City of Coral Gables
Virtual City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-1
July 14, 2020
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
Senior Sustainability Analyst, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)
Myra Joli

Agenda Item I-1 [Time Certain: 10:00 a.m.]
A Resolution authorizing an exemption to the Procurement Code for an assessment of the water quality and habitat conditions in the City provided by Florida International University pursuant to Section 2-607(26) of the City's Procurement Code entitled "Exemptions -University provided consulting, education services or cooperative activities."

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Time certain at 10 a.m. and that is item I-1, Resolution authorizing an exemption to the Procurement Code, I-1.

City Attorney Ramos: I-1 is a Resolution authorizing an exemption to the Procurement Code for an assessment of the water quality and habitat conditions in the City provided by Florida International University pursuant to Section 2-607(26) of the City's Procurement Code entitled "Exemptions -University provided consulting, education services or cooperative activities."

Senior Sustainability Analyst Anderson: Good morning Mayor, Vice Mayor and Commissioners, for the record, Matt Anderson, Senior Sustainability Analyst for the City of Coral Gables. Staff is bringing this item before you today for permission to utilize the education exemption in the Procurement Code, to finalize an agreement with FIU and this in-depth multi-year analysis study of our Coral Gables waterway. The budget for this project is just under $300,000, which has already been allocated in this fiscal year's budget through the Storm Water Utility funds. This project is a two to three-year study and future phases are dependent on findings during Phase 1, and the future availability of funds. This Commission and Administration has made protecting and preserving the environment one of its top priorities and with over 40 miles of coastline and waterways in Coral Gables, our aquatic environment plays a vital role, not only in our city's history, but contributes tremendously to our local economy. In Biscayne Bay which scientists say is at a tipping point, where NOAA has made it one of their habitats focus areas in the U.S. as a prime example of that. To that end, over the last year, we've put together a team of the brightest minds here in South Florida to focus on water quality to help us analyze and study our Coral Gables waterway. I want to introduce Dr. Tiffany Trosler, who is the Director of Science at FIU Sea Level Rise Solution Center. She will be leading this project and will provide a very brief presentation covering who is on the team, the goals, outcomes, and benefits of this project. Dr. Trosler and staff will be available after the presentation to answer any questions from the Commission. And Mayor with your permission, I'd like to turn it over to Dr. Tiffany Trosler.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead please.

Dr. Trosler: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Keon: Welcome.

Dr. Trosler: Thank you very much. Good morning everyone.

Vice Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good morning.

Dr. Trosler: Can you all see my screen?

All: Yes.

Dr. Trosler: Let me use the slideshow. How is that?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Perfect.

Vice Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Dr. Trosler: Okay – great. Thank you so much. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. So, I'd like to provide just a brief overview of the Coral Gables Water Quality Assessment Project. We have a team of Ph.D. scientists at FIU, NOAA, University of Miami, Miami Water Keeper and the University of Massachusetts that have worked the stats over the last year to develop a water quality assessment program for the city. We know that multiple lines of evidence indicate that Biscayne Bay is on the brink of ecological collapse. We've seen sea….blooms and incidence of bacteria are harmful to public health. This is related to how we manage the delicate balance between activities on the coast, the water resources of Coral Gables and Biscayne Bay, and the economic value that those resources support. So, the Miami-Dade Commission created the Biscayne Bay Task Force, on which I serve. We've released a draft of recommendations. This assessment project that we are bringing to you today is consistent with those recommendations and lays the foundation for cost effective management of water quality in the city. So, this is a list of the tasks that we've set forward for the program. The goal is to assess water quality and habitat conditions in the Coral Gables waterway and to inform management and restoration. We've designed a two to three-year project, pending findings and availability of funds with these five tasks that have been identified over a two-year period. So these are to design and implement to water quality programs so we can understand nutrient loading impacts, including those associated with storm water outflows; characterize the nutrient loads in to and from the watershed; undertake field data quality collection so that we can begin to inform a model that will help us to better manage these resources; and develop education and outreach materials that can contribute to policy development; and then also provide the data synthesis and project management necessary to undertake such a project. This is a slide that shows just a snapshot of the sampling that we will undertake. We have a comprehensive program that includes extensive sampling, so this means good special coverage; and then intensive sampling which is represents high temporal frequency of samples taken and this is of multiple water quality parameters that includes macro nutrients of phosphorous and nitrogen, metals, corafil, which is an indicator of green algae, dissolved oxygen, fecal indicator bacteria, as well as microbial source tracking and waste water tracers. The sampling combines a grab sampling, so we grab samples from the water; use of multi-parameter water quality sensors, as well as auto sampling.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Dr. Trosler can I interrupt.

Dr. Trosler: Of course.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's a question.

Dr. Trosler: Yes sir.

ACM Santamaria: Mr. Mayor can you repeat your question.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The question is, is the sampling just in our Coral Gables waterway and canals or is it bay-wide?

Dr. Trosler: It is primarily focused in the Coral Gables waterways and canals. We do have a sampling station that's just outside of the Coral Gables waterways, so that we can also understand a little bit more about what's coming into the waterway from upstream of the city boundary.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Sorry to interrupt.

