

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-7
June 8, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Mayor's Assistant, Chelsea Granell

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-7 [1:17 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission establishing the Cavaliers Future Leaders Program, a summer internship program designed to introduce rising juniors and seniors of Coral Gables Senior School to the inner workings of local government.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

Mayor Lago: Kirk, do you want to take G-7 and discuss your item?

Commissioner Menendez: Sure. My item – historical perspective, Coral Gables Senior High School and the City of Coral Gables, they've enjoyed a history of 75 years together, common history quite honestly. They've shared achievements, they've shared a common support of the community. Quite honestly, a great majority of Coral Gables residents are Gables High alums. I for one, Class of 1980, I think Commissioner Anderson has family members also; and unfortunately, I'd say the last ten years or so, the relationship between the two institutions has not been as strong, they sort of drifted apart. And Coral Gables Senior High School is our only public high school in the city, and through those halls of the high school we've had kids that grew up to

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be astronauts, to be U.S. Attorney Generals, and they've been the pride of our community. And I spoke to Principal Ullivarri recently, with Darryl Payne of the Friends of Gables High, and actually friends of mine in the community who are also Gables Alums like the Kerdyk family, and what I'm proposing is a program which I call Cavaliers Future Leaders Program. And basically, it would be five students, rising juniors and seniors, geared towards kids that are ready to take that next step to college and give them a hands-on behind the scenes look of what quite honestly what a Commissioner, a newly elected official, goes through. When Commissioner Anderson and I came on board, the administration basically took us by the hand and explained the inner workings of government. So, the idea is to have these young people sit on Commission briefings with the Commissioners, agenda briefings, be part of the budget workshop, sit down with Commissioners and the administration, go through the list of Capital Improvement Projects. Also work, when we were talking about our state and federal legislative priorities, to have them sit down and be part of that discussion and preparing that list. We are fortunate, a lot of us are fortunate to have grown up with family and friends that had generational successes, that your parents, your grandparents got into college or got into good schools, but there are a lot of kids out there that don't have that roadmap, because of just circumstances, be it family, be it whatever you want to call it, and this idea is to let these kids see behind the curtain, and you'd be amazed. I had a young man, Inaki is his name, help me during my campaign. I invited him to the UM Debate, or the Forum and he walked away from that experience surrounded by so many impressive civic leaders with his eyes open. Two months later, I got him involved organizing getting the word out. He grew up before my very eyes, and this program is to give those kids, open their eyes to see the possibilities, the future, the options that they have, because a lot of kids don't know what the options are in the future. So how can you set goals, how can you set dreams if you don't know what the choices are. So, besides the work with the Commissioners, the Chamber of Commerce with Mark Trowbridge, they've agreed to also host these young people, these students, at a Board of Directors meeting and at a luncheon as their guest so that they can meet and forge relationships with our business leaders, that eventually opens doors for these kids. And most importantly, at the end of the summer, the city will provide a letter of recommendation on official city letterhead, signed by the Mayor that these young people can submit as part of their college application, part of their file when they are taken under consideration, whichever college or university they apply. In addition, they'll be a scholarship check of \$500.00 for each student for having participated which I've committed, my family and I, to personally fund the first three years of the program, which would be basically five students each of the first three years and \$2,500 a year my family and I are committed, pledged to fund it until we come up with other funding sources in the future, but there are kids out there that don't have options and we have the ability, the power, to empower these kids and hopefully one day become future leaders in our own community. And somebody said to me, well one day they'll be back here in the City Manager's office, but quite honestly, when you are looking for a job in the private sector, if you have any government experience or any government contacts, you are highly regarded. So just the fact that these kids can see what its like to be a Commissioner and to say that I've met with the Chamber of Commerce business leaders, that goes a long way of helping these kids move to the next level. So that's what the program's about, like I said, the Cavaliere Nation, as they like to call themselves are totally behind it. They are very excited, and its also a way of bringing the two institutions back together the way it was and the way it should always be.

Mayor Lago: Anybody else have any comments?

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Commissioner Fors: What's the duration of the Page Program and what is the duration of the Cavalier Future Leaders Program? In other words, is it all summer long?

Mayor Lago: That's one of the things that we worked on with the Page Program, it was about two weeks, the first time that we did it and we wanted to now extend it, because it was a lot of kids that applied, but we didn't have positions and certain of the kids they wanted it to be longer, so they could try to get into different departments and experience it. That's why I mentioned, there is a lot of synergy in between what we did in 2019, which we weren't able to do last year as a result of Covid, and what we are going to do this year, and along with what's being proposed by Commissioner Menendez. Again, I'm open – there should be always opportunities, as many opportunities as possible, so I'll do whatever you guys are interested in doing.

Commissioner Menendez: With regard to what I'm proposing to tie in our high school, our public high school, and speaking with the Principal and Darryl Payne and actually Mary Snow, the Coral Gables Community Foundation. We were thinking of scheduling their program on a week-by-week basis, sort of like our schedules, our agenda schedules, in terms of we have meetings, we have Commission workshops, so the overall concept of the Cavaliers Future Leaders Program, they wouldn't have to be here 9 to 5, because actually if you're here 9 to 5, you know say 4 or 5 days a week, sometimes there are down periods, and I think its important for young people to take advantage of the summer. So, it would be a balance, because quite honestly when you get to be our age, we don't quite have the summers like young people can and should have. So, it would be a balance, but be more than anything item by item, meeting by meeting and give them some flexibility, but whatever they do make it worth their while.

