

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting  
Agenda Item I-2  
February 15, 2022  
City Commission Chambers  
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Michael Mena**

**Commissioner Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner Jorge Fors**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Attorney, Miriam Ramos**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro**

**Assistant Parks and Recreation Director, Carolina Vester**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Dorothy Thomson**

---

Agenda Item I-2 [11:26 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission accepting the recommendation to begin the Country Club employee hiring process and to waive the competitive process of the Procurement Code for all purchases related to the Coral Gables country Club as Special Procurement/Bid Waiver, pursuant to Section 2-691 of the City's Procurement Code.

Mayor Lago: Moving on to Item I-2, time certain 11:15.

City Attorney Ramos: I-2 is a resolution of the City Commission accepting the recommendation to begin the Country Club employee hiring process and to waive the competitive process of the Procurement Code for all purchases related to the Coral Gables Country Club as Special Procurement/Bid Waiver, pursuant to Section 2-691 of the City's Procurement Code.

City Manager Iglesias: Before we start, I'd like to say that we have worked with Parks since the very beginning. Parks was always an option to take over the country club. We had that Fred and his team have presented to us concerning the Coral Gables Country Club. And so, we have used Parks very effectively in many other -- in our many other facilities, our Venetian Pool, our Youth Center. And we felt that they were certainly an option to take over this facility had things not developed with the prior proposer. Things could have fallen apart; things did, and we were ready -- Parks was ready to take this project over. So, we had been prepared since -- just to let you all know that this has been done since -- this has been prepared since the very beginning so that this -- so that we would be able to take over this facility in case something did not work out with the potential proposers, which it was only one.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: So, with that, I would like to have Parks present. This is the conceptual plan of what we have for the country club. We have all the other options done. We like to present the concept at this meeting and the final with costs in March.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Before staff presents, I would like to recognize Mayor Thomson who's here with us today. And it's always a pleasure to have you here. Thank you. I know you're going to have some comments after in regards to what's being proposed, and we look forward to that. Thank you so much. Please.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, thank you. As the Manager presented, we did come before the Commission at the last meeting and talked about the operations of the country

club. We did get a directive to start looking at the planning process. And as the Manager mentioned, in March, we will present the numbers with the financials after they've been vetted. But it's -- we thought it was important to come early and show the conceptual plan and also get approval to get the ball rolling, which are those two resolutions that we'll talk about as we go. But before we start, we do have a presentation and it starts off with a video that we put together that includes a lot of our historic footage, and we think it'll be a very educational and jovial video to watch as we set the tone for what we want to do with the country club. So, if we can play the video, that would be great.

Audiovisual presentation made.

Narrator: Coral Gables was one of the first planned communities based on the popular City Beautiful Movement that swept across America in the early 1900s. Inspired by the works of landscape architect Andres. Inspired by the works of landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmstead, who designed New York Central Park, the City Beautiful Movement encouraged the use of wide tree-lined avenues, monumental buildings, winding roadways, green space ornate plazas, and fountains for communities to enjoy and gather. The Coral Gables Golf and Country Club is an illustration of that very movement and a testament to the original 1921 City plan developed by Coral Gables founder and visionary George Merrick. In fact, there's an entire historic district named in honor of the original club, which is comprised of the country club, the golf course, and 84 private residences. The country club building, known as the clubhouse and first public building and facility in Coral Gables, was built in 1922 by the architectural firm Hampton & Reimert to primarily entertain prospective buyers. The opening of the City's first golf course, designed by the nationally known architectural firm of Langford and Moreau shortly followed in January 1923. The private residences to be built overlooking the Granada golf course were some of the finest in the City and include representative designs by George Fink, Phineas Paist, and many more. These very same designs reflect the predominant Mediterranean revival architectural character selected as the theme the City of Coral Gables is internationally known for today. While much of the original country club building was lost to a fire in 1983, the six original coral rock

arches seen across the golf course lawn stand tall to remind us of the building's historical significance, stands as the cradle and epicenter of Coral Gables. In its heyday, Merrick himself entertained prospective buyers from its distinctive tower and large crowds gathered and danced to music of renowned bandleaders from a bandshell located on the famous palm patio now forever lost to history. As the Coral Gables Golf and Country Club embarks on its 100th anniversary, the City will have the opportunity to reclaim its very first public building and preserve that piece of its past by bringing it back to its former glory for the community and future generations to enjoy. Something old is new again.

Applause.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, the first thing we want to make sure that you understand is we want to reproduce that gigantic neon sign. No.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll make a motion.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, that kind of sets a tone of, you know, recognizing the history of the club and what it once was and kind of where we want to go with it. And we have a presentation that will show the conceptual plan now if we could pull it up and Carolina will start on the presentation.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And before we start with the presentation, I just wanted to kind of reiterate, you know, it's very exciting for us to look at the history of any of our national landmarks. And we want to make -- you know, we take this very responsibly, and we wanted to make sure before we look into the future, we really have to look at the past, you know, what did this symbolize for the City. And that's why it was so important to show you guys a little bit of the history and tie it back in with why we're here today. And it mentioned there was a landscape architect, Frederick Olmstead, who designed national -- the -- sorry, the park in New York. And he's not just the father of landscape architecture. He's also -- in our books, in Parks

and Recreation, he's the godfather in Parks and Rec because at the time when that first flourished was due to disease-ridden slums in New York, and that's why really parks became so important to the infrastructure in the United States. So, it really pays nice tribute. And 100 years later, this was our first public facility, and given the opportunity, you know, it'll be turned back over and be a public facility in a different approach. And that's what we're going to show here conceptually is we're going to try to look at this as a public facility accessible to the public, but with a different concept because it is ultimately and was designed as a country club foremost.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Can I have the presentation, please?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, this is -- as Director Couceyro mentioned, this is a conceptual plan. We will bring back numbers. We've already vetted some of the numbers, but we're going to bring them back and get them additionally vetted for presentation hopefully in March. Okay, so what we first wanted to look at is we kind of benchmarked over 20 different municipal and private country clubs in the state of Florida, and we wanted to do our research and we wanted to look at what is it we're looking to offer, not just historically, but what do we want to do future-wise, you know, visionary. And what we've found is that while golf predominantly was the soul of country clubs, family gathering spaces and amenities really have become the heart of what the country club living is today. So, we looked at different concepts and we looked at a design that gives tribute to the country club. So, here's a conceptual design of a logo. And if you see here, there's two shades of the yellow and orange of that country club building giving both tribute to the original structure that has the six arches that are still original today, and then the reconstruction in the lighter yellow. So, we wanted to give tribute to that historic landmark and what's new and what's old as part of that building. And then we came up with a visionary statement, you know, what are we trying to do here long vision. And it was about tying it back to the City's vision. You know, our City vision is "world-class city with a hometown feel." We wanted to tie into that, and we really want to provide a world-class country club for our community to gather, grow and call home. And those are some of the keywords we kept hearing over the last two weeks. We've had residents call us. We've had emails. And over and over again, those were

