

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-4
December 10, 2024
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
City Planner, Jennifer Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Dorothy Thomson
Felix Pardo
Maria Cruz
Maria Longo
Zully Pardo
Karelia Carbonell
Dariel Gonzalez

Agenda Item E-4 [10:37 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, “Architecture,” Section 5-200, “Mediterranean Standards;” Article 3, “Uses,” Section 3-402, “Restrictions related to location;” and Article 16, “Definitions;” to enhance the quality of Coral Gables

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Agenda Item E-4 - Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code to enhance the quality of Coral Gables Mediterranean design by requiring a conceptual design review; removing duplicative criteria; relocating inapplicable standards; supplementing existing criteria; and including additional Mediterranean building examples.

Mediterranean design by requiring a conceptual design review; removing duplicative criteria; relocating inapplicable standards; supplementing existing criteria; and including additional Mediterranean building examples; providing for severability, repealer, codification, and for an effective date. (09 26 24 PZB continued, Vote 5-0; 09 11 24 PZB deferred, Vote 7-0; 08 14 24 PZB continued, Vote 6-0; 07 10 24 PZB deferred, Vote 5-0; 06 12 24 PZB deferred, Vote 6-1) (10 29 24 PZB approved the proposed legislation, as amended, Vote: 6-1) (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: Now moving on to Item E-4, which is time certain for 10 am. And like I mentioned, thank you for Mayor Thomson being here with us, along with Felix Pardo from the Planning and Zoning Board and other esteemed members of the community who are here in regards to this issue. Madam Vice Mayor, do you mind running the meeting just for a few minutes? One second, I have to step out to go to the bathroom.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Certainly, certainly.

City Attorney Suárez: Vice Mayor, if you will allow me to read the item into the record.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Absolutely.

Commissioner Fernandez: Madam Vice Mayor, can we just take two minutes...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Fernandez: To use the restroom? That way everybody...

Vice Mayor Anderson: That way everybody's...

Commissioner Fernandez: Can start fresh.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah. Anybody else need to use the restroom? It's a good time to do it.

Commissioner Fernandez: All right.

[Later...]

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, Item E-4, time certain, 10 a.m.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you, Mayor. And the item needs to be read into the record.

City Attorney Suárez: E-4 is an ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, "Architecture," Section 5-200, "Mediterranean Standards;" Article 3, "Uses," Section 3-402, "Restrictions related to location;" and Article 16, "Definitions;" to enhance the quality of Coral Gables Mediterranean design by requiring a conceptual design review; removing duplicative criteria; relocating inapplicable standards; supplementing existing criteria; and including additional Mediterranean building examples; providing for severability, repealer, codification, and for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes. I've provided a memo to each one of you, but I would like to give the opportunity for staff to do their presentation and then I'll -- I have some speakers here as well that would like to speak on the issue, okay?

City Planner Garcia: Perfect. Thank you. I have a PowerPoint. Can you hear me okay? Good. (INAUDIBLE). I'll go through the history. I'll go through what's currently allowed and how the Med Bonus works today, and then also, we'll go through the proposed revisions. So, if I can have that PowerPoint, please. So, it's good to be back. As you remember, we were here -- oh, not here, but we were at the City Commission discussion last November, so we discussed the Med Bonus and changes that need to happen with the same Commission just this last year. It's been a long journey since then. So, since then, we've been able to work with the Board of Architects, basically line by line, of each of those criteria, each of those criteria that gives them the tools and the teeth to be able to review these projects and make sure that they look like the Mediterranean design. So, that started back in October of last year, 2023. We had a few meetings with the Board of Architects, again, to go through each of those -- each of those levels and each of those tables to see what they need to be able to do their job more efficiently and better. Again, we came back to the City Commission in November and December of last year. We were able to review that with staff line by line, with Legal, with other -- with the City Architect, of course, and be able to make sure that what is proposed really is substantially legal and also what the Board of Architects and the City Architect needs to be able to make those projects look better. So, then we went to the Planning and Zoning Board a few times as far as discussion, as far as getting their input and their feedback. And this is above and beyond what we usually do for any kind of text amendment. As you know, the text amendment process is Planning and Zoning Board recommendation and then the City Commission for first and second reading. But this was a little more substantial. This is basically giving the tools that the BOA needs, the Board of Architects needs to be able to do their job, to be able to make sure that these buildings are of high quality so that they deserve that kind of -- that kind of bonus or that kind of incentive. So, again, we went to the Board of Architects

and Planning and Zoning throughout this last year. You can see all the meetings that we had up there on the board. And then at the last meeting in October of 2024, they recommended approval of what's before you today. And just as a little bit of recap, as you know, Mediterranean architecture has been part of our City since the get-go, since the 1920s, since the original warranty deed. George Merrick and his team of architects required that all buildings that were not in our thematic villages, that were 15 to 20 villages, the Chinese Village, the Dutch South African Village, all the buildings in Coral Gables need to be of Spanish, Venetian, Moorish, Italian, or other harmonious types of architecture. So, it's been part of our DNA in Coral Gables for a very, very long time. And that's eventually incorporated into the first Zoning Code in 1930 to require all buildings to be of Spanish style. And then, as a mid-century architecture, especially a short burst of development in the 1970s, there was a strong concern that Coral Gables was losing its character. There were a lot of buildings that were built along, specifically on a Alhambra Circle, and in our downtown that did not resemble that Coral Gables look. So, in 1986, there was the first ordinance for Mediterranean incentives was adopted by the Commission at the time. We here today have the original Mayor Dorothy Thomson here. So, it's a privilege to be able to talk about this history with her sitting right behind me. So, that was basically the areas of applicability that would apply to was the CBD, the Central Business District, and the North Ponce area. That was the first part of the City that they wanted to test this to make sure that we have that Mediterranean architecture in this area in 1986. And they expanded a year later to include the southern part of downtown and also the Biltmore Way Section. And in the early '90s, they expanded it to be citywide. So, today we have areas in our city that's actually mandate Mediterranean Design. And that's in our former industrial district, what we know now as the Design Innovation District, the Giralda Plaza, the North Ponce area, the RIR, and then MF4 and MF3 zoning districts in our city. All right, so to go back to this. So, what's before you today, if I can go back. Thank you. So, just explain, what's before you today is not just the Med Bonus, it's not just for bonus -- for buildings that want to have additional height or additional FAR. It's also for these areas of our city that mandate Mediterranean style. So, they may not even get bonuses. They may not get extra incentives, but they're actually mandated to use this style of architecture. So, what's before you today is not just applying to bonus buildings, but also to these areas of our city that mandate this design. And the Mediterranean Ordinance has been amended many times since 1986, this first ordinance. It's been amended -- some of them are extended amendments, some of them are just tweaking the language a little bit. And the most recent amendment was actually due from the recommendations of our Blue Ribbon Committee that was formed in 1921 -- sorry, in 2021. And that was adopted a year later in 2022, and that required Mediterranean style for Level 1, which would be obvious, but apparently that was changed in the early 2000s, and also provide for optional conceptual review of buildings. So, the current standards today, if you can see, so what's in green is basically your by right. This is for the heights that you're allowed to have. And if you get Level 1, you get an additional one story. No matter the zoning district, you get one additional story. And then for Level 2, you get additional -- another additional story or additional two stories if you're a high rise or MX3, or if you're MF4 north of Biltmore Way. And then the FAR is also dependent on Level 1 and Level 2. So, your base FAR, for example, in our mixed-use districts is 3.0. So, with Level 1, you get a 0.2 FAR, and then with additional Level 2, you get an additional 0.3 for a

