

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items C-1 and C-2
October 8, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Interim Director Economic Development, Belkys Perez**

Public Speaker(s)

**Jorge Galbis
Mark Trowbridge, President, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce
Olga Ramudo, Chair, Economic Development Board**

Agenda Item C-1 & C-2 [9:28:16 a.m.]
Mayor's Comments

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And then I have Mayor's Comments, Report on the International Rum Conference. We had, as you know, the International Rum Conference here a few days ago, and it was a resounding success; and if you want to, we can play the tape first or you want to say a few words.

Jorge Galbis: I'd like to play the tape afterwards, if I may.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Let's say a few words.

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Mr. Galbis: Thank you. Good morning – good morning Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk. Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to come and see you and talk to you about our recent, the International Rum Conference. After seven successful years in Spain, the event was relocated to the City Beautiful, here in Coral Gables. When selecting our new home, it was no doubt that Coral Gables was the place for us, from its rich history and stunning architecture, to the international...diversity. For example, Coral Gables exemplifies everything we want to do with our International Rum Conference. So, thank you for giving us this opportunity. The International Rum Conference took place at the Biltmore Hotel, the historic Biltmore Hotel, September 25 through the 28, about a week or so ago. We were humbled at the exceptional support from the trade, our partners, consumers. I'm very proud that we were able to house and host about 1200 people over a four-day period. So, we were very excited and very thankful. We also were able to receive over 186 room nights at the Biltmore Hotel. We had people from all over the world coming over to check us out. Over 21 countries were represented, so it was very exciting. I just want to give you a brief summary of the four components of the event. First and foremost, we had a rum tasting competition, which is always fun, but we received over 238 entries from over 30 countries. So that was encouraging, which all competed in 17 different categories. We had local judges that presented and helped us evaluate the rums. The other component was, what differentiates our event from many other events in the industry is, we had industry enrichment seminars. We had two complete days of executives and industry leaders from around the world that came in to speak about where rum is going and how to better develop the category over time. So that's a little bit different from what you see from these types of events. The other component which Vice Mayor Lago accompanied us was the cane-cutting ceremony. We had an opening event that served two purposes; one of them obviously was to kick-off the event here in the City; and the other one was to celebrate the International Rum Conference Day in the City of Coral Gables which was September 26th, thanks to the City, thank you. I'm sure Mr. Lago it's the first time he's ever actually been to a cane-cutting ceremony. He's done a lot of ribbons, but never cut cane, I'm sure.

Vice Mayor Lago: It was a wonderful experience.

Mr. Galbis: Thank you for accompanying us. The other component which more of a consumer piece is the grand tasting. We had 48 companies that represented 200 rums were sampled, available for sample, we had hundreds of rum connoisseurs came out, locally and internationally come and join us. Part of the event also included master classes where people could have educational experience about different brands, every hour on the hour, so they had deep dives into what its all about. There was an educational process as well, very exciting. I want to take a moment to highlight and thank the City of Coral Gables Police Department. They were there present with us and helping us with all the recipients and participants. The level of help and support was just beyond my imagination. Thank you Chief, thank you to the department and the City. There are two words

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that I have to kind of encompass what I see for next year – encouragement and excitement. While walking out of this event, we have 48 exhibitors, over 40 of them committed to next year verbally to be here, so there is a noise around wanting to be here next year. We had speakers lining up to come and talk about the different seminars. So, the response has been spectacular coming out of this. We’ve already negotiated our dates and set our dates with the Biltmore, so put it on your calendars, save the date, September 24 through the 26, 2020, we’ll be back, and better than ever we hope. But thank you. Closing, just want to thank the City, thank our partners and thank God for helping us through this process. If you’d like, we can queue up the tape. Its just a little summary of all the events and how it worked.

[Note for the record: Video presentation]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautiful. How many rums did you have from how many countries?

Mr. Galbis: We had at the grand tasting, we had approximately 200 rums, 41 countries. For the competition itself, we had 238, 230 countries, because you didn’t have to exhibit to participate in the rum tasting competition.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. It was wonderful to have that in Coral Gables and much success for next year.

Mr. Galbis: Thank you very much. We appreciate the support.

Vice Mayor Lago: Personal point of privilege. Like you mentioned before, I’ve been to my fair share of ribbon cuttings, but this was an interesting opening to a ceremony, and I commend you on having such a spectacular standing-room only event for the opening ceremony. The Biltmore Hotel was a perfect setting, like you mentioned before. It was just perfect. It brought everything together, synergy and I think that looking forward to this event, it’s just going to continue to be another feather in the City’s cap. We are the spears capital, in my opinion, we have some of the biggest companies, biggest players in town who call Coral Gables home. It just makes sense to have this rum event in the City. So, congratulations, we look forward to helping you next year in any way that we can, and if the Mayor allows me the privilege, I’d love to do it again next year. It was a wonderful time and see if some of my colleagues can also show up next year also. I know they were out of town, a lot of them, but it was a wonderful, wonderful opportunity. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, thank you very much.