some of the words that resonated, so that's what we came up with conceptually. So, we looked at different implementations of our membership types, and predominantly, what people asked for is kind of a social lifestyle fitness membership that incorporates multiple amenities. So, obviously, there will be a fitness center amenity. There's access to a steam room. We are looking to include a smoothie bar upstairs in the fitness center because that's predominantly what people were asking for, looking for a pool and poolside bites, having amenities to make it actually a hang-out space around the pool deck not just an exercise and lap swimming space. Having a kids club amenity - that's over and over again. You know, it's not kid-friendly right now, make it kid-friendly. Having access to the tennis courts, which right now is managed through a separate lease with Neighborhood Tennis and having access to those courts as part of the membership, and then including some kind of a programming discount structure for both programming within the Tennis Center and additional programming that will be social experience-wise. We're looking at making sure we have capacities for those memberships because that -- it's not -- it's a limited size building, so you need to make sure there is a capacity to make sure that the services rendered are at the highest level. And the different brackets we have here, we have a family platinum membership -- and we'll explain shortly what the platinum means. It's more of a social lifestyle membership at a higher level. We have the fitness, and then we have a single fitness, a single junior, and a senior, or also known silver, 65 plus membership, which is also what existing members right now wanted to make sure we keep discounts for those seniors, and we keep discounts for juniors to participate in this membership bracket. As Phase II -- and like we mentioned, there's currently another organization that manages the tennis court, so we figured let's make sure we vet all those concerns first, and we look at a Phase II implementation that includes the tennis courts. And something else that we heard over and over again is the need for pickleball. I mean not just here, but everywhere. Pickleball, pickleball, pickleball. I mean, in emails and phone calls, so we're looking at potentially with a capital structure in the future to include additional two pickleball courts there on the same space. Now those courts are limited; you only have six. So, you're going to have to have a reduced membership of probably 200 or just limited to tennis. In the same structure, you have a family, a single, a junior, and a silver. And the last Phase II implementation, which is of course important because there is a golf course, and traditionally, historically, the name was the Coral Gables Golf

and Country Club is tying back in the golf membership. And there's certain apprehension because it's still a municipal course, and we don't want to lose that feel of a municipal course. We have a lot of users there that use it regularly, so we want to keep that structure, so we're going to limit that membership as well to only 200 memberships, and we'll make sure we'll phase in our existing memberships, so there's a smooth transition. Now for this membership, just because the municipal rate's already so low, we did not include a silver, a junior rate, to make sure that it's limited to that 200 max. And we're including a family, a corporate -- which is going to be something new -- which is probably something that happens -- and when we were doing the benchmarking, we found a lot of organizations were including some kind of a corporate -- to include the business aspect of our City, and then also a single. So, a little bit more details of some of those packages. We're looking at including a separate pricing structure for resident and nonresidents, which currently there is none in the existing country club structure. It's just one flat fee regardless of your residency status. So, we make sure it becomes affordable to our residents first. And then of course, similar to all our other structures in the Recreation Department, we have a split structure for resident and nonresident.

Mayor Lago: Could I ask you a quick question on that point? Maybe you're thinking about this already, but I'm just going to mention it. The memberships, we would open it up first to residents -- correct? -- and as that fills in, if there's any opportunity...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: We would address a non-resident then.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And that would be at the will...

City Manager Iglesias: That's correct, Mayor.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Of the Commission. This is just...

City Manager Iglesias: That's correct, Mayor.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: A conceptual structure.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. I'm just giving -- just thinking out loud. I'm just thinking out loud. And like, for example, let's say -- you said 2,000 memberships. Let's say we have 1,800 residents and we have 200 nonresidents. As the nonresident -- let's say if a nonresident leaves, we would first give it to -- priority to a person who is obviously a resident, correct?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And we can even -- what we could do is permanently kind of create a percentage so that there's a certain allotment for residents and nonresidents, so you can even create that structure as well.

Mayor Lago: I just want to give -- I want to give first bite of the apple every time that there's an opening...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: To a resident. And if you tell me that -- listen, if you come back to me in a year and say, "Hey, Vince. We have 2,000. We're full. The capacity is 2,000 and we don't want to increase anymore," it's perfectly fine. You're the experts. You know best. And they're all residents. I'm perfectly fine with that.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Okay.

Mayor Lago: If we exclude nonresidents, I'm perfectly fine with that.



Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We have already started to do some of that, like when we reached our capacities at our golf course, and we have memberships there. If anything pops up, it's residents first, so we've been doing that already, just so you know.

Mayor Lago: And just like I told you when I spoke with you today...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, no, that's a different story.

Mayor Lago: You know, I've spoken to several people who've even told me jokingly that they're nonresidents, like listen, what I pay at Granada is the cheapest of...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Any...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Mayor Lago: Golf course I've ever seen, especially of that quality. And I was mentioning it to the Manager. I go, "I think it's time to raise the rates for nonresidents."

Commissioner Menendez: And by the way, something that you all do, I know, let's say with the Youth Center that you open it up first for...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes, early registration.

Commissioner Menendez: Early registration.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, we can definitely do that,

Commissioner Menendez: Resident membership, and then sometime later then depending on capacity, then you open it up...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: To nonresidents, so you...

City Manager Iglesias: We intend...

Commissioner Menendez: Sort of stagger that.

City Manager Iglesias: To prioritize the residents, yes.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That is correct.

Commissioner Anderson: I don't want to see happen what's happened basically at Venetian Pool where it's very, very difficult for residents to get in now.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Well, actually we changed all of that. So, one, we changed the pricing structure; two, we never turn a resident away. So, there's preset tickets that they can purchase, and also, the structure now allows for any resident to not be considered as part of the capacity that we've reduced to make sure that a resident is never turned away, so that doesn't...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Happen anymore. Now, if the residents want to use it, that's different. What we've found out is for the generic, you know, day-to-day swimming,

it's not predominantly used by residents. But when it comes to our programming, our special events -- we had a beautiful event there last night, romance under stars -- those are predominantly taken up by residents of Coral Gables. So, they enjoy the programming aspect, just the day-to-day, you know, swimming is predominantly nonresidents.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That was a direction we got from the Commission a couple of years ago to look at that and make sure that we accentuate the opportunities that we have for residents. And that was one of them where if you want to come, you could sign up. We're not going to turn you away as a resident. You could come whether we've reached capacity or not.

Mayor Lago: And Fred, we also are going to have an opportunity here for members, obviously, to bring guests, correct?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Oh, yes, that's in here.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Next -- the next paragraph.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: The next bullet right there. You got us.

Mayor Lago: I want it to be all about residents.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yep.

Mayor Lago: That's what I think the whole -- the Commission is being very clear, you know. And if we exclude nonresidents, I understand that, but I want this to be a community haven for people to have -- come and have a great time. But I don't want there to be a situation where any resident comes back and says, "Listen, I can't get in as a member."

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: You know, if...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Understood.

Mayor Lago: We're at 2,000 residents, then I have to say, "Listen, we don't want to fill it up too much because then it becomes unbearable."

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Mayor Lago: And it's not a pleasant situation for everyone.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, you know, and again, going back to everything we've included in this presentation, it really came from existing users right now from the existing country club structure that came to us and told us what they want to keep, what they would like to see differently. It came from community members, what they wished they could see in this country club, so we really kind of gathered all those ideas, and that's what we put out here. So, yes, the guest fee was a big one. People wanted to be able to be friendly and allow them to bring either a family member or a friend so they can enjoy and introduce the country club. And it's actually a good promotional model also for sales. You know, you want to bring somebody in, introduce them to the country club, get an experience, and then you join the country club. Also, as part of Phase II, we're going to -- like we mentioned -- we're going to include the Granada Golf Course, which is a nine-hole par 36 course, a historic site as well. And as part of that membership, what we're trying to do as kind of an incentive -- and that's what we found predominantly in the state of Florida -- some of the incentives to golf memberships include a seven-day advance tee