maximum of 0.5 FAR, no matter if it's residential or if it's mixed-use district. And I'm saying this because none of this is changing. We're keeping the same -- the same incentives for property owners, for developers to be able to take advantage of this, to be able to design in the Mediterranean style. But the issue, the concern we've seen is that the buildings that we see being built most recently are not really passing the straight-face test of Mediterranean look. So, what we're doing today is looking at the actual criteria. So, today, Table 1 consists of 14 criteria. And Table 1, like I said, will get you one additional story or 0.2 FAR. If you look very closely at what this criteria is, a lot of it is either very common in architecture, as -- you know, far as architecture relief elements at street level, you know, those are doors, windows facing the street, and some are not even related to architecture, such as bicycle storage, structural soil, street lighting. They're not really related to architecture or specifically about Mediterranean design. And then Table 2 is the other level of bonus, which again is an additional two stories if you're high-rise or MF4 north of Biltmore Way, or just one story for all our districts, and then a.3 FAR. And then Table 3 right now is not additional level of bonus, it's just a development option. So, here you'll find some odd things like setback reductions and encroachments into the right-of-way that are options for Mediterranean Bonus buildings to take advantage of. So, then just to explain, so as of right would be that gray, right now, four stories, right? And then the Level 1 Bonus and Level 2 Bonus on top of that. Level 1 Bonus would be to make all those checklist items I just went through, which includes, like I said, structural soil, bicycle parking, things that are not really related to architecture or even Mediterranean style. And then Level 2, they have to fill 6 of 12 or 8 of 12, depending on the zoning district. And then also right now in our Zoning Code we have eight buildings that we should all recognize. The Douglas Entrance, the Coral Gables Elementary School, City Hall, Colonnade Building, the Fink Building, the Granada Shops, which unfortunately is demolished, San Sebastian Apartments, and the Biltmore Hotel. And you'll notice that a lot of these buildings, as beautiful as they are and ornate as they are, only one of them is taller than three stories. And as you can imagine, it's kind of limiting for an architect to be able to use these precedents when they're building a building that is more substantial height, six stories, eight stories, 12 stories, 16 stories, and it's difficult for them to use these precedents on such a large-scale building. So, the purpose of this revision is basically to implement the purpose that's already in the Med Bonus, which is to create incentives and encourage Mediterranean architecture style. So, as you may remember, 1922, Allen Morris building on Ponce and University was a very different look of a building, and it wasn't well received by the residents. And then they went back and they revised the design, and then the residents came pouring to the Commission meeting asking to approve the building. And the request was not that much different, the height, the FAR, the number of units was not that much different from the original 2022, which is the last revision of the 2022 proposed building, but the architecture was substantially different. And it seemed to be that the residents were really looking for a higher quality building. So, this is a summary of what's before you today. It's revising and strengthening that intent and purpose of the gain of the Med Bonus section of the code. It's also removing some of that criteria that's already been copied and pasted in the underlying zoning that's not related to Mediterranean design, it's just related to good architecture in general. It's also relocating some of the current criteria into more appropriate parts of our Zoning Code that deal with streets, that deal with driveways, that deal with certain streets that have

porte-cochères. It's moving that to the more appropriate parts of our code. You can see that notated in your draft ordinance with brackets to kind of explain why some of the criteria has been stricken through. And then it's also requiring a conceptual review by the Board of Architects. Now as you remember, the most recent change to the Med Bonus was not just the Mediterranean style, but also an optional conceptual review. Well, the Board of Architects thought this was a great idea. It's working really well with the proposed buildings. They're able to basically design and review it better before it's already cooked, what they call it. It's already been thought out and really well designed. They're able to get into the design much earlier in the design phase. So, this is going to be required for any Mediterranean design building to be required to go through a conceptual review by the Board of Architects. And then it's also requiring 12 prerequisites. Prerequisites do not give you any kind of bonus. It's just basically allowing you to enter into the bonus program. So, it's an additional set of regulations and it includes great things like contextual analysis and proportions and building scale and things that architects should probably know by rule of thumb. But it's there for them to be able to do all of the analysis and add studies before entering into the program at Level 1, Level 2 bonuses. And then a lot of the provisions that are in these levels are taken from the Mediterranean Village PAD Architecture Standards, which is basically what made the Plaza. Not the scale of the Plaza, not the height, not the massing, but the architectural design, the skinning of the Plaza, as far as the materials, the portions, the height, the glazing, all of those kinds of provisions are incorporated into what's before you today. And then also, probably very, very important, is expansion of the precedence list, the example buildings, the architects can use to create their designs. So, this is showing pages from the Zoning Code update that were some of those -- some of those criteria was copied and pasted from the Med Bonus with the thought that we would eventually update the Med Bonus standards of our code and relocating those into the underlying zoning districts. And this is also just showing in your proposed draft where we're going to be relocating those leftover standards that don't really deal with architecture, especially Mediterranean, and putting those into the more appropriate parts of our Zoning Code. And then these are illustrations from our Mediterranean Village PAD that shows proportions, that show repetition of windows, that shows massing, explains how to -- based on these precedents we have in our Zoning Code, the hotel -- sorry, Biltmore Hotel, the City Hall, the Fink building, and showing how those architects use proportion analysis to be able to make these beautiful buildings in the 1920s. So, again, currently we have eight buildings. What's before you today is proposing to remove San Sebastian Apartments and also the Granada Shops, just because we don't have a lot of drawings for actually either of those. And then replacing them with a series of new buildings. This slide is showing buildings by founding architects. Founding architects meaning George Merrick's small group of architects that helped basically create and give that brand to Coral Gables. So, you recognize names such as Phineas Paist, Martin Hampton, George Fink, and we took those buildings that are local, some of them not so local, some of them are in Hollywood, some of them are in Tampa, but those founding architects that did other Mediterranean buildings throughout Florida and putting them into our code to be precedents for architects to use. And the other local examples that are not by our founding architects, such as the office building that's on Ponce, the Comber Hall, Church of the Little Flower, St. Michel, Vizcaya. And other examples outside of local, such as Santa Barbara City Hall, some buildings that are even in Europe that were used as,

or may have been used for precedents in 1920s. So, we're really expanding the field and the examples that the architects can use to design new buildings. And it goes on. Malibu, Atlanta, other buildings, again, that are local, in Palm Beach, by Mizner, and abroad. And we also have a list put together, actually, by one of our historians of the area, George -- I'm sorry, I can't think of his name, George Gillis, or Gillis...

Commissioner Castro: Brett.

Commissioner Menendez: Brett.

City Planner Garcia: Brett Gillis, thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Brett Gillis, yes.

City Planner Garcia: So, he put together character-defining features, and we were able to tweak this a lot with the Board of Architects. Towers, asymmetry, varied window and door types, cast-iron work, a lot of these character-defining features that need to be and should be in these Mediterranean buildings. And then this is the prerequisites table. So, as you can see, we're striking through a lot of these items, again, because they don't relate to architecture, such as bicycle parking, structural soil, street lighting, and replacing them with more appropriate prerequisite items, just contextual analysis, precedents, building proportions, building scale, ground floor design. These are things that we want people to -- architects to be able to use earlier on in the process and keep that in mind as they're designing their Mediterranean building. And again, once you do the prerequisites compliance and you have studied your precedent and you've analyzed it as far as your façade goes, you have now entered into the Mediterranean Design Bonus Program, right? But you're not actually allowed to have any bonus yet until you fulfill Level 1 or Level 2 as well. So, Level 1, many of these are being reused and just adding on to, such as arcades and loggias. Some of them are being replaced by street facing building, rear access, sidewalk and plaza and courtyard. Some are just being renamed and also just added on as far as just the clarity of a provision. And keeping the same idea as far as 6 of the 11 would have to be met for residential and then 8 of the 11, now 11, would be for mixed use. And then once they fulfill that, once they fulfill the prerequisites, the precedents, and one of those Level 1, depending on what their -- multifamily or whether they're mixed use, then they would be granted, if the Board of Architects agrees to it, of course, and they grant it, Level 1 Bonus, which again, is one story or 0.2 FAR. And the Level 2 Bonus is about building lot coverage resources for Mediterranean. As far as, actually an idea came from the Board of Architects that the architect on record would sign an affidavit saying that they've looked at our website, coralgables.com/mediterraneandesign. They've looked at our best practice manuals. They've look at our history of our city and applied that to their proposed building. And that would be Level 2 Bonus. So, again, you fulfilled the prerequisites, the precedents, the Level 1 Bonus, and Level 2 Bonus, which is additional 0.3 FAR for a maximum of 0.5 FAR and two stories or three if it's a high-rise building -- zoning, sorry. So, on the left side of the screen is what the Board of Architects can approve. They have a by right shown in yellow,