Mr. Galbis: You are all welcome, my invitation. Thank you, have a great day.

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

[End: 9:35:40 a.m.]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If we are going on the next item, which is your...mission, speaking about Coral Gables hosting events. We hosted last Friday, Saturday, Sunday and yesterday, the 75th anniversary meeting, conference of the Inter-American Press Association. We had up to 200 newspapers represented from all of the nations and Central and South America; and the Biltmore again as packed with representatives of these newspapers, this is the press in all of these countries, and we are proud to have been chosen by them for the 75th anniversary conference. We are really getting in the map.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The next item is San Isidro Sister City relationship and Argentina Mission - Belkys, Mark Trowbridge. I led and the Coral Gables Chamber had a mission to court Argentina and then Buenos Aries mainly, where our industry representatives met with many, many people, we'll see a tape, but I think it was a very productive mission; and also we signed a Sister City Agreement with San Isidro in Argentina, it's a city next to Buenos Aries, its Coral Gables to Miami equivalent, and they have a fantastic, fantastic infrastructure. It's a historic city, beautiful downtown, historic downtown; and they also have technology. Its very much of a smart city. We visited their safety center or the camera center, it was very, very impressive. I think that we could learn from some of the things they are doing or not doing, and Mark and Belkys has a presentation.

Ms. Perez: I also wanted to mention that Olga Ramudo, if she can come forward, she was our travel partner and she is also the Chair of the Economic Development Board, she accompanied us on this mission. Mayor, do you want to speak about your Sister City relationship here with Mayor _____.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: San Isidro is a wonderful historic city. We had a signing ceremony in the scorching sun, but signing ceremony, at the museum, the _____ museum, which was one of the houses where Argentina dependence was dreamed about and accomplished; and we signed this agreement to cooperate in culture and smart city measures in cooperation, and I think we can learn a lot from them. They have two things that are fantastic; one is, a program for kids and to prevent kids from deviating from the straight path and helping them when they do; and the other one is, concerts and exhibits which I think would be wonderful for us to bring here the idea. They have specially a festival where they show silent films and invite composers and the orchestra there to compose something for that silent film. And they attract thousands of people and I think that would be very creative, new event idea for us to have in Coral Gables as part of our cultural offering.

Ms. Perez: So, the downtown, you see a picture there, it was a very quaint, beautiful downtown and very reminiscent of the city. There were a lot of beautiful shops and so Mark and I, we strolled down, took a lot of pictures of the storefronts, because there are things there that we can definitely take from there and bring to Coral Gables. There were a lot of small businesses, some were just 400 square feet and they were beautifully done, and the downtown was bustling. This is right after that ceremony that we had, the Sister City ceremony, we sat down with the San Isidro Chamber of

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Commerce. There were multiple businesses there, a lot of technology, as the Mayor mentioned. Many business owners that were there and seeing if they could expand their businesses to the States. We also met with a newly formed university. San Isidro has a brand-new university and they are primarily focusing on health, paramedics, in that field, that was very important to them. So, we hope to see some sort of synergy between our university here. I want to toss it over to Mark, because he accompanied the Mayor to this meeting, which was in San Isidro with the municipality.

Mr. Trowbridge. That's correct – and the Mayor mentioned before that we had a chance to view their kind of emergency operations center where they have eye in the sky on every aspect and every area in San Isidro – very impressive. They actually did not have their own direct police force, but are augmented by the district though, there in Buenos Aries that works directly with the EOC. These two gentlemen gave us a briefing and then a tour. We could not take photos inside the EOC, but I know the Mayor was very impressed and you could see everything down to the details of what was going on in various intersections, storefronts, and even parked cars.

Ms. Ramudo: During our visit to Buenos Aries, we also met with top level officials from the government. We met with Senators, we met with the current Governor of the Province of Buenos Aries, Mario Jenó Vidal, and throughout the entire mission, we met with over 100 companies, that from the economic development side the Mayor did a great job offering our City for them to expand in the future if they ever chose to.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The Province of Buenos Aries would be the equivalent in the U.S. of Texas, California, New York all put together. That's the exact importance of Argentina.

Ms. Perez: And I don't know if you want to mention just a little bit about what's happening in Argentina. This is a very critical time for them right now. There is expected to be a new president to take office and so a lot of these businesses are very wary about the situation there and they are really interested when they came to the table, really interested in seeing what the City of Coral Gables has to offer and what does Miami in general. I think that having the Mayor there was very beneficial to us, because most of those talks really centered around Coral Gables. And what we found out also is that many of these people were familiar with Coral Gables and knew about Miracle Mile and many of them also had some sort of business outreach that they had done in Coral Gables.