time, which is some of the complaints we get right now. It's really hard to get a tee time just because everybody has access to it because it's so affordable, and then some more activities at the golf course; maybe it's tournaments, maybe it's, you know, men's and ladies' golf tournaments hosted by the club, more community-based, not something national. It doesn't allow for that space, but community-based tournaments and clubs there. Additional things that we looked at, like we mentioned, we wanted to tie in the business community as well. So, we're looking at a kind of structure that allows for a corporate membership to be sold in packs of four, and it allows for a business to transfer these four memberships in the company's name to four individuals in the company. It allows them to have access only on weekdays, which is going to be a nice way -- because that's when predominantly activity is lowest in a typical country club, and that's when businesses really look for their members to, one, have access to a gym fitness center, but also to business. You know, you can go there, you can talk business, and it allows for that structure. So, we thought that that was a really nice concept that we found in other places and to include here as well. Of course, the family memberships, it's important to differentiate that you have access to that membership as part of the member, or the spouse. And we talked back and forth, is it under 18; is it 21? So, we looked at really, there's a lot of older young adults living back home, so we're looking...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: You know, it's best to keep it 21 and under.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Not leaving the nest yet.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And then the platinum membership, that kind of gives you a little bit of higher level. We're looking at including another bracket of discounts and amenities, so you get now discounts to the rental of the banquet hall facilities, you get access to exclusive monthly and annual member and social events, and then we also want to include some kind of a discount. Because in this membership, there is no access to the golf course, so you'll have access to discounted greens fees as well as discounts to all programming as part of this facility.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, one of the things that we are looking at with the country club space is the café area, which is now operational. And we are looking at how we're going to continue that operation with as little interruption in service as possible. So, there are two options that we're presenting as part of the concept that we can operate this under. You know, I'm not a chef. I don't want to prepare food, although Carolina used to do it at Venetian Pool, so if I have to throw her in there...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, so...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We know what we're good at.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah. There's two options, and one option is the concessionaire agreement and it's with a revenue split. Now, what makes this a good option for us is that, you know, the revenues are based on sales. We manage the sale -- the way of accounting for sales through our system. We provide the interior set up and the equipment, and then we're able to oversee the quality control, and we're also able to continue to use the equipment and the space for internal things, such as if we have a small meeting that we can do that we don't need a large-style caterer or anything for, we can do as a concessionaire agreement, as opposed to the other option that we're presenting. Well, show the two options. The other one is a lease. This is

where we give them the space. It's a defined revenue for us. It's X amount of money per month that they pay, and the tenant has to do the build out. They have to do the maintenance, and then there are a couple of other issues that we've run into as we started to look into this that would require some surveying, looking at a separate folio number, kind of making a split away from the rest of the building if it's going to be its own operational lease. It's a little bit less oversight. There's only -- you're only a lease administrator. So those are the two options. We personally, from a recreation standpoint, we like option one because it allows us additional oversight. It allows us control of the product and control the service, and we're able to work with a concessionaire that has experience, but we're also able to control more. We have had -- I have had experience -- and Carolina has as well -- with concessionaires in our other areas, whether it's the Youth Center or Venetian Pool, and we think the concessionaire agreement is a lot more viable of an option than the lease issue, which we've done both and a concessionaire agreement seems to work better from an operational standpoint.

Commissioner Menendez: I want to comment just -- because I know residents are listening. And the key is to maintain a café that's a quality experience. It's not going to be hot dogs and popcorn.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Absolutely not, and that's why...

Commissioner Menendez: There's a lot of misinformation circulating.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: And it's high-quality food, the ones that they've come -- you know, become used to. And you know, personally, between...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: All of us, I guess, the more flexibility you have -- because tastes change, patterns change, flexibility. But I just want to assure the residents that you're going to present a quality product.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right. Well, that's one of the reasons why we're saying -- we're not interested in running it. We're not going to -- we're going to get a -- an experienced person that's able to do that. And you know, we've heard the commentary. We've heard the commentary from everything I -- everyone I talk to. Keep the gelato, keep the gelato, things like that. So, we understand, and that's what we're looking at presenting.

Commissioner Anderson: I...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Another thing to mention with the concessionaire agreement and that's really important to note is that we as a City, we're going to have access to the kitchen space. And what we found sometimes when you have a lease agreement with somebody, you lose that access. So, if when -- when you want to get to the point where you want to run internal events, when you have other banquet facility rentals going on, other concessionaires or caterers coming in, sometimes there's an animosity of sharing the space. And right now, it's one large kitchen space that needs to be shared, so allowing the concessionaire agreement where they still report back to the City gives us that direct oversight to make sure that the space is evenly shared, that they're maintaining the space in the proper function and manner, and that we have a say as to what the fees are going to be, and we have a say as to the quality control of the menu. Because ultimately now, if we're going to operate the space, the residents are not going to complain to the business owner of the restaurant, they're going to come to the City and complain, so that allows us a little bit more oversight of those issues.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, now we move into the next portion of the club, which is the rental of banquet hall facilities.



Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, the concept -- and similar to what Fred was mentioning about us not being interested in running the restaurant, we're good at certain things and we know what we're not as good at. And that is -- you know, in the hospitality industry, it's an industry that works 24/7 and everybody has different tastes. So, the best approach that we found as a city -- and this is what we found in other municipal country club styles is that we are responsible for the rental of the banquet halls. We oversee that aspect of the business operations, and then there's different structures that we can provide for the catering. We still should have the opportunity to cater our own in-house events and any smaller programming spaces opportunity so that we still have that opportunity and flexibility to do so. As part of the rental fees that we're going to propose later on and share with the Commission, we're looking at the same structure right now. They're five-hour structures. And then if there's any additional hours within that five-hour structure, there'll be an additional fee for those services and amenities. The different structures we're looking at entertaining for the catering is having a pre-approved or pre-qualified list of caterers, which is very typical, that includes some kind of a revenue split or percentage of sales incentive that can be anything from five caterers to 10 to 20. It'll be at the discretion -- we can create a panel. It can be some kind of a review process to go ahead and get these caterers approved, or you can also allow for the renter to just bring in their preferred caterer. I mean, when there's a bride who has a specific taste of food amenities and they want to bring in a chef or some sort, they should have the flexibility to do so. So, that's another structure we're looking at that where you can bring in your own caterer at an additional fee, of course. And both options would have to be conditional on any kind of City insurance requirements and bond requirements. So, as being pre-qualified, you have to go through all of that first as well. And again, one of the nice things about that structure is people will come in and out, meaning that you don't collect equipment there over time, that you don't have space to store there, and it'll allow for a cleaner kitchen, a cleaner facility as a whole because they're going to be the experts in the business. They're going to bring in what is needed, and they're going to take it back out at the end of the night.

Vice Mayor Mena: Are you looking to repurpose any of the square footage that's currently allocated for...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Usage-wise, yes. And we're going to show you...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We'll get to that.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: One of the rooms.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We'll show you what our concepts are...

Vice Mayor Mena: Because right now...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: For some of the spaces.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think there's too much space dedicated to that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We'll show you.

Vice Mayor Mena: In my opinion.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, yeah.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, the first of the banquet halls -- I'm sorry, the hour. So, those are the hours that are currently being offered already for the rental hours. We're

not looking to change anything. We want to continue to honor the 11 PM evening closeout on the weekdays and the Sundays, and then the Friday and Saturdays will run from 6 to 12 midnight for rentals maximum with up to 1 AM to kind of break down and return the facility to its original condition. So, these are the same brackets that are proposed right now in the rental structure, and that's what we want to honor to make sure there's no additional hardships to the community for the rentals. And one of the things that we want to take away is one of the things we kept hearing is the parking, the parking when there's rentals that affect the course, that affect the residences. So, we as a city, we have garages in our city, and I think we have resources that we can apply to make sure that there's an incentive for people to pay on parking garages, whether it's our own valet system that we host. You know, there's things that we can explore further to make sure that those hardships are no longer pushed upon the community. So, here's a little overall map -- we'll zoom in shortly -- that kind of show the different structures. So, the biggest of the rooms is the Grand Ballroom, which you can flexibly split in two, if needed. You have the Atrium Room, which faces the country club and just kind of part of the original structure. You have your café space and the hallway, which actually historically, it's interesting was actually just an open air patio. And then you have the Merrick Room, and then you have the Fountain Room, which connects to an outdoor patio, and we'll show you the plan for those spaces. So, obviously, the Coral Grand Ballroom, you want to keep as a rental amenity. That is the largest ballroom you have. Here are the current capacities that we're looking to honor the same. Banquet style, you have about 600 reception; reception style, 1,000; and theater style, 800 people.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That is current. To make clear, that's not -- we're not adding anything. We're not saying more people or bigger. We want to be clear that that's currently what's being used right now as a rental.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Then you have the Atrium Room, which also has the poolside access. And here's the current capacity: for banquet style amenities, you have 150 people; reception style, 250 people. Predominantly, this space is often used as the counterpart to the Grand Ballroom. A lot of times you have the reception cocktail area take place there, and then