and Level 1, Level 2 Bonus. And that's all the Board of Architects is allowed to approve or grant. On the right side is what the City Commission. And that tall area in the middle is when the City Commission grants a change of land use or zoning that affects the height. So, when these projects are reviewed by the Board of Architects first, because it's the first step of our process, it's misconceived that the Board of Architects is approving a 16-story building, which in fact, they're just approving the Mediterranean Bonus on top of a proposed change of land use or zoning building that has yet to be approved, the land use and zoning change be approved by the City Commission. So, this is kind of a misconception that the Board of Architects is approving taller buildings when in fact they're approving it only if the Commission changes the land use and zoning of that proposed building. So, this is our process. The first line on the very top is showing more by right projects. Coral Gables by right. Of course, nothing here is by right, even a single-family house, you can't do by right in Coral Gables, but you start off with the optional Board of Architects conceptual review, if you want to, the DRC Development Review Committee, and then the Board of Architects preliminary approval, and then it goes to final and building permit. But typically, of course, the project you see here, and most of the projects in Coral Gables, unfortunately, have to go through a site plan approval or -- and/or a change of land use and zoning approval. So, it goes through DRC, an extra meeting, Board of Architects preliminary approval, and as you can see, the middle line is showing the site plan approval, but these are usually being traveled with a change of land use and zoning with the proposed building. So, again, the BOA is looking at the proposed building assuming that the Commission is going to approve the change of land use and zoning. They are not approving the change of land use and zoning; it's not their purview. They are only looking at the aesthetics and the Med Bonus on top of that building. So, then Planning and Zoning Board is actually the first one that looks at both the site plan and the change of land use and zoning at the same time and they determine and make a recommendation to the City Commission who then has the authority to approve the change of land use and zoning. So, this is a process that the Planning and Zoning Board brought up that is a concern for them. They made a motion during the review of the Mediterranean design standards that they would like to have the Commission have them study this process a little more in depth, maybe have the Planning and Zoning Board be able to look at these requests for land use and zoning early on in the process and not be one of the last ones here on the screen. I think that's it. Oh, so, in summary, updating the intent and purpose, removing the criteria that's redundant, requiring a conceptual review, requiring our prerequisites before entering into the bonus program, and then also expanding the list of precedents. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you for the presentation. I'm going to touch upon some of the things that I put in the memo that I sent to my colleagues yesterday, and it's going to be available on the City's website for the public to look at as well. This has been a very long process, and it actually began before, you know, we started with, you know, the Board of Architects and the initial drafting stage. I'm going to touch upon history briefly because Dorothy Thomson, who's given us her presence here today, was a champion that was dealing with the -- what she called the flash cube buildings and trying to find a solution for that. And the original Mediterranean Bonus code

did not include some of the problems that we developed later on. In mid-2000s, specifically 2004, additional language is added to the Mediterranean Bonus that allowed our other architectural styles. And that language, when it was added, allowed things to creep into our city that were not of Mediterranean design and providing them bonuses that they'd never earned for Mediterranean design. So, that was the crucial big step that was taken shortly after I was elected. When I was on the Planning and Zoning Board prior to my election, I asked for this issue to be addressed, that we needed to address the Mediterranean Bonus provisions and the language because it was providing bonuses for buildings such as the Zubi building, commonly known as the building with birds on it. We had an as-of-right project, the Aloft project. I live within a thousand feet of it. I never got any notice of it. It's one of the, you know, one of the poor designs and poor materials. We have Styrofoam folding on -- molding on it, and we could have done so much better had we had more collaboration with the public. So, after my election, I requested a Blue Ribbon Committee be formed, and each one of the members of the Commission selected a member. Mr. Pardo has blessed us with his presence here today. I'm glad you're here. As I said to you, this brings us full circle. They came up with the idea of conceptual review. They also came up with other ideas that we weren't able to implement at the time. And they urged, as I felt needed to be done, to take other architectural designs out of there because what was being done is we ended up with a Picasso of a Mediterranean building which didn't look Mediterranean at all. At the time, you know, staff was very concerned that we would get sued if we made conceptual review mandatory. As it turns out, it's very much favored by applicants going to the Board of Architects. I actually even heard the comment that it would be malpractice for someone not to use it because you're going to save a lot of money for your client. It also saves, on the other side, a lot of anxiety for residents because you have an early opportunity to provide comments to the Board of Architects on things you don't like. And you know, had there been this type of conceptual review on some of these buildings that went through the process and got denied, they probably would have saved a lot of anxiety for residents having to fight these things and ended up with, at the end result, such as Allen Morris' building, a lot earlier. So, I thank the Blue Ribbon Committee for the hard work they did. We got the two first phases done on conceptual review, you know, and eliminating that language, and then came the hard, long work that we couldn't do in a rushed fashion. And you know, Ms. Garcia worked tirelessly on this along with other residents in the community. Maricris Longo Teófilo, who is sadly not with us today, he worked on that. We did the symposium where we discussed what was wrong with our Mediterranean design code and identified areas where we really needed to focus in and do some improvements. And it was a blending process, using what the Blue Ribbon Committee had put together, what we had and other comments in the other documentation to put together the final result. And this was made available for everyone to provide comments. So, I look at this as like a collage. Mr. Gillis, who I know is not residing in Coral Gables anymore, came up with some very good input and ideas as well. And I appreciate all the work that everybody has done. Now we had buildings from many different places being brought in as suggestions, local buildings, buildings, you know, as far away as California, as well as other European buildings because the original architects for Coral Gables got their inspiration from somewhere. So, we needed to take the highest quality buildings that set an example of what we want Mediterranean design to be in this city to provide additional inspiration for our city going forward. The same

type of inspiration that George Merrick had and Mr. Fink had when they were -- and Phineas Paist had when they were designing the original buildings that were built here. So, that's why we went beyond Coral Gables for proposed buildings. We also did a test drive. I called it a test drive through the Board of Architects. I thought it was important, because number one, unless you drive it, unless you try it out, unless you do a drawing, we asked the Board of Architects to provide comments on it based upon their experience. And the Planning and Zoning Board also has architects on it, like Mr. Pardo, who could provide their input as well. Because an architect will look at it in a different way than a policymaker will. I know what my end goal is. My end goal was to improve the architecture. But the language to improve it and how far the fenestration needs to be was something that it took experts to provide that type of input on. So, I listened to the last Planning and Zoning Board meeting, and it -- I wanted to share with you all what I tried to do early on in my career here as a commissioner was to bring the review of the underlying zoning earlier on rather than trying to have it done after the fact as it's done currently. After the fact, meaning by the Planning and Zoning Board after the Board of Architects has already labored over a building and it's already baked to be this tall, and then they find out after the fact that you can only build a building much different than what they wanted to because the height was not granted by the Planning and Zoning Board. I went through that on a project near my home. The developer was in tears because they were denied at the Planning and Zoning and had to redesign the building from scratch. So, my suggestion is the following. Because I was told by staff if we have a vote by the Planning and Zoning Board on zoning before it goes to the Board of Architects that it becomes an as-of-right project. And that's something we don't want because we'll have another Aloft. You know, we won't have that type of discourse and opportunity to do a conceptual review process. Have it go -- you have the conceptual review before the Board of Architects and other conceptual review before Planning and Zoning Board, okay. There's no vote taken at the Board of Architects. They just provide comments. And then there's a clear picture for that developer that they either need to start over with something that's more compatible for the area or that the Planning and Zoning Board feels that it's appropriate for the area, a particular zoning change. And this only applies to zoning changes. So, I'm going to circle back a moment and highlight one of the other main contentions that I continually heard from folks that were frustrated that went before the Board of Architects. And that is the Board of Architects was instructed to ignore zoning. Throughout this draft, the words compatibility and massing are clearly delineated as something that the Board of Architects has to address, not only based upon future zoning changes as they show on a map, but the existing. And if you have a historic building here, and you have a single-family residential home here, and you have a brand-new building over here, and you're going to put an MX building over here on the other side, you need to consider the fact that you have a single-family home there. And that's -- that's the existing buildings that are there that have to be placed under consideration. Those were compatibility and massing at the Board of Architects level. And I look forward to seeing the future work for the Planning and Zoning Board dealing with conceptual review of zoning matters. So, I just will point out, because I know that Mr. Pardo is there taking notes, that on page 5, 9, 21, and 28, the words compatibility are put in the venue of the Board of Architects here. Massing is highlighted on pages 7 and 12. So, this will make it more difficult for folks to qualify for Med Bonus. It absolutely will because you're not going to get

points for bicycle racks anymore or things that don't contribute to the Mediterranean design of a building. So, Mayor, at this time, I'd really like to give the opportunity for Mayor Thomson, who's blessed us with her presence here, to say a few words.

Dorothy Thomson: Thank you for your leadership.

Unidentified Speaker: You're welcome.

