

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-15
April 16, 2024
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 Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-15

Discussion regarding Florida Power and Light (FPL) under-grounding and Sunshine Meeting for Residents (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: I'm going to move into F-15, because I know that we can kill two birds, we can start moving quickly through this. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. F-15 – I received e-mails, I know the rest of you all did too regarding FPL and I want to encourage dialogue and cooperation between FPL and the residents. So, my thought was to have a community meeting, we're going to map out, we look at appropriate places where we can place some of these transformers, so that – are we missing something.

Mayor Lago: I don't want Ed to leave. Ed don't leave. Don't leave Ed. I apologize. I didn't mean to interrupt. I tried not to interrupt, but he kept walking.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: I see all this, like traffic signals.

Mayor Lago: I don't want him to leave. I just want him to listen to this because it's important.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Oh, it's important with your prior experience. But I do want more cooperation with FPL and the residents to work together cohesively, because if you're only talking to one resident at a time and we're not looking at the entire block for better locations to put these transformers, sometimes on the short end of the block near the poles, we can find a better place to put the transformers. Now, I'll give the example again I've told other people, if FPL can have all the transformers in one building on Biltmore Way for the entire block, there's no reason why we can't have productive conversation of finding the best location for transformers. It's not going to be taking up half of the 50-foot frontage on some of these small lots that have no swales whatsoever. Okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: Madam Vice Mayor, I actually had a resident reach out to me, because they were concerned about the placement of the transformers and they tell me, FPL is coming tomorrow, so I showed up and you're right, it was about a 45-minute presentation that they made to one single resident, and I think its counter-productive. I think many people have questions about what's coming, how it's coming, when it's coming, what the process is going to be. So, I think it would be beneficial for a lot of people to know and maybe something that we can make available recorded so that anybody who has questions about the process can do it, and you're right. I think – they are basically requiring one transformer for every four homes. So that means two houses on either side of the street, there's going to be one transformer, and they are going to have to figure out which home its going to be placed at. There are locations throughout the city where you may be able to put a larger transformer at the end of the block, maybe on city land. So that's something that I think we're going to have to engage in the conversation with FPL because the folks who are doing the demonstration basically say no, we've been given the instructions its one for every four homes, but there may be a better way to do it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I was looking at Wallace Street and with this particular resident there is no swale there, short end of the block. It's essentially an alley, a dead-end alley. To me, it made sense to put it there, but we have the CMR room, I'm suggesting that we do this.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may, I'm all in. This is a project that I worked on for years and we got it done. You're not going to make everybody happy. I've already been involved in two conversations with our City Attorney when I brought residents in who were very unhappy about the location of the transformer, and my understanding is that's basically going legal. We're going to have very, very tough conversations with residents and this is about infrastructure. We want to modernize our system and we want to be one of the first to be able to deliver. It's going to take ten years to underground 70 percent of the city is the number we're talking about. It's a very similar discussion like we have about sidewalks. It's a very similar situation and it's tough and we're going to be confronted with that situation and sometimes we're not going to be able to make everybody happy, but we have to think about the entirety of the city. So, I don't want to speak too much because we've got a lot of stuff left. It's a catch 22, and it's a lose/lose, win/win situation that we've got to navigate these waters. I'm all for more transparency and more conversations, but the project is

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moving forward, and I think that we should all get behind it and find a way to make as many people as possible we can find new locations for these transformers, but in certain cases, I promise you, we're not going to be able to.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I understand, but I think with more information and working together, looking at the entire picture of a block-by-block situation, we'll be able to make some concessions.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Certainly. Good evening, everyone, Stephanie Throckmorton, Deputy City Attorney. So far as per the SSUP project that FPL has undertaken, about 500 homes or so have been undergrounded so far. As you know, there have been a handful of complaints or sort of a discussion about where those transformers should go, but we've successfully undergrounded, or FPL has 500 homes in the city as part of that project. We have talked to FPL and our consultant about the specific areas that the Vice Mayor has mentioned and reached out to FPL, and they will look at alternative areas for transformers in those locations. As always, this is an FPL project, so to the extent that there are complaints or issues that arise, please feel free to refer them to us and we will try to facilitate if we can with FPL and our consultant, those discussions, but again, it is an FPL project not a city project. So just to make that clear. We have certainly conveyed the importance to FPL through our consultant about the City Commission's desire for additional transparency and meetings with residents and we will be sure to reiterate that following this meeting.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Anything else so I can move on.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's it. I just thought we should schedule a meeting through the Manager's office.

Mayor Lago: You can Sunshine it and we'll all be there.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Sunshine it. Yes.