move into the Grand Ballroom. So, a lot of times, you know, separating the two would really be a hardship because to make the Grand Ballroom a good rentable facility, you need this space. So, we really don't want to turn this space into anything else. It should be separate from the café space. We don't see it as a good restaurant space just because it is often rented together with the great ballroom. And then here's an interesting room. So, this is the Fountain Room. And what's really nice about this room, it has access to a little patio area with a fountain and that really has a nice private feel. It also has a separate entrance off to the side, so we really thought about if we could use the space a little bit differently, what could some of the future visions of the space. So, when we over the last two week heard again about, you know, could there be a restaurant feature in there, could there be a member social lounge, could there be a bar, could there be some kind of a private space where we have private dining exclusive usage as members, so this room currently has structured as a rental space. Predominantly, it's used for baby showers, those kind of rentals. It's smaller in size. The banquet style is 90 people, reception style is 150 people, and theater style is 100 people. But it does have a nice structure that if you wanted to use it differently in the future, it does lend itself because it does have separate access. It has the nice patio. It could even include some kind of outdoor dining component, which is still very private. It doesn't affect the front lawn for outdoor dining, so I think you have an amazing opportunity here.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And there's also an entry that's right next to that.

Unidentified Speaker: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, if you needed it to be an independent space such as a lounge or a restaurant, you have that ability, that infrastructure there. And you know, and I wanted to emphasize, you know, you do have that outdoor dining component, which as we know has become very important. And it's a nice area; you have the fountain. You can have something all the way around it. So, if you wanted to go in that direction for future use, we think this would be the room to look at.

Commissioner Menendez: And for future use, I guess another benefit is that it has the parking right behind the facility that they can go park and go straight instead of parking in front...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Direct access.

Commissioner Menendez: Where the golf course...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, it's direct access.

Commissioner Menendez: Which frees up more parking space where the café and where the golf course is.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And that's why we really thought the Atrium Room didn't lend itself to that space. One, it's a big sale component of the Grand Ballroom. Also, it's facing the front lawn. It's where our residents don't want any more activity. This is more private, and if there is a future vision, this would be the right space.

Commissioner Menendez: That makes sense.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Okay, and then the last one is the Merrick Room. And what we found, it's the least rented. It's the smallest of the four. It's the least attractive, and it makes for a great programming space, and this goes to our programming. We're really -- we're looking at the fitness center and the size of the fitness center, and the direction of having more

fitness classes, and that space is pretty small. You can turn the space into a multipurpose space that allows for large Fitness Center classes, similar to what we have at the Adult Activity Center, which are really popular. And it also allows for programming and allows for meetings. So, over and over, we heard, you know, there are certain organizations and groups that really don't have the means. They're pushed out. They're having to pay high fees to meet. This is a nice space that could lend itself for that as well, and we can also look at catering themed party rentals in that space. We, in Community Recreation, have a lot of resources when it comes to birthday party spaces outdoors, nothing indoors. And our parents keep asking us over and over again, especially your mothers, get us something with air conditioning; what do you offer indoors. So, this could be a nice attractive feature that allows for party rentals indoors. And then, you know, a big feature is bringing social activities back. Historically, and also what the community wants today, they want a family-friendly environment. They want it to be kid friendly, and there's a lot of events currently that we already do -- I mean, we just had one this weekend, which is our Daddy Daughter Dance, that we had to move outside of our City facilities. We held it at the UM Alumni Center. It's a beautiful location. We love it, but this gives us an opportunity to bring it back in-house, bring it back to our City and looking at different programming, family type of programming, dive-in movies. We have a beautiful pool there that is underutilized; having themed nights there, talent shows, pool luau events, crafting workshops, you know, swim lessons. Over and over again, we hear Venetian Pool's too cold. You're only doing swim lessons in the summer; wouldn't it be nice to have something year-round. And we're not looking at to completely outfit that pool with swim lessons, but there can be times that allow for access for swim lessons.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Especially for the members, if they want some programming there, that's what we would focus on is the membership.

Commissioner Menendez: By the way, I mentioned before Ocaquatics...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: They used to.

Commissioner Menendez: Had swimming there in the mornings for the toddlers.

Mayor Lago: They used to.

Commissioner Menendez: Very well received, people loved it. That was the first thing that got removed.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Menendez: And you know, Daddy Daughter Dance, it's a jewel. I mean, people love it. It creates -- and the good thing is you already have programming in place. It's not like you have to reinvent the wheel. You have the programming, now you have the facility. So, you know, that part of it, at least, should be a very smooth transition.

Mayor Lago: Imagine, I was -- in reference to Ocaquatics, I had to take my kids to their other facility on 72nd. It would have been great just to go two minutes from my house.

Commissioner Menendez: Yep, exactly.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Enjoy it in the City of Coral Gables.

Commissioner Menendez: Right.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And that's what we're hearing over and over again, you know, why do we have to take things outside; you guys should offer that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That's what we want to do. We want to open up those opportunities. And I think we -- there's -- we do have a golden opportunity to do so.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And then also -- oh, sorry.

Unidentified Speaker: Sorry.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: A couple of making sure that we continue with the member special events, you know, having annual events, parent night out, having a kids club where you can actually work out and put your kids to be -- not just put into a room to color and draw, but actually have activities for your children. I think we can do that there.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, obviously, to run this, we need a staffing structure, and this is our organizational chart. And one of the things that we wanted to emphasize and make sure that the Commission was aware of is we do plan on having a professional country club manager that will head up the country club. It's someone that we will go through an extensive interview process and start working with to get someone that's going to lead the charge there operationally, and they'll be the head of it, obviously, with support from myself and Carolina and moving the operations and everything else. But we do plan to install stuff in there. Another item from the organizational chart that I want to make sure people understand is the building and grounds maintenance. We want to make sure that we staff it, the maintenance accordingly. One of the things that we heard, and we wanted to make sure was that we're going to be able to take care of issues when things pop up at the country club in a timely manner, quickly. So, if we have the staff and we're already there, we're able to do repairs and do things much quicker and that's our hope. This staffing structure leads us -- you know, there's going to be three phases, as we talked about -- two phases as we talked about. Eventually, when it's all said and done, it'll be ten full-term employees and 36 part-time. And as we move through the phases and we see what the needs are, that could diminish. It could be less depending on what we see and what we find to be the areas that need the most attention. Obviously, this is just a plan but what -- one of the resolutions



that are here before you today is for us to at least get started with the process. It takes a couple of months to get people through, so we'd like to start the process today before we even come back to you in March when we originally were going to come back to you. That's why we came to you early so we can start the process, work with HR to at least start the interview process, and we'll come back to you, obviously, with the budget amendment in order to hire these people and have the financing for it, but it's very important to get that started. And I think that we've covered all of the things that we've talked about, whether it's the banquet hall, whether it's the fitness and pool. You know, one of the things that you look at, we have a pool now. You know, when we run it, there's a different standard. We have to have lifeguards there. We have to have safety. We have to have security. So, there's a little more that goes into it than just throwing a pool out there and having people walk around it. We have to factor in a lot of these other things that puts us at a higher standard, whether it's for safety or whether it's for service. So, that is listed in here, and I think we -- you know, we've taken a long time to look at it, and we've been over it, and we'll continue to tweak it, but this is our concept to begin with and we want to start that process. So, in addition to operations and staffing, one of the things that we have to look at is the capital improvement needs. And there is quite a list of them, and they're listed before you. There's some structural building repairs. There's the HVAC system. We have to look at the pool and the renovation. There's some other restoration. There's the kitchen. It goes on and on as you see in the list. One of the things that we've worked with, we've worked with our CIP team. They've given us some estimates and we'll bring those back after we've vetted them to look at all of the different things that need to be done there. Carolina, I don't know if you want to share any more on the capital.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: No, just, you know, the structure that we're looking at is similar to one of the nice things that we already have in Parks and Recreation. We have a five-year matrix, and that helps us not just initially but helps us long-term because this is a 100-year-old historic landmark. It's not just going to have initial capital investment. It's going to have ongoing capital investment that has to be at a high level. So, we really want to make sure we