Ms. Thomson: I'm going to thank Jennifer here because I had mentioned to her when she was approaching here I said, please speak up because it's very difficult to hear some people when they come up to the microphone unless they enunciate and raise the volume of their voice. Forty-five years ago, in 1979, is when the time I was elected to the Commission. And that's a long time ago. Some of you weren't even born, right? And some of you were just toddlers. So, I guess I'm vintage here, or whatever you want to call it. But the reason I mention that is because I was much younger. I was 45 years younger then and I felt it was difficult to even hearing some things at City Hall. And it's never been remedied as far as I know and I hope when you do this transition over there that you keep that in mind because the acoustics there are pretty bad, even for a younger person. And certainly, for an older one, they can't hear anything. I go home to watch it on television. I can hear the screen and have the closed captions on and know exactly what you're saying. Otherwise, it's just standing up here and saying nothing. But anyway, I wanted to thank you again, Jennifer, because you did raise your voice, and I heard every word you said. Thank you for suggesting and inviting that I come here today, Vice Mayor Anderson. I really appreciate that. And I know this has been -- so much has gone into this particular very important aspect of our city through its ordinance. And you know, it's a rare occasion that I do come here unless I see something or want to say something, but I'd rather stay home and watch. I watch all of you. I'm always watching all of you and keeping up with what's going on in the city. But when there's I feel an item of importance that I maybe could lend some type of words of wisdom or something to it, that's the time I will come. Otherwise, you're not seeing me here. Today I felt it was very important because this is having to do with a very, very, very crucial part of our -- of our whole being of Coral Gables, the whole ambiance of being in Coral Gables and living here. I really felt it was important that I should come and just speak a few words for whatever -- for whatever good it does, or whatever you want to take from it. There's another item on the agenda later on today having to do with the Biltmore Hotel, but I'm not going to stay for that. That's something different. It's been said that this Mediterranean Ordinance, architecture ordinance, is part of my legacy. And I guess you can say that is true, because it was signed under my name as Mayor at the time in the mid-1980s. But really and truthfully, it's a legacy of the City, belongs to the City. Each one of you, as you serve your time here in office, are going to have some sort of legacy that you're working on now. And I already recognize some of your legacies that you're working on. It's very important to do that, to give back to this community. That's going to be long lasting. And certainly, the architecture ordinance has been a long lasting one. And now it's being enhanced. And I have many, many, as I've said, many, many meetings leading up to this. I probably should have attended some of them, but I didn't. I didn't even know some were going on. I concentrate

more on what's happening in the Commission level rather than Planning and Zoning and Board of Architects and all that kind of stuff. It's impossible to be up to swift with everything. However, it comes down to here. But I do think of a moment ago because I'm almost like that person that I've sort of set up as an example of someone not being aware of what's going on in the City, and all of a sudden at the very end, hey, what's going on here? That's what happened, if I can digress for a moment, when we had the final meeting for the Biltmore Hotel to be renovated and to be brought back to life after being in its own stupor for all those years and being abandoned for 18 years. And we had the most vigorous meeting that night at City Hall. Everybody came up and said -- had their say of what they thought about whether or not the Biltmore Hotel should even be renovated. Would you believe? You won't believe that now, but the feeling in that room that night was don't do anything with it. Just leave it alone. We don't want any strangers in our neighborhood. We don't want taxi cabs and trucks coming in and all that type of thing. And because they wanted to be left alone. And they didn't care if the building would fall down or anything else. At the very end of the meeting, we called the meeting -- the public hearing part of it closed, and one man stood by at the end. And I didn't even know what he was going to say, and everyone exited the chambers, and this one man stood behind, he said, I just want to let you know, Mayor Thomson, that I want to thank you. He said, I didn't know what was going on, because they would come up and say, what's going on? Nothing has been said all these years. So, I'm in the same position here. That's why I bring this analogy in. All these different meetings have been very impressive and going on for so many months and years, I guess, and here I am today saying, what's going on? I've tried to understand this. It's very difficult. It's very convoluted. This ordinance is being revised. And I even took it with me to the Thanksgiving dinner up in North Carolina. And I did because I wanted to try to understand it. And it goes on and on and on. It's just really wonderful, all the input and all that has been put into it. But again, you really have to know what you're talking about in order to really have some sort of words of wisdom that are appropriate. I even corralled my son-in-law, Allen Morris, who knows all about these things and his building up here on the Alhambra Circle is beautiful, a wonderful model of Mediterranean architecture. And I had him sit down and read it, read it, read it. He's (INAUDIBLE) well, here and there, I don't understand that, this and that. So, if he couldn't do it, you know, I couldn't do it either. So, I'm here today and in awe of what you've done, Vice Mayor Anderson, from what I see. And I don't know what the outcome in all will be, but I really feel that you've done a wonderful job, a really Herculean task to go through this and bring up these type of things to everyone's attention. Because we all have -- it's impossible to avoid seeing what's happening in our city. You talk about legacy. This is the legacy of our city, of having these beautiful Mediterranean architecture type of buildings in our city. It has such a long-lasting effect. It's the envy, I would think, of most cities around the whole, not only this Dade County, but also around the state of Florida. So, what happens today with this is a very serious thing because it's our very essence of the beauty of Coral Gables, architecturally speaking. And it goes back, like I say, to the early 1980s. And the genesis of the concern were the two buildings, glass buildings on Alhambra Circle, as has been already mentioned. People, when they saw that, people in general said, what's going on with our city? Are we going to have a glass city here after all? Be named Glass Gables, maybe Coral Gables Glass Gables, I don't know. I just happened to think about

that, but probably people might have -- they got upset and the Commission was upset. And that's where we brought a long, a long-standing, sort of like this, you know, it went on for months and months and months. It wasn't something we did overnight because we wanted to make sure we got it right. And in so doing, we were able to pass the Mediterranean Ordinance. And I was Mayor at the time, but it led up to that. From, you know, several years, other commissioners were very much involved in having a hand in doing this. We didn't have all the social media, stuff like that going on, so it was pretty much in-house. In-house, we didn't have so much, you know, the community rising up here and there because they were unaware of it. We didn't have the technology then that we do now, that everything goes out today, goes out all over the city and comes back at us different ways and so forth. No, it was pretty much in-house and the seats were pretty much bare. So, it took a lot of thought and a lot -- I guess you might say that we had no influence from outside. It was in-house that we had to do this and depending upon staff to correct information coming to us to make this decision. When I think back of it now, I mean, there was like a few lines in the ordinance. It was made simplified. They were enhancing it. And when you enhance something or change something, you run into the risk. At that time, and I look around the room today and around the city today. And it's Felix Pardo and I are the lone last ones standing here. And I mean, who knows how long we'll stand. So, you really need to listen to this. It's very important from the 45 years ago when this all happened for you now to be doing the next important step to make sure it goes on into the future and keep what we have here. We are the envy of the country. Coral Gables city is known, California, Minnesota, Massachusetts, any place, you say you're from Florida, and then you say Coral Gables, and they know exactly what you're talking about. I would like to say a couple of other things. Like I say, I'm not as swift in thinking anymore, so I wrote a few things down. I've already mentioned most of them, I guess. It just went on in my mind after all, better than I thought. Again, I say that the legacy of what you're doing here today, it belongs to all of you. It belongs to the City. It doesn't belong to any one person, but it takes a person or a few or a Commission to come up with something that's going to be so meaningful that you retain this quality of life here in the City of Coral Gables and pass it on to your children and grandchildren, which I've done. I didn't have grandchildren when I started on this, but you know, I do now, and you will too. And it's a very important issue to make sure that you do the right thing. And like I say, there's other things. I have a legacy -- I digress again -- of being the founder of the Coral Gables Citizen Crime Watch. Thank you for coming to the breakfast the other day. That's 1980, that's a long time ago. The Biltmore Hotel that I had a hand in, of course, again, when I was Mayor. And that's a long-lasting legacy. The community -- the Coral Gables Community Foundation, I founded that. That's a long-lasting and ongoing, very, very successful organization to this very day. And all these things, they're a legacy that belongs to the City. I hand it to the City. I was just the cog in the wheel, if you will, that goes on and on. Like I say, Felix Pardo again, he's very much involved with everything. He knows the whole -- everything that's in that ordinance that you're proposing and the changes. He's very much aware of it and very much available to give you guidance along the way. Lastly, I always say this to you, and I really mean this, and that is each one of you have a great job that's in front of you and each one of you really carries out your jobs very well. I know I've been there, but not where you are now because it's so much more intense. You have the whole city, the whole world, whole organizations

to deal with. Whereas we did it pretty much in a vacuum almost because we didn't have the technology at that time that you all have now. You have a tough job. We thought we -- we thought our job was tough, but you know, yours is much tougher and I really appreciate every one of you and you know I do. I reach out to each one of you and I always, I receive good input from each one of you when I call you, you know. I thank you so much for that. And just bear with me because I'm not always here, but I am listening to you. And I'm always there if I can help anything from the past, because the past is never gone forever. It always has some part of the future and of what's now. So, thank you again. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you, Mayor. And...

Applause.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I cannot take credit for wordsmithing this. There was a lot of people involved, including Mr. Pardo, and I think he's ready to speak next. And he made substantial, you know, input during the Planning and Zoning Board meeting, as did each member of the Board of Architects and what we needed to do to make this design code something that we're proud of. So, with that, thank you for coming here today, Mr. Pardo.