Mr. Trowbridge: This photo that you see on the screen was taken at the Bosch Palace, which is our Embassy in Buenos Aries. In the photo you see along with the Mayor and myself, all the way to the left is my colleague Alfred Sanchez, who is the President of the Greater Miami Chamber and of course our U.S. Ambassador in Argentina, Edward Prado, a very proud Texan. He and his team gave us a wonderful briefing, and as you heard from Belkys, it specifically centered around the elections that are coming up on October 27th where there is an expectation, a change in parties, and a return to power of the previous administration that served. And so, a lot of the companies are looking for pathways to move capital and to specifically look at Florida, South Florida to do business with that.

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Ms. Perez: I don't know if you want to take this one. The Mayor was actually honored, he was the guest of honor at the _____ for Buenos Aries. They held a special reception for him. The Mayor is very familiar with the city and has a lot of friends there as we clearly found out; and so, it was a great way of honoring someone who they consider a citizen.

Ms. Ramudo: As a recognition of Citizen of Honor for the City of Buenos Aries.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It was very much an honor to be declared a guest of honor for the city. The last one that got this award was Roger Federer, the tennis player and I specified that I don't play tennis, but they told me I could start trying.

Mr. Trowbridge: I'll point out that this recognition was done in the Evita Peron Salon, we can go back to the photo please. Its very much here to the gentleman all the way to the right...no offense Mr. Mayor, but that was the highlight for me.

[Laughter]

Mr. Trowbridge: This was a meeting, as I may have mentioned before, we had an opportunity to sit down with three different Senators, all of whom were involved with Argentine-U.S. relations and spent a lot of time in the United States working with members of our senior government officials and federal officials. The gentleman who is speaking there on the left is Esteban Bolige, he found out that we were visiting through the Ambassador and asked for a meeting with us, so we were able to add that to our agenda while we were there. Next to him is an additional Senator and a third Senator joined us partway into the meeting, so we had an audience with those making decisions at a significant level, especially as it relates to our relationship, trade, and future opportunities post-election. And we began our time in Buenos Aries with a memorandum of understanding and cooperation agreement between our Coral Gables Chamber, the Greater Miami Chamber and the AMCHAM in Argentina. Very strong AMCHEM, they just turned 100 years old. Their leadership along with our Mayor, Alfred and myself after a briefing, and I think at that session alone, we had over 60 companies who came to learn, not only about Coral Gables where we gave a briefing, the Mayor and I, but also doing business here in South Florida.

Ms. Perez: This is an opportunity for many of them here as well are very tech oriented and definitely there are a lot of connections that I need to do with some of the businesses that reached out to us.

Mr. Trowbridge: So apparently, we couldn't find a better photo of myself, but the good news is we are talking with a gentleman there who works with HSPC and talks with the Mayor and obviously we have a branch of HSPC right here in Coral Gables.

Ms. Ramudo: And our delegation started really with meeting – this one is the Argentina Chamber of Commerce where we also had meetings with them, it's the equivalent of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and they gave us a very insightful and truthful and honest overview of the situation in Argentina, the government situation over there, political situation.

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Mr. Trowbridge: Another very flattering photo. This is our group outside of the Chamber in Cordoba. The Mayor joined us in Buenos Aries, but we had an opportunity to spend about a day-and-a-half in Cordoba with our co-mission leader, Domenico Macinato from American Airlines, who were tremendous partners and as you know they are headquartered here in the City Beautiful and am pleased to share with you what they shared with us on the trip, they have extended their lease here in Coral Gables for an additional five years. So, we are really thrilled to have that corporate headquarters here and Domenico led our group through various meetings in Cordoba with business leaders and a great briefing that morning at their Chamber of Commerce, very active. Cordoba is the second largest city in Buenos Aries, the country of 44 million people wo live in Buenos Aries, in Argentina, about a million five live in Cordoba. We now have a twice weekly direct flight that American Airlines has invested in that we had a chance to inaugurate and fly down on Saturday evening.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very, very much and Olga was one of the leaders of the mission. She is the head of the Economic Development Committee or Council here, and the President of our Chamber also did a great, great job, and especially I want to thank Belkys who was wonderful, and she came as part of our department and she really did a great job in keeping me organized and keeping us organized. So, thank you very much Belkys.

Mr. Trowbridge: And I pass across the book, this was my most coveted item from the trip, which is a picture book on the meats of Argentina. So, I know you'll all want to look at that. One of their major exports is agriculture and of course they are working in the tech space, as you heard, but also very, very much involved in fuel and petroleum, so I'll pass this along.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

[End: 9:48:44 a.m.]