build it correctly. And the success on our team really depends on what the Commission and Management's going to give us to make this successful and part of that is that capital infrastructure.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We -- excuse me, sorry, Commissioner. We feel strongly -- and I kind of went through this already once with the Granada Golf Course when we started the construction process, and we talked about it, and I talked about it with the Manager at the time. And said, "You know, if you give us the resources, we can give you what you're looking for," but the resources have to be there. And to the credit of our Manager, we got those resources. We got a great superintendent. We got the equipment. We got the capital improvements. And all of a sudden, now the golf course, which wasn't always a money earner, now is in the black, and that's because of all these improvements and the resources. So, we're capable of doing things. We have to make sure we get the resources. If we don't get those improvements, if the air conditioner doesn't work, it's hard to get rentals, that kind of thing. Yes, Commissioner, sorry.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm of the opinion, you know, get everything done, you know, instead of waiting two years down the road just for one part. Get it all done that way the community can really enjoy it. And we've mentioned it here before. Could you just go into a little bit the possibility or the probability of -- I think that's the direction we're heading -- putting the country club under the umbrella of Community Recreation so when we decide collectively as a city to go with a referendum for the master plan these needed improvements can be funded if not completely, partially, by way of that referendum that would go to the voters of Coral Gables.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes, we can look at that. We are going to have a sunshine meeting coming up, and that is one of the items that we can discuss. I know we'll be discussing quite a few things there, the entire plan and what the different components are and what can be included and what can be taken out, and we'll have all those discussions. And absolutely, a country club can be part of it as to whether it'll be an addition or omission or whatever it is that we need to do.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: One easy thing that we can do right away because if it's going to fall under the Community Recreation umbrella to the master plan as a plan -- a conceptual plan, you can add an addendum that includes this facility because already in the master plan, we identified certain deficient needs -- the junior size Olympic swimming pool, certain things that we don't offer right now that immediately as part of this acquisition are resolved right away.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Changes some of that.

Commissioner Menendez: You know, as we all know, like Mayor said, we get emails and calls and texts and even at the farmer's market or actually on -- at the Gloria Estefan show, I was -- residents approached me regarding the country club.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Menendez: And there's so much community -- our community loves the country club so much and wants to see the best for it. So, in my opinion, to have them be part of the path forward, through a referendum and other ways, I think that's an amazing tie-in to make it a community effort collectively. So, you know, we're bringing community back to community.

Commissioner Anderson: I think it's an excellent idea, and I really applaud your proactive approach here to try to get the ball rolling now...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: As opposed to waiting to March or April. So...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: I applaud it and thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: So, Commissioner, I...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Thank you very much.

City Manager Iglesias: If I may say, the ball was rolling a long time ago.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. Well, you know, I...

City Manager Iglesias: The ball didn't just start rolling now.

Commissioner Anderson: No, I'm talking...

City Manager Iglesias: And I want to make sure that people understand though.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm talking about the hiring process.

City Manager Iglesias: Correct, correct, but...

Commissioner Anderson: We need to get that started now.

City Manager Iglesias: But we were looking at this for some time ago. This is really a new vision for the country club.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: It's really a new vision. It's not just a gym. It's not just an event center. But this new vision is really the old vision.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: What it used to be, and that's what we want to bring back. This -- and so we're looking at maybe proposing a five-year plan to -- because we have to finance all this. And also, this is now part of Parks and Recreation. It's part of that department, and certainly, from the bond issue, I think we can certainly -- it's part of that -- it's another facility that's going to bring certain facilities that we need onboard immediately. So, there's a -- so this is the vision for the -- our new Coral Gables Country Club.

Commissioner Fors: Wouldn't it be nice if we had somebody that was going to invest five to six million in the capital improvement.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Fors: I'm -- I just want to say on the record that I'm not quite where I need to be on this yet. Frankly, if anybody is capable of doing it, the Parks and Rec Department is. And I'm extremely grateful that you guys not only -- really that you guys began working on this a long time ago because now we do find ourselves with this being our only option. But I'd be lying if I didn't confess that I do have a bit of a pit in my stomach about how it's going to progress. My worry is that we're going to have -- it's going to be one of two things: either it's going to be a combination of the Venetian Pool and the Youth Center -- even though we already have a Venetian Pool, and we already have a Youth Center -- or that it's going to be something similar to what was being proposed by prior bidders, except without the benefit of the five to six million in capital improvements and with certain limitations that we'll have inherently as a city. The money's only one of them. So, the Parks and Rec Department, by all means, has my full, 100 percent support. But I just have to disclose that I have a pit in my stomach about how this will proceed in comparison to what it may have become. And I think a lot of people would have been surprised that they would have liked it a lot and that possibly the product we put out there is going to be not that different from what was initially being proposed. Putting it on the park referendum I think is

obviously a very viable plan. You know, the -- my only hesitation on that is -- and I'm sure there's precedent for it. I'm sure it's done all the time. But if you're looking at a facility with like -- really, at the end of the day, what it's going to be 2,000 memberships, so does that --? Is there any conflict between putting that on a referendum because I think there's still amenities that are going to be open, even without memberships, right?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: We're going to have event space.

Commissioner Fors: Okay.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: You're still going to have rental space. You're still going to have programming that's open to the community at large.

Vice Mayor Mena: The café's open.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Café is open, yeah so...

Commissioner Fors: And do -- have we thought about -- I know this is conceptual -- the volume of event rental...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, what we did...

Commissioner Fors: -- that we're going to seek out to do?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: What we want to bring back to you in March, we've done pretty deep analysis of operating costs as well as revenue projections. We're not ready to present those as well. But also, as a visionary statement, you know, this would be set up as an

enterprise fund, which means that eventually it's going to reap a profit. Based on our early estimates, we're looking -- and that's something you have to think about. I think any restaurant business that comes in or hospitality business, they realize the first year, you're not going to make money. That's just part of the investment that you have to put in. We're looking at within five years, you should be fully back in the black from your operational cost, so a full recovery in the operational costs, as well as predominant recovery on the capital cost, but it's going to take five years and that's going to be a complete disclosure. But I think once you're at the five-year's mark, you can run it as an enterprise fund, and we're going to try to make sure we maintain that balance where we look at a business module but look at a community and resident space as well.

Vice Mayor Mena: I have some of the same concerns as Commissioner Fors just from the perspective of what's the vision of what this is supposed to be because I do think if it's just additional, like the Youth Center 2.0 kind of thing, I'm not sure that's what this is supposed to be, at least in my view. If it's supposed to be a country club, then it has a different dynamic to it, and it doesn't need more programming for sure. And I think you can have some of your traditional sort of parks and recreational programming, but how you manage it is going to be key. And that was why I asked about, you know, repurposing some of the space, which...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know, like some of the ideas that you have there. But even in the bigger spaces, like for example, is it more profitable for --? Because if you're using outside -- if I heard you correctly, you're using outside like catering.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Um-hmm.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, is it much more profitable for us if there's an 800 person event in the big ballroom versus if there was, say, a 400-person event, or is it basically...?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes and no. So, our fees are based on the rental space.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's a marginal increase though.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: But then there's also an incentive that you do with caterers based on the per capita of the event that there is a percentage that -- of the revenues or the split that goes back to the City. So, you can work that as a structure with the caterer. And those caterers that are not pre-qualified that are coming in, they still have to pay a fee as well, and that fee may not be per person. It may be a set fee. So, we have flexibility to work around the fee structure. We have a proposed fee structure that we can present to you, but we have flexibility to work around that.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah. I think I'd just like to see some analysis on not only that -- right? -- what it means for us marginally to have these very big special events versus, you know, medium-sized special events, I guess, what it means for us marginally. Also, what it does to your sort of supply and demand, right. It's like, well, yeah, marginally, we only make more, but we're going to have less events because people are looking for that type of space for 800 to 1,000 people. And I say that for multiple reasons. One, because obviously the bigger events taxes the neighborhood more -- right? -- in terms of the parking and the overflow and all those things. If you have 800 people...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's no way around that. And two, because you're committing a lot of that square footage to that enormous ballroom that is five days a week really not being used for that special event on Friday and Saturday night, you know, typically. You might have some others, but -- you know, you might have a weekday thing here and there.



Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Well, I would say that, you know, I've attended several events at that location and in its heyday, it had quite a few. I mean, that space was being rented -- I mean, not just privately for weddings, but the German Consulate, the Italian Consulate. They used to have their national parties...

Vice Mayor Mena: But for 800 to 1,000 people?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yes, oh, yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Wow.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Now, I'm sure there were certain fees that were amended for those kind of events, and that's something we can talk about structurally too when it's a non-for-profit event, not just a private one. Do we want to do --? Traditionally, we do a 50 percent discount for a non-for-profit, so that's something we can talk about.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, that's -- I think that's -- yeah, I think that's great or whatever -- I'm just trying to talk about utilization of the space and having it be more...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Just financially as a ...

Vice Mayor Mena: Active and having more features for residents on a day-to-day, as opposed to it being as hyper-focused on special events as it has been because...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm in line with what the Mayor said about it being something for residents to come together all the time, not just for the weddings, not just...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Correct.

Vice Mayor Mena: For those things, but all the time.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Our intent...

City Manager Iglesias: Well, I think that...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Is -- I'm sorry.

City Manager Iglesias: Let me just say something.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Excuse me.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor. Number one is, we don't want this to be Youth Center 2.0. This is a country club, not Youth Center 2.0.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: To be very clear about that. Two is there is a lot of events going on right now, probably too many, but that is a good profit center, so we have to look at that initially as that. But we want to reduce some of those events, but it's still a good profit center, so we have to provide that balance, which is what we're looking at right now, and we'll be back....

Vice Mayor Mena: And...

City Manager Iglesias: In March.

Vice Mayor Mena: And we have to be -- look -- and that's why I talked about what the vision is, because yes, we have to be fiscally responsible about how we manage this. But my number one goal is not for it to be a profit center.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right, so it's for it to be a community country club that people use, that I, as a resident, have reason to go to on a Wednesday after work.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because it's somewhere people want to be.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's not been that for a long time.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: No, and that's what we want to do.

City Manager Iglesias: And that's what we wanted to try to provide balance on. But remember that if there's nothing coming in...

Vice Mayor Mena: I understand.

City Manager Iglesias: We have to charge a lot.

Vice Mayor Mena: I understand the finances have to work.

City Manager Iglesias: So, there's got to be a financial issue that...

Vice Mayor Mena: I get it, I get it.

City Manager Iglesias: So, we're trying to provide that balance so that it is a country club.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: Yet we have enough events to go ahead and actually pay for it.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Manager.

Vice Mayor Mena: And so, just -- I think we need to be clear on what we're looking for it to be.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think we've been clear on certain things, and I think we've made certain promises to the residents, which is that certain things are not going to change. You still have your golf membership. You still have your gym membership. You still have the café. I think we're all in agreement on that. That's the easy part. Now you have to manage and execute, that's the hard part. But from...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: A vision perspective...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's the easy part.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: The event space part is tricky. It is profitable -- I get it -- but we need to figure out the best utilization of all that square footage, and I need to understand more about the finances historically what -- because I don't -- don't just come in and plug in and do the same thing the prior folks were doing, except maybe changing one ballroom in the back. I think that would be coming up short of what we could do here, and that's I guess where I'm going. And then the last thing is -- and I'm on the fence on this -- the notion of the infrastructure. And to Commissioner Fors' point, you know, this was part of the underlying discussion about a capital infusion here that led us to this point, which we don't have now. I've said it before, and I'll say it again, we need to be really careful that we don't just keep piling on this referendum idea because everybody's going to end up with zero if we're not careful, and that would be a shame.

Mayor Lago: And if I could add something to the Vice Mayor's comments. I've been very clear; I'm not going to vote in favor of just more and more debt on top of the City.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, we have to be careful.

Mayor Lago: I'm a "no" vote on a referendum to the tune of 50, 60, 70, \$80 million. I've been very clear to the Manager I will vote no on that. I love the Youth Center. I know it needs a face lift, but I'm not going to leave the City in more debt than when I walked in, just not going to do it. It's never been what I'm about, and I don't think the Commission is about that. And I don't think the Manager or City Attorney or staff's about that. So, we need to be very, very careful, like the Vice Mayor said. I want to just add a few things. I like everything that I hear. I want to see more of a country club feel. I want to get away from what we had previously, which was just a profit center. It was a machine pumping out events. We obviously need to still have events, but like you said, let's activate some of the smaller components, smaller ballrooms into something that you can

come up with, that you can dream about, that you can enjoy, where families can come together, and they can have a good time there. My only concern is coming -- what's coming April 30th. How are we going to address and continue to make it a profit center? Do we already have --? Is your staff going to be ready to pick up the baton once the current administration leaves and start, you know, taking reservations for future weddings, bar mitzvahs, birthdays?

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, let me add to that. That's a very important issue.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

City Manager Iglesias: And I don't think we can discuss it now.

Mayor Lago: No, no. I'm just saying are --? We're working on that, right?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, we are. Yes, we are, but there's a number of components to that that we need to discuss. As far as the referendum, I don't think we have to increase the referendum. What that referendum gives us is time, and what we need is time to fund this. So, I do think that we go with the same referendum number that we have. We have facilities that we can incorporate. And the fact that the referendum is going to give us that time I think is what we need to really encompass this. So, what I'm talking about is this is not part of Parks and Recreation. It's just part of the referendum, but we're not going to increase the referendum number.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Exactly.

Mayor Lago: And the referendum discussion is one that I'll have another day with our finance team to get a real understanding of the debt, the debt service, and those kind of numbers. So that's a conversation for another day. What I want to make sure is when April 30th comes, is Liberty Café going to close? Are we not going to be able to host events in May there because we may not have the staff?

City Manager Iglesias: I would like to discuss that. We need to discuss that.

Mayor Lago: So, those are things that we need to discuss. I like the game plan moving forward. I think you've heard from the Commission of what our vision is. Yes, it has to be a profit center, but it -- you know, I'm not looking to make this our savior in regards to the finances, so you shouldn't worry about that. It should be more about producing a product that is complementary to the vision of the City, the City Beautiful.

Vice Mayor Mena: There should be -- there really should be everyday food and beverage options that are not just the café, that are not just a place that you can go get a coffee and a sandwich. That's fine. We should have that component...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Where it is now and that's fine. Okay, move forward with that, but somewhere else -- and I don't know if it's in that back...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: I forget what you called it, the back room with the...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Outdoor, whatever it is -- you know, when you go to a country club, you typically go with a member. The member can bring a guest, whatever food and beverage is consumed, it's charged to the member...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: So that guest now is generating revenue for you, even though they can't be a member. It could be somebody from out of town or wherever. You -- we need to generate that component of this thing.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: That's factored in. The only thing we didn't factor in is the food and beverage minimum. So, traditional country clubs have a food and beverage minimum...

Vice Mayor Mena: Sure.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: That you have to spend, especially to keep the restaurant space afloat. It's sometimes a deterrent. If you have the means and the amenities do that, that's great. A lot of people don't have the means and amenities to do that, so we want to have it as an incentive, but not a requirement.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I don't want -- like for example, you have a resident who is bringing a guest from -- who's not a resident, that may be even a family member who's not a resident, I don't think that person should have to pay a guest fee. I mean, if they're going to use the gym or something, fine, I understand that, but I'm talking about...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: But no, not for the public amenities.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: No.