Felix Pardo: Thank you, Vice Mayor. Good morning, Commissioner. And good morning, Mr. Mayor. It just so happens, serendipity, that we're in this exact room that we were in 2022 where there was a Sunshine meeting. And I spoke at the Sunshine meeting. The Mayor was kind enough to recognize what I had said and the Vice Mayor, and then there was the movement for the Blue Ribbon Committee. At the beginning of the Blue Ribbon Committee, it's important to understand that everyone had different opinions. But having chaired the committee, I was very, very pleased that we were able to make tremendous strides in looking at the Mediterranean Ordinance and the bonuses, and looking at them in a certain way that we were able to push it forward. Quite right, the first two things were the most important parts, which were Mediterranean architecture for those Mediterranean Bonuses. The second part was the conceptual review. And I received a lot of pushback on that at the beginning, but then the more that the committee understood it, then all of a sudden everybody was on board on that. Most of the changes that you have today, let me reassure you, are based on the original Blue Ribbon Committee recommendations. Some of the things have been changed a little bit as far as the orientation, the this, the that, but believe me, it's there. I probably spent more hours working on this 40-some-odd years ago to today than anyone that's left. I was going to introduce myself as Dorian Gray instead of Felix Pardo, but I feel like Dorian Gray because these are the same issues that happened back in the mid-eighties. The one thing that I want everyone to understand, speaking as a resident, when I went through my six-mile run, as I do every morning through the Gables, is that at some time, when the Blue Ribbon Committee was disbanded, some people didn't understand what the word compatibility is. Compatibility is the most important word that we have in all of architecture and all of planning. Because of that, I think it's extremely important that we recognize that. So, one of the things that occurs is that there is a subset of requirements that the Vice Mayor touched on. And in this subset, this is where you

have upzoning, change of zoning for upzoning or a change of the comprehensive land use plan, usually for something more intense. Now, as the Vice Mayor had said, is that the Board of Architects, which I sat on and chaired many years ago, is asked to consider those type of projects as if they were already approved by the Planning Board. From a procedural standpoint, really, there was a second motion that is part of the public record. And basically, it was to recommend that there be a procedural change. That when there is a comp plan or zoning change, that the applicant must first go to P&Z for preliminary determination before going to the BOA. Now I'm not an attorney, but when you use words like preliminary determinations, it doesn't sound like a matter of right to me. You're trying to test the water, see if it's too hot, too cold. And that's a lot better because when then it goes to the Board of Architects and they look at that transcript from the Planning Board of this -- of the discussion of the compatibility of the zoning, it becomes important. I want you to look at this podium here. So, let's say that the zoning graphically, the existing zoning on a property comes up to here. That's what's allowed. And let's say that the applicant is asking for an upzone and maybe including a change of the master plan, so now it comes up to here. Then when you add the bonuses, it's only these two stories here. Why is this important to understand? It's because usually when you have a change of zoning or you have a change of the comprehensive land use plan, what happens is that the determination of how it's going to affect an existing neighborhood, an existing area is everything. And that's why the same as the pre-meeting that I had suggested while I was sitting on the Blue Ribbon Committee, which was adopted by this Commission -- by the Commission, that made -- it was a huge tool for the Board of Architects and also for the applicant. It would be a protection for residents to be able to have an additional tool when this specific subset comes before. Not projects that are already a matter of right, but these particular projects. I think that is the last piece of the puzzle that needs to be implemented to assure compatibility in existing neighborhoods. If you are in a CBD area, it becomes almost a gimme. I remember projects in areas such as the innovative area, the zoning area. And again, it's almost all built out. It sits almost by itself. So, when you look at the plan of the city and you understand that, the one thing you have to always remember when you sit here is that you want to protect the existing neighborhoods and the quality of life in Coral Gables, which makes Dorothy and myself the last ones standing. I have to congratulate you for allowing us to take a look at these different components. It's a lot of work, but it's well worth it when it comes to preserving the beauty of the City Beautiful. This particular component for this specific subset is key for making the Mediterranean Bonus work correctly. There's no blame of any particular department putting their finger on the scale. This then becomes a matter of a recommending body being able to have a preliminary determination, the same as the Board of Architects doing exactly the same thing. It's for the benefit of the board members, the applicant, and the neighbors. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you. And I agree with you and that's why there is a separate resolution so the Planning and Zoning Board can proceed on that work. You all can set your schedule.

Mr. Pardo: I would just like to say I'm here as a citizen.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I know. No, I understand.

Mr. Pardo: And I'm here as a citizen so the only thing I can say to you is that, you know, you go through -- if this is approved, you go through two readings. I think that by the time the second reading comes up, I think we should strive to have this particular component in there so there's no doubt of this particular subset. It's only fair to the neighbors, the applicants, and the City.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I agree with you. And...

Mr. Pardo: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you for all the hard work that you did on this and many other things.

Mr. Pardo: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Next speaker.

City Clerk Urquia: So, first speaker is Ms. Maria Cruz.

Commissioner Castro: So, are we adding that in between readings or...?

City Attorney Suárez: So, the Vice Mayor has a separate item because that wasn't part of this item and it's not part of the title. The Vice Mayor has a separate item addressing that potential change in the procedure.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

City Attorney Suárez: So, that'll be discussed whenever that item is called. If I may clarify just one point. Vice Mayor, I think there is a little bit of confusion. The Planning and Zoning Board is a recommending board. So, if they were to -- it's not a matter of whether they vote or not vote, it would simply be a conceptual review, but of course, it's only if the City Commission were to grant the land use change or a zoning change, that would be, of course, then approved, and you know, potentially lead to an as-of-right project.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I understand. I -- basing this upon conversations I had three and a half years ago with staff, so I do think the Planning and Zoning Board needs to sit down, discuss, make recommendations, and we can incorporate it.

City Attorney Suárez: Absolutely.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question for the City Attorney on that issue. So, the proposed ordinance has the conceptual review for the Board of Architects, but the conceptual review, Planning and Zoning, is not in the ordinance. It's a separate piece of legislation, right?

City Attorney Suárez: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: So, if somebody wanted to vote in support of the ordinance, but they - well, they want the Planning and Zoning Board to have a conceptual review, we would vote for one and perhaps not a guarantee that the second legislation will pass. So, it's sort of -- you're sort of a leap of faith that it'll all come together.

City Attorney Suárez: Correct, but the Commission -- so the separate item is a resolution basically asking the Planning and Zoning Board to flesh this out, to talk about the change in the procedure...

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

City Attorney Suárez: To have their feedback and input on the proposed suggestion by the Vice Mayor, which is -- again, that's a separate resolution that we will discuss when it's called, but that is something that could then be incorporated with further legislation if that's the will of the Commission.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You know, we can -- we can amend between first and second reading. I think it's pretty clear on the record that this is a desired thing. It's in -- touched upon in my memo to you all as well. We did conceptual review with the Board of Architects. It wasn't mandatory. This particular ordinance makes it mandatory now. You must go for conceptual review.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, I understand. But I think you all need to have a discussion. The Planning and Zoning Board members need to have a discussion amongst themselves, and you know, figure out how that wheel is going to be shaped.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Cruz?

Maria Cruz: Yes, Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I just want to reinforce something that was said, because even though I don't live by the waterways project, I have attended either by Zoom or in person every meeting. And yes, in fact, the Board of Architects granted Mediterranean Bonus without regards to massing and compatibility under the very clear directions and opinion of the

attorney, who told them they had to -- he didn't say assume. He had to -- they had to vote as if the Planning and Zoning Board had granted them everything they were asking for and then they would apply the Mediterranean Bonus. It was not -- I was there, and I have the minutes, and I have my notes. And yes, he forced the issue. They had to vote on the Mediterranean Bonus as if Planning and Zoning had agreed to it. I'm sorry, I -- you know, we cannot change it, we cannot modify it. The minutes are clear, the video's clear. All of us that were there objected to it, and that's how they got the 6-0 vote because he said they had to vote as if -- as if it had already been granted.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Maria Longo.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you for being here with us.

Maria Longo: Good morning. Let me know if you can hear because I...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Bring up the -- yeah.

Ms. Longo: There have been okay times that I can listen well when others -- Can you hear me well?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Ms. Longo: No echo?

Mayor Lago: It's fine. Thank you.