Vice Mayor Mena: I was going to ask, and I apologize if Chelsea mentioned this, but on the Page Program is that like an age range?

Mayor Lago: Well, we try to get as many kids in high school as possible.

Vice Mayor Mena: I wasn't sure if it was like middle school or high school.

Mayor Lago: High school.

Commissioner Fors: 15 to 18, right?

Mayor Lago: Yes, 15 to 18. We had 9 the first year, a lot more applied and we've been getting a lot of attention from people who have been sending us resumes and obviously, losing last year was very difficult, but it was something, again, these kids got a lot out of it, so we are hoping to expand it. What do you want to do Commissioner? You want to have two separate...

Commissioner Menendez: I pledge to work with you, Mayor, Chelsea, and see how we can share ideas and resources. Like I said, this basically is in large part, because of the need to bring the two institutions together, considering we have so many residents that are Gables Grads. When we have a strong school system within the city, it's a great reflection on us and I think it's a great way to

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bring the residents, the city, and the school together, but I'd be more than happy, I ask that the board take this up on a vote and after the vote I'm here to share ideas on how to make both programs the best possible, and if we can share resources, by all means, the bigger the better, that's the way to go.

Mayor Lago: Will anybody make a motion?

Commissioner Fors: Sure. I feel that there is a way to reconcile them. Maybe make Cavalier Future Leaders Program a type of Page, etc. Like I said, like Mayor Lago said, the more kids we can give a shot to is better. I'm not opposed to doing both, I'd love to see if it can be merged in some way, but at the end of the day can't do much wrong when you are just giving more kids more opportunities. And I do understand the concept or the idea behind creating a special opportunity for Coral Gables students only, to foster that synergy. I understand that idea.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Anderson: Just add one more question, because one is a high school program and the other one is a Page Program, it begins during the summertime. To me, it seems like the high school program would run during the school year.

Mayor Lago: Its also a summer internship.

Commissioner Anderson: Just summer.

Commissioner Menendez: Summer, right. And in talking with the Principal at Gables High, they said a lot of kids, and most likely this would be seniors at the end of the day, geared toward seniors going into the senior year, he explained a lot of them do early admission, early decision. So, by October they are already submitting their applications to college. So, if they could go through this program and get that letter of recommendation signed by our Mayor, that goes a long way. They thought it would help these students greatly in getting into the college of their dreams. So, it would be a summer program and hopefully timed where it completes and they get their certificate and they get their letter in time to apply to early admission, early decision in college.

Commissioner Anderson: So other than the scholarship money, how is this different than the Page Program.

Commissioner Menendez: Well, the way I wrote it up – I was inspired by your experience and my experience on how we got to see things that perhaps the community or public doesn't quite see on how we get to decisions and how items are discussed and vetted, and I thought it would be very valuable, helpful for young people to see that early on in their lives, so I geared it towards that kind of experience. Its not a 9 to 5 job, its more of an opportunity-to-opportunity experience to see it. And then of course, getting that letting going into the senior year goes a long way, because a lot of kids have their summer jobs, which are phenomenal and they are making money and they are being part of the community, but this I think will catapult a lot of these kids and based on the

conversation with the Gables High Principal, they were thrilled, because they thought this was a gamechanger for a lot of kids.

City Attorney Ramos: Another distinction is the Page Program is open to all students in Miami-Dade County and this one is only Gables.

Commissioner Menendez: And its our only public high school.

Commissioner Anderson: I think, like the Page Program, if they could write a report at the end or make suggestions to the Commission then it bolsters that qualifications.

Commissioner Menendez: In the way its written, it allows the City Manager and his staff to make whatever modifications going forward in the program, to make it even better.

Ms. Granell: If I may, one of the suggestions as I was listening to everybody speak, that we can do is create an application for the Page Program and a separate application, so you would have two applications, like a subset, so if you are a Coral Gables High School student and you would like to apply to the Cavaliers Leaders Program, you would select that category and go under that track and it would be the same requirements but that could be an easy fix to the conversation.

Commissioner Fors: And obviously for the Cavalier Future Leaders you have to be a student.

Ms. Granell: Coral Gables High School student, right. So, one would be general, the other one would be tracked.

Commissioner Menendez: And this program, in the legislation itself or at least in the cover memo at some point, the idea is also to engage the alumni association and helping the process of reviewing or providing the materials to the city, in terms to make the final decision, but also engage the City's School Community Board, as well, because I think its right down their alley and maybe we could just have them also be part of the overall be part of helping young people get those opportunities, Page and the Cavaliers. It would be nice to engage those groups, along the way, but I leave that to the administration to figure out.

Ms. Granell: This would be for 2022.

Commissioner Menendez: 2022.

Ms. Granell: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: The Cavalier one would be for next summer.

Vice Mayor Mena: Why don't we approve it and then figure out if there is a way to – sounds like what people are saying is maybe there is a way for the Cavaliers Future Leaders Program to sort of be dedicated seats, if you will, within the broader Page Program.

Commissioner Menendez: And I'm fine with that.

Vice Mayor Mena: But the point is, if there is a will to do it why don't we move forward and then maybe staff can come back before next summer, obviously and come up with a way to meld the two together, it probably makes a lot of sense.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll move it.

Mayor Lago: Can we get a second.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's your thing.

Commissioner Anderson: You're going to second it.

Commissioner Menendez: We'll flip – I'll move, you'll second.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay, I'll second.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)