to pay the full cost of garbage collection either. So, if we can remove some of these items from the landfill we get the benefit of reducing our tipping fees and even if we break even on the cardboard, we have reduced our costs, so that it stabilizes the cost to residents and it shouldn't really change it. I think at the last meeting we talked about the equipment or the type of trucks that can compact cardboard. So, all you have to do is throw the cardboard in the truck and they can be compacted and I think you said you were looking at doing that.

Commissioner Quesada: Well I think that when the consultant comes back with whatever recommendations, I think we make the decision at that point.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think there are ways to do that, that both reduce our tipping costs that are more sustainable that enhance the aesthetic of the City and really don't burden the residents either. So, I think....

Commissioner Quesada: And also make it easier to recycle the cardboard, because right now it's a pain in the butt.

Vice Mayor Keon: I agree with you.

Commissioner Lago: Commissioner you mentioned before on multiple occasions that you do a lot of ordering.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes – Amazon.

Commissioner Lago: At Amazon – and if you remember the presentation that I put together and I thank Chelsea for that, because she did a lot of the research for it. Last year alone the increase in online orders grew by 35 percent, so how do they wrap it?- they wrap it in cardboard, so it's only going to get worse.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Because as Amazon gobbles up even more players out there, like Toys R Us just announced, I think, Chapter 11, so they are going out of business so people are ordering more and more online. I agree with the Mayors comments. I don't want to take away from people who feel that they are tied to their garbage pit and there is no other way of dealing with waste, but if we make it easier like putting your cardboard right next to your recycling bin, I think people will adapt to that.

Commissioner Quesada: But I think at this point, I think we are just waiting to hear what the consultant tells us.

Commissioner Lago: I agree. But, I want to get it on the Commission like you do. I want to tackle this problem. We are supposed to hear something at the end of March, I know we've had some change in staff, but I want to have a hard stop date of when we have this discussion.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Understand.

Commissioner Quesada: We have a placeholder and we'll deal with it then.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The key to the marketability of cardboard is that its dry, and so, what we are also looking at is how can we make it absolutely easy for the residents, operational for the City and dry so that we can get full benefit of it. We have it on the list that the consultant is helping us address.

Commissioner Lago: You are 100 percent correct. Thank you.

[End: 9:36:14 a.m.]