Ms. Longo: Okay. So, my name is Maria Cristina Longo. You all know me by Maricris, and I live at 16 Phoenetia Avenue. And I'm going to speak in favor of the Med Bonus revisions. About two years ago, I became involved in facilitating the Med Bonus revisions because I was very frustrated with its results. In fact, I was one of the individuals who fought the first Allen Morris project, the Ponce, that is beautiful now, wholeheartedly and with great passion because the original design and style was not Mediterranean. The Allen Morris team reached out to me to help with the design concept, and a group of three residents, including myself, influenced significantly the final design, which was approved unanimously by all of the Commissioners. Please say yes to the Mediterranean Bonus revisions because this initiative makes sense for the reasons I will tell you here today. The Med Bonus grants only a total or maximum of only two additional stories in most cases when developers meet all prerequisites and criteria for Bonus 1 and 2. The problem that we have in our city with high and massive buildings is not caused by the Med Bonus. The Med Bonus is not the problem. The problem, as you saw today with the explanation that Jennifer gave you with the PowerPoint, is that unfortunately, developers and their lawyers request radical and unreasonable changes of zoning that are not appropriate for the context. In 2004, there was a

code rewrite, and the Med Bonus Code was watered down. Unfortunately, since then, the Med Bonus has been abused many times, and stricter revisions are necessary. The goals of these revisions is to elevate the standards and the quality of design in order to preserve our distinctive identity and branding. Having cohesive themes creates value and a sense of place. The goal is to produce timeless buildings that create value and enhance our quality of life. Today, for the first time, when Mayor Dorothy Thomson was speaking, I realized, I had a revelation, that our name, Coral and Gables, there's two items, two Gables is part of a traditional architecture and Coral is a stone, which is traditional. Our roots are traditional architecture. The revised Med Bonus criteria is more demanding and rigorous because it raises the minimum standards for developers to be able to apply for the Med Bonus. Among the new prerequisites that developers must meet before they can apply for the bonus are contextual analysis and proportional analysis. The rewrite, this revision introduces a new prerequisite that requires contextual analysis. Developers must show how proposed building massing, scale, and height are compatible with the existing urban context and adjacent buildings. And I -- what I'm going to tell you, I took it directly from the language of the Med Bonus. I'm actually reading what's there right now on contextual analysis. This new prerequisite requires that an analysis of the context be studied and submitted for review that illustrates the compatibility of the proposed building to maintain the character of the existing surrounding area. Any conflicts between the proposed building and the existing -- existing context shall be considered in the site planning, massing, building, height, step backs, and other components of the building by the Board of Architects. Another prerequisite that is new is that developers must also present a proportional analysis of the building façade using a proportional classical system, such as the double square or the golden section. Developers will have illustrations and examples of how these systems work in the best practices manual for Mediterranean architecture. And you're already aware that the BOA now is in the new -- in the new bonus revisions. The conceptual review will be mandatory instead of voluntary. Developers will have to submit for a conceptual review prior to the developmental review process and the preliminary BOA review and approval. This new mandatory step is very beneficial because developers will get feedback early on in the process, whether or not they will meet the intention of the Med Bonus, and before they start spending money. Because this comprehensive initiative to revise the Med Bonus was initiated by the Planning Department with the participation and collaboration of the late architect and professor, Teófilo Victoria, who helped the Planning Department plan a series of workshops for the BOA members. The Board of Architects -- the members of the Board of Architects have extensive experience reviewing projects on a weekly basis. The buck ends with them. They are the soldiers in the battle with developers. I would also like to give credit to the City Architect and Judy Carty who dedicated many hours to this initiative. And I would like to thank Felix Pardo who worked on the original Blue Ribbon Committee and gave us great feedback during the Planning and Zoning presentations. After eight meetings and during a seven-month period, the Med Bonus revisions were approved by the majority of the Planning and Zoning Board members. This comprehensive initiatives is a win-win for everyone. The BOA wins because they will have legal grounds and teeth to reject poorly designed projects, and they will have higher standards to spec more. The mandatory conceptual review process will help the residents like myself win because bad projects that are not in context will be stopped in

the initial stage freeing citizens from the burden on having to organize to fight unreasonable projects. I'm ready to throw the towel, by the way, after this. I don't want to -- I don't want to fight anymore. The Planning and Zoning Board will win because residents will be happier and there will be less frustration with the outcome. There will be less people fighting to protect the quality of life. And the City and you win because beautiful, timeless architecture creates value. Now more than ever, I think it is critically important that we keep and improve the Med Bonus incentive. The Live Local Act is developer incentives, which has no design parameters, whereas these Med Bonus revisions have design parameters. This is a common sense and comprehensive approach. It makes sense to make the Med Bonus more rigorous. These revisions may not be 100 percent perfect, but they are 100 percent better. Please say yes today. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Zully Pardo.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Pardo, good morning.

Zully Pardo: Good morning, happy holidays to all. Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager. My name is Zully Pardo. I reside at 49 Campina Court, and I am here to support this resolution. We offer our full support for the proposed code amendments to the Mediterranean Bonus standards. What began, as Mr. Pardo very aptly mentioned, in this very room on June 14th of 2021 to address residents' concerns of development projects receiving Mediterranean Bonuses without merit evolved into an exhaustive collaborative effort led by Vice Mayor Anderson, the Blue Ribbon Committee, our dedicated staff, Board of Architects, Planning and Zoning, and community professionals. The resolution before you is a step in the right direction, demanding quality architecture to stricter Mediterranean standards. Only exceptional design should be considered for such bonuses. We can no longer afford to fall short of the original intent. Encourage architecture that retains elements of the Coral Gables Mediterranean architecture as envisioned by George Merrick. We are confident you too will support this resolution and foster continued conversation as has been very aptly explained this morning by the previous speakers. Thank you for your time.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Zully.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, is on Zoom. I believe to be Karelia Carbonell.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell, good morning.

City Clerk Urquia: Go ahead, ma'am.

Karelia Carbonell: Yes, I actually -- I am going to be speaking, fully supporting the ordinance and the whole process that went into it. But I do want to insert a different perspective, because I'm

going to wear my historic preservation hat. And with that said, I'm going to read just an excerpt of an article that I penned about a year ago regarding this whole review of the Med Bonus. And please bear with me. I do want everyone to have open minds as far as architectural style. George Merrick, thankfully, did not adhere to one single architectural style. On one hand, he envisioned a predominant style throughout his fledgling city, influenced by the residential buildings surrounding the Mediterranean. But on the other hand, Merrick created a variety of thematic villages, highlighting distinct architectural styles. Merrick was an avid internationalist who mandated a design diversity that in subsequent decades came to include Art Deco, Brutalist, Googie, Neo Colonial, New Formalist, and Post Modern. This Mediterranean Bonus was basically -- it was created in the 1980s as a reaction to the modern quote unquote architectural designs populating the city at the time. Ironically, today, these same designs are nationally heralded as meritorious architectural work. Yes, the glass buildings on Alhambra are architecturally significant. And that was, Docomo International gave it that -- that appreciation. So, it is prudent and important to preserve a city's cultural and architectural identity, but one design style does not wholly define it. Mediterranean Revival is our city's foundational heritage, but its preservation should not mean homogeneity in architectural style. George Merrick's city must continue to embrace a full spectrum of architectural design just as he planned it. And by that, I mean not bad architecture, but architecture that, yes, if they're meant to be Mediterranean, they should follow a strict -- strict guideline. But if not Mediterranean, then they should be approved with the -- looking at them as -- as, you know, high-end designed, you know, and hopefully, we'll be able to bring those architects, those prominent architects from around the country to build designs here in Coral Gables, like we had in the past. So -- and I think Mediterranean Bonus was really mostly because of height. It really wasn't, at least in my opinion, wasn't really about design. It was developers wanted to build higher. And so, this bonus gave them that ability. So, with that said, I want to just put a little plug there. There's a book that's going to launch early in the year called Coral Gables Modern, and it's all about our modern architecture. So, please keep that in mind. I'm all for the Mediterranean Bonus or a Mediterranean Ordinance, and I thank everyone that worked on it, but let's really open up our minds to other styles. They're like children. You know, they're different, but we love them. So, thank you again for listening.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you, Karelia. Let me just give you a little context. Context. This revision to the Med Bonus does not prohibit other architectural styles. It only addresses the fact that it is more costly to build a Mediterranean style, and therefore, that was the reasoning that was done for legal reasons as well, that we needed to provide something to incentivize, and we're talking two stories. The major issue that we have, and Mr. Pardo spoke to it, was the underlying zoning and so did our Planning Assistant Director. The underlying zoning is a critical piece. Planning and Zoning Board will be addressing that, I believe, if we have a favorable vote on the resolution. And they can come back to us, you know, as soon as January before this goes to second reading, and we can package them together. It would be a simple text amendment to this particular code, but I don't like to do it in a rushed fashion. But we do need this passed because we do have

projects before the Board of Architects right now and they have clamored for this to be passed for a long time. It's been a long road to get here. The heavy work has been done. It's time to move this train out of the station and give the Board of Architects what they need in order to address better Mediterranean design and not just give it out for architectural styles that don't cost as much to build. The glass buildings are cheap to build. Some of these others are very, very cheap to build. But high-quality Mediterranean with high quality materials are much more expensive. So, do we have any more speakers?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, ma'am. So, on Zoom, Daniel Gonzalez.