Vice Mayor Mena: But you also want to monetize the visit and there has to be a reason for the visit, and I don't see what the reason is for the visit right now, unless there is that added food and beverage option...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Mena: Other than golf, tennis, and gym. So, that's a component and I think -- that's why, again, not to belabor the point on the -- how you utilize the different spaces, I think that's a component that's missing that you need in...

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: It's a food and beverage...

Vice Mayor Mena: Having to work through it.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: From what we've heard it's not...

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, we've had that same discussion internally, exactly that same discussion internally. The issue that we have is that we're not getting that 5 million injection right now, so we're working towards that, but we have -- we've had this discussion because I've been to the old country club as a -- for lunch when it was a country club. And we need to kind of restore that. The only thing is that we -- there's a lot of work to be done there, and that's part of our five-year plan. But we are not getting a \$5 million, \$6 million injection right now.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: If the Mayor is okay and everyone, I think it's a perfect time. I know you mentioned activating the pool area for food, but if you don't mind, Mayor, have Mayor Thomson speak because I think if anyone in this room or anyone in the city can actually share with

us their experience as to what the country club was and what the country club can be again, I believe it's Mayor Thomson. And Mayor, if that's...

Mayor Lago: Of course, please. It'd be a privilege to have her speak. Mayor, thank you for being with us as always. The floor is yours. Thank you.

Dorothy Thomson: Thank you very much. I will remove my mask, providing I don't lose another hearing enhancement in doing so, which you all have done one way or another, I guess, glasses and earrings and so forth. Anyway, it's been a very exciting and very instructional type of presentation, but I'm not surprised because that's what Coral Gables is noted for, doing things very thoroughly and all. And it's very nostalgic watching some of the photos in the presentation at the outset. Of course, I don't remember that far back, but I must say that well, you know, many women or many people don't want their ages to be known, but when you're in politics, you know, you can't keep -- hold that back. And as a matter of fact, every time it appears over and over and over again during the years, people follow your age, mention your name, and then your name and age with -- for whatever reason. So, I'll say that I am -- this is -- this year is my 90th year, and so I remember a lot of things that I've seen on the screen this morning. And I think about it, the City of Coral Gables is only seven years older than I am, and that's something. George Volsky is the only one that has me beat, or maybe I'll catch up one of these days, one of the years. Anyway, I'd like to lend to you some of my experiences with the country club of Coral Gables because it was always such a very important part of our lives, everyone here in Coral Gables. It was so familiar to us all. And we would look forward to all kinds of events, and it was event after -- upon event, upon event. And I know the Parks and Rec under Fred and his cohort -- able cohort here will think it all through. But the neighborhood was quite used to a lot of activity there because there was a lot of activity. I know we have a Youth Center, and we had the Venetian Pool was a lot of more noise and children, outward -- you know, very active activities and all. I would think that activities involving the country club would be more -- a little bit more passive and a little more quiet and respect for the neighborhood itself there. But I don't know what kind of program they will come up with, but I have no doubt that our city will come up with the one that will be very, very acceptable, and

enjoyable to all of us. It was the heart of our city. Everything we did, every event was centered at the Coral Gables Country Club at the Club of Coral Gables. It doesn't make any difference, but -- and whenever I -- and it closed suddenly to the residents and to the community. And ever since, whereas before, it was always a place where you drive by and think of something that was coming up, or something you just attended, it was always a nice feeling, but it's been cold, absolutely cold. Every time you drive by it now to me, and I know from a lot of other people too, because we lost our -- any kind of a contact with it. There is nothing we do with the exception of the City's board and committees' reception, you know, appreciation thing that we had up until COVID hit. But other than that, unless you had a big event that you were going to go to, a wedding, a catering event, or some sort, you never went there again, and it was so sad. It was like we had abandoned it, but really it had abandoned us. And that's a sad thing I see that's going to now be turned around. It has to be turned around because it's something that you're going to increase the wonder of living in Coral Gables. And I know we have a senior center, a senior citizen center, but it's hidden away, and it has a different program to it. We go to it for a class, or you go for a particular reason. But the country club was always a place where people went to socialize. And it's very important, as we've learned during this whole pandemic, how important it is to interact and to socialize with others. It just doesn't happen otherwise. We used to have so many senior citizens. We have a lot of senior citizens in Coral Gables, and we have a lot of senior citizens that are, you know, in proximity to the City. We have a lot of widows. We have a lot of widowers, and we have a lot of couples, older couples, and there's no place to go. They're not going to go to the Venetian pool to congregate. You're not going to go I know to the Youth Center to congregate. It's a different type of a situation altogether. And again, the senior citizen center is another reason for people to go there, but not to socialize per Southeast. So, you're at -- you're providing a haven for a segment of this population that none of you fall into yet, but you will. If you're lucky, you'll fall into that. And it's a place to go, which was safe and accessible, and it was easily accessible with the parking lot there at all. And it's one of its kind. And I'm so happy to see that you're on the right pathway. And I give a special accommodation to you, Mr. Menendez for leading, you know, the charge, if you will, here, and the -- and I and former Vice Mayor Kerdyk, you know, we believe the same thing as you, and we had a very nice letter that appeared in the newspaper now to that effect. I

hope that we will continue on with this. I remember -- some of the things I don't. Like I said, I wasn't old enough to remember the very, very beginning at the country club, of course, but the first times I remember is from 1953 when I first came here to Coral Gables from upstate New York where I lived. We would always go to all kinds of events, put on evening gowns. We'd have wonderful friendship going on, wonderful dinners. I remember one time that Rudy Valley wandered through the country club. You all know Rudy Valley; some of you do. You don't? Oh well. And we had big bands sometimes, like Guy Lombardo played there one time. Guy Lombardo? Yes, yes?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Ms. Thomson: Maybe, huh? Well, anyway, it was a place that was known not only in the community, but it was known nationwide, renowned. The country club was that beautiful. I remember the fire that occurred and incinerated at the west end of the country club, and that was like, I believe, July of maybe 1982. I remember the morning because it happened overnight, and I remember the morning hearing about it. And I was on the Commission at the time, and we were very, very concerned about whether it was a viable thing. I also remember a picture they had inside the country club, the statue of a horse, a white horse, I remember it. And after the fire occurred, the white horse remained. Everything west of the white horse was gone, it was all cinders, but the white horse remained. Maybe that was a good sign. Maybe there could be a name for it of some sort, the horse, the white horse. I don't know. I'm just thinking about that off the top of my head and be silly. But nevertheless, these things did occur. We've had dances. We had fun. And as a place, it's a haven for a segment of the population, and it's very important that you all will eventually reach and know how important it is that it's difficult to get you to go to a restaurant or other place in any city, including Coral Gables and get out of the car and try to make your way to the front door of that place and all. And there it was so simple. Drive in, get out, walk in and you were safe, safe Coral Gables. So, I think that I applaud you all for moving ahead on this. At the outset of the meeting, I understood that the Mayor has a problem with your back.

I hadn't seen you stand up and I thought maybe you'd stand up like in respect for my age or something, and I would understand it then. But luckily you seem to be okay.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Ms. Thomson: And that's good. Alright, well -- and you're not even anywhere near the age to have a problem with your back yet. Okay, anyway, Commissioner Menendez, thank you again for inviting me to speak today. I always like to say something that I think from my heart, and that is, I think this is a very collegial Commission. You may disagree with yourselves once in a while, but it's even hard -- that's hard to detect. You're very --- it's a wonderful Commission. Very, very polite, very nice. And I really, really think that -- including with my years in hours (INAUDIBLE), you are by far the best, okay. I mean it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for your insight and your guidance as always. We're grateful for that. And you're correct, we're blessed to have a great Commission that respects each other even in disagreement.

Ms. Thomson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: So, thank you for being here. Thank you so much.

Ms. Thomson: Thank you again.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: So, I think we've all discussed -- we've all -- we heard from the Mayor. I think that we're all aligned on what we're looking for in regards to the country club.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I just...

Mayor Lago: I think that we have a very...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I just need an approval on the resolution to start the process.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor and Commissioners, this provides us with the flexibility we need in hiring and the competitive bid process to start the -- to start as soon as possible.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll make a motion.

