City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting Agenda Item E-10 October 14, 2025 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 Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez City Manager, Peter Iglesias City Clerk, Billy Urquia Planning and Zoning Director, Jennifer Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item E-10 [Start: 11:53 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, amending Section 14-204, "Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)," and Article 16, "Definitions," of the City's Zoning Code to establish a conservation TDR program and appraisal framework; providing for definitions, procedures, appraisal standards, and conservation easement requirements; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: E-10.

City Attorney Suarez: E-10 is an ordinance of the City Commission providing for tax amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code amending section 14-204, transfer of development rights and article 16 definitions of the city's zoning code to establish a conservation TDR program and appraisal framework providing for definitions, procedures, appraisal standards

and conservation easement requirements providing for repeated provisions of ability clause codification and providing for an effective date.

Planning and Zoning Director: Jennifer Garcia, Planning and Zoning Director. So, we are familiar with development, sorry, transfer development rights for historic properties. We also have them for open space to create new parks for the city to be convey land to the city. I think it was sponsored a few years ago by the Mayor. This is a proposal to allow that transfer for conservation of natural habitat, natural land, not made for a park for recreational purposes, but I guess a park to kind of enjoy just a natural habitat. And it's a little bit different in that it wouldn't be based off of the allowed development square footage that zoning would allow that property to have. For example, if it's zoned single family, you would have a limited amount of square footage based on our sliding scale of development rights you can have for a single family. This would be based on the value by average of appraisals for that one property that an applicant is willing to go through the process for. And then we would divide that number by the running rate of an average of the price per TDR. And that would be the amount of TDRs, the potential development rights, that we would issue then to that applicant. Do you want to further explain?

Vice Mayor Anderson: So yeah, I'll go through it. And I'll share with you all that this has been in the pipeline for about a month. And it's taken that amount of effort to whittle it down and as I referred to it, just go where no man has gone before to try to save some precious pieces of property where people after the fact will say, oh my God, why didn't the city buy that? Why didn't the city get this? This is a tool to help us, help the city acquire these lands that are just amazing. You know, they're rare gems and if we don't capture them now, we'll be regretting it later. There's that one parcel off of San Amaro, it's Rock Pineland. There's another parcel down south that is also sensitive land, and it would be a shame, it's adjacent to the, in part of the Girl Scout Camp. It'd be a shame if that has to be sold off for development rights, which it could very well happen to it. And I have to thank staff for the number of meetings we've had on this, brainstorming how to get it done. It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy at all. So, the rubber really meets the road in paragraph D. You'll see all the underlying language and the evaluation process is different than other land that we have acquired because it's not going to be a soccer field. So, it doesn't go through Parks and Recreation. You know, this is something that we're going to preserve and have for forever, you know, in our portfolio of things that we can be proud of that the City of Coral Gables has saved. We had lots of Rock Pineland here in the City of Coral Gables before. So, the few precious pieces that are left, it'd be nice to show them also from a historical standpoint what Coral Gables was like back when Coral Gables was, before it got developed. So, with that, I'd like to make a motion.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: If I may, I'd like to just add a few comments. First and foremost, I think everyone's pretty aware of how much pride I take in writing certain legislation and some of the things that

we've been able to put forward over the last 12 years, to the extent they say it should be more we instead of I, but I'm very proud of the legislation. I have envy over this legislation. I wish I had thought of this legislation. This is one of the best pieces of legislation I've seen in a long time. And I'll tell you why, because the Pine Rockland piece that she's talking about is adjacent to my home. It's probably two blocks away. I grew up in that Pine Rockland. If you drive in front of this piece of property right now, the little, like it's kind of like a townhouse, very small, I think it's 5,000 square feet. That was my parents' second home in Coral Gables. First it was on Minorca, which I ended up giving to my grandparents. And then they moved to San Amaro. That's how I ended up falling in love with that neighborhood. I grew up in that piece of property. Like my grandfather would take me out every day after school and we'd run in that Pine Rockland and all those beautiful Florida Pine trees.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Slash Pines.

Mayor Lago: Slash Pines. Amazing, amazing. We used to come home like full of cuts and we used to fall on the rocks, and it was amazing. It was just like one of the best experiences. And they used to be able to run into the Arboretum and in the Arboretum, they had like all the exposed coral, and I think a lot of it was manmade. I think they made it, but it's just an amazing experience. I grew up in that neighborhood. We've tried and the City Manager will tell you we've tried over the years to deal with the owner of that property in an effort to conserve that property. I think this is a very good vehicle for us to be able to once again reach out like we've done in the past on many, many occasions. And I don't want to rehash that history because it was out before my time or before anyone's time here. But I'd like to see with the Commission's approval, I'd like for us to have staff reach out to that owner once again. I know that the owner passed away and I know now it's in the family's hands, but that is a property that should be conserved, conserved forever because of just, again, it's one of the few pieces of Pine Rockland that are left in South Florida. And we can use this vehicle. We can get other stakeholders that are in the neighborhood to potentially engage in one form or another, but this is a great piece of legislation. The other one also is Camp Mahatchee, which the Vice Mayor and I have invested a lot of time and money, personal money, in making sure that we bring back, take all the invasive species and we bring that beautiful place back to its original glory. And the Vice Mayor educated me that there's a five-acre piece of land in the back that potentially could be sold off. We cannot allow it to happen. We have to do everything in our power. I have to work with other stakeholders in Miami-Dade County, use a vehicle like this to be able to deliver enough funds so that property is safe. So, I congratulate you on an amazing piece of legislation. I've written a lot of pieces of legislation that deal with parks and buying land, but this is really good stuff.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to add a little backstory for you all. So, I went down to Camp Choey. They're doing a, moving some of what they call pine buff. I didn't know what pine buff is.

It's the needles to prepare to do a controlled burn, which you have to do, or they're going to do to preserve that Rock Pineland. And James Duncan, who works for the DERM, Yield Department, Environmentally Endangered Land Department said, you know, I'd really like to preserve that piece of Rock Pineland off of, you know, near the University of Miami. So that started the wheels going, and I said, like, okay, how can I, how can I try to make this happen? And I remembered the history that a long time ago, and it was long before I was really engaged with the City Commission, that there was a piece of land that was preserved near FPL's site, or that's about all I remember about it, but it was sensitive land, and it was done through this TDR process. So, this is different, but I thought it was going to be easier. That's why it's taken a full month. But we worked on it for a number of edits, and back and forth, and debates, and so forth, and you looked for laws across the country, and farmlands, and so forth, which totally were not usable for us, but, you know, the exhaustive research, Ms. Garcia, that you went through, my hat's off to you. Thank you.

Planning and Zoning Director: I have good staff, yes.

Mayor Lago: If I may, I don't want to, again, we're on your item, but I'd like for the Manager to reach out to the owner of that property and see if we can have a formal conversation.

City Manager Iglesias: I have my notes on it, Mayor, we will do that. Our Asset Manager will be on that.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Any further public comment? Do we have any, do we have any comment or no?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right, I'll entertain a motion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, I think we have a motion.

City Clerk Urquia: We do have a motion.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We need a second.

Commissioner Fernandez: I second.

Mayor Lago: All right, perfect.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Planning and Zoning Director: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much, great work.