Daniel Gonzalez: Howdy, y'all. I just want to mention something that was mentioned by Karelia, Dr. Carbonell. So, about the thematic villages, they were really done -- sorry, here. There we go. So, the villages were done essentially in 1925 because there was a bit of a slowing down in the sale of lots. It wasn't to really change the whole theme of the city. The City from its inception was always started out to be a Moorish Venetian Spanish style city. Mr. Merrick himself sent H. G. Fink off to Spain to get more influence. While there, he actually was knighted by the King of Spain, and that's where we have some of the wonderful furniture that we have in the Merrick House today. But again, the importance, and the Vice Mayor correctly touched up on this, is the pricing of the buildings. If we didn't have this, every other building that we bring up would be a simple glass cube. We don't want that. We have to try to incentivize these more palatial, you know, beautiful style buildings, the Colonnade, City Hall, the Biltmore, for example. So, it's really important that we still, not just divulge from these original architectural styles, but go back and really focus on the striving ideals that built the City, especially now as we're approaching our centennial. That's it. Thank you all.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, what is the good of the order?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I would like to move this. Of course, my colleagues are free to make comments, and I understand where the intent is and we have to deal with the entire issue.

Commissioner Castro: I'll second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk?

Commissioner Menendez: We have discussion?

Commissioner Fernandez: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: Oh, go ahead.

Commissioner Fernandez: All right, just a few comments. I think this is very timely. I think we are four months, five months away from closing out our first hundred years as a municipality. And we've gotten to this point with -- I understand Karelia's point about different architectures, but the main architecture of our city has been Mediterranean. And it's an important thing to continue to preserve that for the next centennial, for the next hundred years of the City of Coral Gables. And I want to thank all the work that has gone in. Madam Vice Mayor, for your work. Maricris, I know you've put in many hours. Mr. Pardo has put in hundreds of hours with the Blue Ribbon Committee. This may have come to fruition a little sooner had that Blue Ribbon Committee been allowed to complete its work, but I'm glad that we're here today addressing this. Mayor Thomson, all the work that you've put in over the last few years to ensure that we preserve the Mediterranean design of our city. I guess my one concern, I just want to make sure, and I'm glad you said, Madam Vice Mayor, that it should be addressed prior to second reading, is ensuring that this, I guess you can't call it conceptual review, but this review by the P&Z takes place prior to. And in conversations I've had, you know, with developers over the last couple of years, they have really found that the conceptual review by BOA has been very beneficial to them because they're not spending tons of hours pushing a project that won't get the support. They'll go through it, address some of the concerns that the BOA may have beforehand. The one thing, and I know it's a separate resolution, the one thing -- recommendation that I would have on that second resolution that you're recommending is, I've had input as well from the Board of Architects, which I think would be beneficial to this ironing out of what the process should be. So, what I would like to call in that second resolution is for a joint meeting between the Board of Architects and the Planning and Zoning Board to kind of figure out what the best way to do this would be. I don't know if on these projects it might even be beneficial to have them go before a joint meeting of the P&Z and the BOA since it is conceptual, so that they can talk through some of the issues or concerns that they have. It might be beneficial from some of the members of the BOA, they'll bring up points that the P&Z may not bring up and they're able to talk it through. I think a lot of the questions that come from watching P&Z and BOA is questions that come, well, what will happen in P&Z or what will happen at BOA? And a lot of those questions are never answered because they're never able to meet together. So, it's just a suggestion, maybe having a joint meeting of the two of them to talk through what maybe the best recommendation from them is for us to consider on how to add that one layer to this. But I think this is leaps and bounds from where we are today, and it's a great step in ensuring that we protect our Med Bonus and ensure that we have quality products. If you look at the products that we as a Commission have approved in the last year and a half, they've been quality products, quality design, they've been using different products in the design, which are not cheap. They're going to what I like to call Coral Gables Mediterranean. And it's something that is specific to Coral Gables. We're not getting cookie cutter projects that are being proposed anywhere else. They're proposed for the City of Coral Gables. And so far, the projects that have come before us, none of them have been maxing out on the ask on height. They've been scaling

it back to what residents have wanted. And I think that has come from involving residents earlier in the process, involving the BOA early in the process so they can have these conversations. Many architects will tell you from the conversations that I've had with them, it's very difficult to design Mediterranean more than five stories. Why? Because Mediterranean architecture is really four or five stories. You go to the Mediterranean, most buildings are shorter or smaller buildings. But we have great new pictures that we added and designs that we added to the brochure and to the packet on buildings like the Breakers that have those components and can help these architects in including some of those design elements. So, I commend you for this and I'm happy to support it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Regarding the joint meeting, I did sit with the Board of Architects when they were doing their discussions because I wanted to make sure we had the right language in there to give them the teeth that they needed to address massing and all the issues that constantly were being told to them in the past. We're going back a ways that zoning is not for their consideration. Getting everybody together is going to be a monumental task. I do think of one member because the sentiment is consistent throughout the Board of Architects, having one member present at the meeting should suffice so that, you know, there's an urgency to get this done, and you know, I'd hope to get it done earlier, but you know, it takes time to do these things because we have projects in the pipeline. And I think we need to not delay unnecessarily because I do think one member of the Board of Architects can express succinctly the same concerns, okay?

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I guess a question for the City Attorney. If we were to require a meeting, a joint meeting of the boards, does it require quorum from both? Or can we waive the quorum requirement and say...?

City Attorney Suárez: So, if there's no quorum, it would be a workshop. No action can be taken. And alternatively, this ordinance can move forward and it can even come back on second reading while the other process to change the review process is also underway. So, that's also something for the Commission to consider.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So...

Commissioner Fernandez: Right, but I guess if we ask for a joint meeting of the two boards, both boards would have to have a quorum.

City Attorney Suárez: If you want -- if you want a formal recommendation as opposed to just a workshop with feedback, with informal feedback.

Commissioner Fernandez: Understood.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, what I was going to suggest, because there was a Board of Architect member more than once that went to Planning and Zoning and expressed, you know, why they need this, why this was needed and various points were needed. They can have somebody appear

at the Planning and Zoning Board meeting. So, it's not a joint meeting between the board, but the board has participation, has a spokesperson there to address their concerns for Planning and Zoning.

City Attorney Suárez: And so, also to that end, the Board of Architects could discuss and even designate one of their members to be the one who represents them at Planning and Zoning, if that's the will of the Commission.

Commissioner Menendez: I suggest since regardless the recommendation of Planning and Zoning Board and the BOA is not binding on us, it's advisory, if I'm not mistaken. So, if they do meet in an informal setting, workshop, again, it's whatever they recommend would be non-binding as well.

City Attorney Suárez: Correct, but they cannot make a motion so you would not know what the decision of the board is. You would have feedback from individual members or comments from individual members with no official recommendation from either board.

Commissioner Menendez: It's not that difficult to understand what the direction of that group would want. Now, I think instead of one representative should be two or three of each group. I think that because sometimes you have discussions that go in depth and it's nice to -- any board to have more than one person there, I think, because people see things from different angles. But I'm supportive of having some type of meeting of the minds. I think it's healthy; I think it's positive. We want to get this right. I think it's fantastic legislation, but let's -- let's make sure that whatever possible questions are addressed, if -- I don't know if, Commissioner Fernandez, if I'm -- my biggest concern, and I think obviously Dorothy -- Mayor Thomson, what you've done, and the staff, and everyone involved is we're always striving to make what we do well better. And this is a step in that direction. My biggest concern, because it's something that's been evolving I think the last few years, is I want to find a balance between the BOA and the Planning and Zoning Board. And an issue that's come up is that sometimes the lines are blurred between what the BOA is tasked with reviewing and doing and what are the criteria and what the Planning and Zoning Board is. I think it's not in the best interest of the community if those lines are blurred because they may be reviewing the same thing from the same angle and get different conclusions. So, I would like to see as part of the process to define what the BOA should review and what the criteria is, and what the Planning and Zoning Board should be reviewing, what the criteria is, because I think that's been going on a little bit in the past. I agree with Karelia that you go around the City of Coral Gables and we have beautiful Mediterranean buildings, obviously, but we do have other styles that are just as spectacular. And going forward down the road, I would love to see steps to encourage that type of architecture as well, something that's compatible. If you go to the Louvre, there are beautiful paintings from all kinds of painters, but they have different styles, but collectively, it's spectacular. And I think we can continue to grow in beautiful quality architecture. I think the key here is aesthetics. I think everyone has seen and identified and recognized that there's some great work and there's some poor work. And I think what we're focused here is trying to get the best, highest quality architecture, design, and aesthetics so that we can be proud

of every item. And you know, it's interesting how this has evolved, and thank you, Mayor Thomson. If you really look at it, this Mediterranean Bonus in a big picture, if the Biltmore Hotel came to the Commission or BOA, Planning and Zoning Board for a Mediterranean Bonus, odds are it wouldn't get approved just because of where it's located. So, times have changed, but I think we're heading in the right direction. I just want whatever pending issues are addressed before we go to second reading. That way we all walk away feeling good.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. I think Mr. Pardo had some additional comments he wanted to make on the record.