Dr. Trosler: Yes sir. No problem at all. And that is a map that illustrates the different sampling locations for the different parameters and techniques that we will apply. So just a brief slide on outcomes and benefits to the city. So this program provides municipal managers for cost effective management of nutrient sources in the watershed that can help to improve water quality in the canal system and the quality of the discharge to Biscayne Bay by identifying which portions of the watershed are contributing the most to loading from specific land use types and explore the potential for contribution of associated septic systems. It assists the City of Coral Gables with watershed nutrient management and infrastructure planning for adaptation to ongoing rising sea levels and planning for potential future accelerated rise rates. And it also supports education and outreach that engages residents to be part of the water quality solution. And then just a final slide. The program also leverages resources brought by FIU, in-kind resources in some of the water quality sensing, as well as bringing graduate students support to the project. As a learning opportunity, students gain firsthand knowledge of how to work successfully on projects that deliver information that support cost-effective management of city assets and resources. That concludes my presentation. I would be happy to take any questions. Thank you.

ACM Santamaria: Mr. Mayor, I would add that some of these sensors are connected to our Smart City portal and residents can view the data that is collected by these sensors in real time. We are very happy that we are able to do that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Mr. Anderson – Matt.

Commissioner Keon: While we get Matt back on the line. I'm really excited that they have finalized this contract with FIU, because we introduced and discussed the fertilizer, the use of fertilizer along the waterway. We were really waiting to be able to get – we passed it on First Reading, we are waiting on Second Reading to be able to look at some of the information that they could provide for us along the waterway to tell us what the nutrient load is and if it is increasing, and if it is related to the products that are in fertilizer that are adding to it. Matt when he comes back on, had just sent me some information about what the nutrient level is and what they are finding at the Blue Road sensing station, what they have picked up, and its really interesting what is flowing – maybe it comes from upstream from us, but we know that so much of the city's water

drains through our systems drains into the Coral Gables waterway. The northern part of our city kind of drains to the golf course, to the Granada Golf Course, the next drainage area down is into the waterway. So, we know that when it rains and you have storms and everything else, the water drains off the streets and everything else that it is draining into the waterway. So, we have some information. Now that it would be really interesting now to see, as we go up to the mouth of the waterway, how that changes and does it just keep increasing or is it diluted as it moves along, or whatever. We really need to wait till we get some of that information to bring back the fertilizer ordinance that started a long time ago, in working with the Water Keepers that we've been working on. So, I'm really looking forward to this. We had planned a program with FIU that was supposed to take place last April on how our city drains, so that people really understand what kind of drainage, storm water drains we have in the city, where that water goes, and eventually it all goes to outfalls, most of it, other than the part that goes to Granada Golf Course, because that's just the city drain. Everything from that pretty much goes into waterways that outfall that make their way into the bay. It's a very old system…[Inaudible]…I don't think that Dade County or DERM is allowing those outfalls any longer, but…all over and really feeding into the bay. So this is really a great project for sustainability and I hope we can reschedule the community education piece of where our water drains to, because I think that people don't really understand how the city drains and that's why sometimes we get a lot of calls after storms or heavy rains about why the streets are not draining and where its going and whatever. And so, staff does a good job in trying to explain to people one person at a time how that happens, but it would be a very good thing to be able to provide this information as a community education forum when we can all gather again. So, who knows when we can do that, but we will look forward to that in the future when we are not at risk in this time of Covid. Its an exciting project and its very good for our city.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Commissioner. This is a resolution authorizing an exemption to the Procurement Code. Are there any other comments? I think it's a very, very good project and I congratulate staff and FIU and everybody for having thought of it and having brought Matt Anderson. Do I hear a motion?

Vice Mayor Lago: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Its been moved and seconded. Will you call the roll please?

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor before the Commission votes, we do have a member of the public who would like to speak on the item.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is not a public hearing item, but yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Its going to be Myra Joli.

Ms. Joli: This is a pubic hearing item. We are going to – if we are going to take some portion of sponsorship for the project, but its not a public hearing item. Whatever I said means nothing. I just live in Coral Gables and the waterway, so I don't have anything to say. Just go ahead.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I am letting you speak. What are you complaining about?

Ms. Joli: This is not a public hearing item.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, but you are speaking, so tell us what you want to speak about, and we will hear you.

Ms. Joli: Okay. Okay. So right now, we are, according to everybody around, we are in the middle of a pandemic. We cannot open any business or anything, so why don't we put all those projects we put on hold, instead of taking resources to sponsor those projects. The priorities are where? Nobody can go out and then they cannot be socializing with people. They can't be amongst each other; they have to be wearing masks. Why are we pushing a project for a group of students to go and test the water to see…or how good or how bad our waterways are, when right now everybody is home.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Thank you very much ma'am. Thank you. This is not a project for students. This is a water quality project that is vital to survival in the long run. A motion has been made and seconded. Mr. Urquia call the roll please.

Commissioner Keon: Yes
Vice Mayor Lago: Yes
Commissioner Mena: Yes
Commissioner Fors: Yes
Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.