Mayor Lago: Anyone second it?

Commissioner Anderson: I'll second it.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Before we adjourn, I just want to talk about this issue. One more thing I want to make sure and put it on the record. For individuals -- because we're all going to get notified, and I want to make sure that my colleagues on the Commission can refer back. Please watch the Commission meeting. If you have a membership to the gym, the membership will continue, correct?

City Manager Iglesias: The memberships all expire at the end, on April 30, so we'll be starting anew.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Just to clarify, we were notified that they had actually terminated all their memberships through the end of this month, March.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: So, of course, there will be a month between the transition where there are no memberships before we can even come in and continue. And just as a disclosure, a lot of the members there are also nonresidents, so that's just something to consider because right now there was no differentiation between resident and nonresident. But we're looking to have a seamless transition to make sure that those members can continue with their membership.

Mayor Lago: So that's the key you just mentioned, a seamless transition. My main and our main priority are the residents. So again, if there's a thousand or fifteen hundred memberships to the gym and we can't fill it up with residents, perfect, then open it up to nonresidents at maybe a higher amount so we can subsidize the resident fee. And again, that's what we're talking about in Venetian Pool, in the Granada Golf Course, and that's something that I've told the Manager. When two

people in a week tell me that are nonresidents that they love the Granada Golf Course, not only because it's a beautiful course, but wow because I pay \$27, that's a sign that it's way too cheap, way too cheap.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I like to focus on it being a beautiful golf course.

Mayor Lago: Yes, but I also want to focus on...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: I also want to focus on the fact that we are making money on the golf course and -- because costs are only going up, as you've seen.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Absolutely correct.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: You are correct.

Mayor Lago: Across the board. So, I would like at the next Commission meeting -- and I've asked this -- I think I asked this at the last Commission meeting, and it was supposed to be on this Commission agenda -- I would like Mr. Clerk...

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: On the next agenda, I would like a report in regards to what are the costs associated with golfing at Granada for nonresidents and for residents. And I would like the same report for Venetian Pool, and any other City establishment that deals with residents and nonresidents; adult activity center, anything that -- I would like to see a graph telling me what the cost is for residents



and for nonresidents, and I would like to have that presented at the next Commission meeting, please.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Just to answer you already now, our traditional structure is 25 percent with exception to the golf course and the Venetian Pool, but everywhere else is a 25 percent normal differentiation.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We did also present it as part of the fee amendment, so there's actually a chart already that has our five-year plan that we brought to the Commission.

Mayor Lago: But I want to see it explained at the next Commission meeting.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Absolutely.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Okay, so -- because we're all going to get calls from members of the gym. So, memberships are terminated at the end of this month, then the City's going to pick back up in...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: When we're allowed to...

Mayor Lago: In March?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Go in.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, no.

City Manager Iglesias: Need to discuss.

Mayor Lago: Okay, well, I want to make sure that we do things in a way where, you know, people are not turned off.

City Manager Iglesias: That's our intent, but we -- I think we need to look at that a little closer right now.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: I'd like to, you know, have clear information so that when residents contact us to know how the seamless transition's going to happen, when does it pick up?

Mayor Lago: And the issue too is that, for example, we're already getting calls -- for example, the Camillus House event -- to discuss whether there's going to be enough employees in the facility for everything to be seamless in April. And I want to make sure that everything is very, very clear.

City Manager Iglesias: We will discuss that at the March meeting. We just needed a little bit of time to...

Mayor Lago: That's fine.

City Manager Iglesias: Work things out right now.

Mayor Lago: No problem. Yeah, we have all the time in the world, but I just want to make sure that we don't skip a beat on that, and I know that we have the best staff to do that.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: And just to share with you, we've gotten phone calls, not just from residents, but also people who do business with the current company, including a temp agency that staffs all the staff there, so we're just picking up layers after layers of information.

Commissioner Fors: Yeah, you know, what you might want to do for the residents is say to call the current operators and ask them how seamless it's going to be.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: I think that's great.

Mayor Lago: That's a great point. That's a great point, Commissioner. Staff, thank you. Great work on the presentation. It was very impressive, and we're looking forward to a new day at the country club. I think we're going to see something very, very special soon. Does anybody else have anything they'd like to say?

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, I...

Vice Mayor Mena: You guys -- I just had one final question on that before you guys go. Do you have like their membership roll, like with contact information of all the current members? You don't?

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: What we've seen though is I think they're going to come to us naturally because they already are.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Because we do not.

Vice Mayor Mena: Why don't we have that?

City Attorney Ramos: There was something attached to the settlement agreement -- I'm looking at it right now -- and I think it was at least the memberships then.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: It appears not to be complete. I'm not sure why.

Commissioner Anderson: Could be.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is there -- do we have all of their records? Why not?

Mayor Lago: Is the audit finalized?

City Manager Iglesias: We're having issues, Mayor, that we're trying to resolve. We may have to resolve them. I would like to really not get to that point right now if possible.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Then we'll discuss it, I guess, in March.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay, but...

City Manager Iglesias: We can discuss privately.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's fine. Like we're entitled to those records, and I'm not surprised, but I'm troubled that we don't have them, and we should get them.

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Vester: Well, we were also just surprised that the entire tennis membership doesn't even fall under that structure and those members hadn't been accounted for in any of the reports, and that falls under a separate company that leases that space, so...

Mayor Lago: This is what we're seeing in regards to the audit and the lack of transparency. And I don't want to speak for the Manager or for staff, but I think that we're going to find a lot of buried bodies when everything -- when the dust settles. So, you have your work cut out for you.

Commissioner Anderson: You do.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We'll work with the Attorney to get the information...

Mayor Lago: You have your work cut out for you and...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That we can get.

Mayor Lago: We'll discuss this in March once the Manager and the attorneys have a little bit more time on their hands to iron this out.

City Manager Iglesias: The City Attorney and I are working very closely on this, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: No, I know you are. But like in the words of the Vice Mayor, it's disappointing. And I'm trying to show a little bit of restraint right now because there was a whole dog and pony show that was put out there. People were called -- there was a call for a recall, and there was papers that were put throughout the neighborhood in regards to a recall effort, and we're asking for information that is -- should be provided as per our contract. And for some reason, we're not being provided that information, so...

Vice Mayor Mena: And whatever other contractual remedies we have, you know, I don't know what they are, but you know, we need to exercise them because, again, we have a right to this information.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: I mean, this is -- we shouldn't -- it's going to be hard enough to have a transition. It shouldn't be harder than it needs to be because of people acting a certain way. And so, you know, I guess we'll get a briefing. I don't want to wait till March 8th, so Mr. Manager, through the Mayor, if you could, please, sooner than later, brief all of us and where that stands. You know, I just -- I don't want to wait until March 8 because the thing is coming. I mean, the...

Mayor Lago: We may have -- I mean, listen, I leave it up to the attorneys, but I mean, to the Vice Mayor's point, we may have to take legal action at the end of the day.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, I plan on doing that. Yes, Mayor. We plan on briefing you all and -- as to where we're at and where we're going.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: And I also want to point out that this was a conceptual plan. We did take in some information, and I got -- you know, that we'll look at, you know, the alterations that we need to make to see...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: What your vision is.

Mayor Lago: This is a...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We understand.

Mayor Lago: This is a moving target.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Mena: Listen, Phase I...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is triage really.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: It is get it...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We got to get opened and we got to (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Mena: Get the transition, get it...

Mayor Lago: Get it open.

Vice Mayor Mena: Flowing, and then beyond that, we're going to have to have -- you know, and I would recommend having some sort of like -- we've done it with other parks and things like that, having like a visioning session with residents of -- to brainstorm ideas, not necessarily go to them with, "This is what we're going to do..."

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: But have them engaged in that process because I think you'd be surprised sometimes what people are amenable to and not when you get into those sessions.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right, absolutely. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Great work.

DRAFT