Mr. Pardo: I think you're -- you're all in sync. There's absolutely no doubt about that. Just so you know, we've had, based on Jennifer's request, we've had the chair, Judy Carty, the chair of the Board of Architects, and Peter, the vice chair at the Board of Architects, and the City Architect there. And it's a very good representation, you know, of the BOA. The other thing is I know that Judy and Peter meet, you know, in between meetings, they make some time before the meeting starts at the BOA and they discuss among themselves. Okay, and I know of some of the things that they've discussed specifically about this. There was also the only -- I think also that if you have that representation, actually go to the Planning Board. And we separated during -- we had two Planning Board meetings. In other words, we had a Planning Board meeting specifically for Med Bonus because we knew it was just going to be a Herculean type of issue, but on top of that, then we had our regular board so -- because it was unfair, you know, to applicants coming to us to go through this lengthy thing and then have them at the end of the meeting or the other way around. So, if you have the chair, the vice chair and the City Architect there, you're going to have a very good representation. And also, I know that the chair and vice chair of the BOA will discuss this with the other board members that are very experienced in it. I don't think that you would need a quorum to do something like this. In fact, it's going to be legislative. It would be, you know, in the purview of the -- of the Planning Board. But I think we can get to that very quickly and we could have another special meeting because of this process. The other thing is if you go through your transcripts, the verbatim transcripts of that meeting, unfortunately, we lost one of the members, had a death in the family, had to leave after the -- the first motion. But then there is healthy discussion about this particular issue, and if you read through those minutes or see the tape, you'll -- you'll be able to realize exactly, you know, which way. So, it's really a matter of logistics. And then, of course, you know, once we come up with that, we'd run it by Legal to make sure that, you know, we can dot our I's and cross our T's. So, that's what I wanted to say, Vice Mayor. Thank you for...

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, no, I appreciate it, because I did have the opportunity to listen to that very healthy discussion. And I appreciate, you know, that that needs to be addressed. I just -- I had run into obstacles previously when I tried to do something.

Mr. Pardo: Right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I think the time is right for the Board to come up with recommendations that will work, okay.

Mr. Pardo: And Commissioner, the only thing I would take issue with you is, I don't -- I don't think that the Biltmore would have an issue based on what we're discussing today, simply because it sits on 220-some odd acres of land, which is the tremendous buffer. And the other thing is that, you know, I think that over the years, since Bill Kerdyk, Sr. and Dorothy led the charge on making sure that we saved the Biltmore, it's usually been a great neighbor when it's -- when it's managed, you know, the way that the Prescotts have done over the years, a good, good job. And I think that what we're talking about is really when the proximity and you're -- you're -- you know when it's wrong.

Commissioner Menendez: Right.

Mr. Pardo: You know, so...

Commissioner Menendez: My point, Felix, was Dorothy went through hell to save the Biltmore, just to save it.

Mr. Pardo: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: So, imagine if the action was to build it. And you know, it's always a battle regard -- even if it's the best intention, and obviously, the Biltmore is the jewel of our historic buildings, but you know, there are challenges everywhere. But I'm glad we're all here together and we're working in the right direction.

Mr. Pardo: I think the entire Commission has done a great job. And you know, Mr. Mayor, you know, thank you very for -- for, you know, all the hard work that you put into it. And also, you know, going back to 2021, June of 2021, thank you for listening to an old guy.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. I was very happy to second your motion. This has been one of my biggest concerns too when it came to architecture. And I also want to give credit to Felix Pardo, because since this was one of my concerns, he has numerously met with me, gotten on phone calls. In fact, I also want to thank Mayor Dorothy Thomson and Allen Morris and Spencer because we had meetings regarding the quality of materials that these Med Bonuses were -- we were trying to see how to improve it. And I think you were able to accomplish through this a lot of the things that we were talking about. But I really, really want to give thanks and credit to the people that, besides working with you, worked with me.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right. Well, we have a common thread there because Mr. Pardo also mentored me through some of the initial stages, and that's how we got the Blue Ribbon Committee to begin with. So, we have a motion and we have a second. Are we ready to...?

Mayor Lago: Say something?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Oh, no, no, no. Sorry.

Mayor Lago: I haven't had a chance.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Sorry, I forgot about you.

Mayor Lago: I've been trying to stay quiet. Somehow, some way I get blamed for talking too much. Very briefly, very briefly, three things. Number one, the Biltmore, in my eyes, would pass today, not only because you made a very good point about the 200-plus acres, which is something that I've worked on for a long time, is to make sure as much ground on the first floor, we can have as much green space as possible. It would pass because you don't have a parking platform. You don't have a plinth. And in my belief, what makes, and the belief of most architects that I have the pleasure of talking to on a daily basis, is when you add bulkiness to a building, it immediately removes the ability to really -- to really inject Mediterranean design. That's -- that's the key. I don't care what you do, what you say. Look at, for example, Willy Bermello's building that he was able to put together in the Innovation District. There's no parking. When you remove the parking, look at Europe, you have a more distinct, more flavorful, more acceptable, more palatable building in regards to the architecture. So, the Biltmore, in my opinion, would pass easily just because of the two points that you took one of them from me. I had it right here. Thank you, Felix. Was number one, the green space, and number two, the fact that it doesn't have -- it doesn't have a parking podium, which is a huge deal, huge deal. Look how many buildings can you say in Coral Gables don't have a parking podium: City Hall, the Biltmore, maybe the one that Willy is going to -- is under construction right now. There's not many, there's probably a handful. Maybe Jennifer can put that in an email and send it out to us and educate us. Number two, I want to give credit to Burton Hirsch, who is writing me -- who's telling me a few things about this issue along with Felix, and that is, Karelia's comments are correct. While we concentrate on Mediterranean, which is the -- you know, it's a building block of who we are and our design, and I commend the Vice Mayor for her hard work on this, along with the Blue Ribbon Panel and Dorothy, and more importantly, the employees, Jennifer and her team, who've done a great job. I really want to not forget that we are a city that has different designs, different designs, and we need to celebrate that. I would not want to see my neighborhood be all ranch homes like mine. I don't think that would be something that if you speak to George Merrick, if he were alive today, that was never the intention. That's what I think Karelia made a very good point about the villages. You know, you have different villages, different flavors, different touches of design. So, that's something I put out there. Just -- just always keep in the back of our mind that, you know, we love Med, but at the

end of the day, let's also focus in on preserving some of our great design that we have here. And the third point, we talk about meetings and Planning and Zoning and BOA, I'll make it very easy for you. Mr. Clerk, send out through the Commission a request to the BOA members, to the Planning and Zoning Board members, to the members who have played a role, Blue Ribbon Panel members, anyone who's -- would like to be engaged in that conversation and provide a handful of dates in January for everybody to come and have a meeting and have a sit-down conversation. If we can get people to attend, we can get people to attend. Let's use common sense. Let's make it after 5 o'clock, you know, even if we have to and we have a lot of people, maybe we can make it on a Saturday morning, you know, so that there isn't any excuse in regards to most of the people are working during the week, they have certain obligations after work, maybe it's an opportunity for people to gather on a Saturday morning. We can provide breakfast, and we can have a conversation here. I think there's a lot of opportunities, I think that we can all figure out. We may not get everybody there, but at the end of the day, people even with comments can Zoom in, and also, they can send their comments in writing. I think you'll be surprised by how many people will attend if we provide it on a Saturday morning. Those are my three comments. They're pretty simple. I have nothing else to say. Thank you for your hard work on this, Madam Vice Mayor. You've done an exceptional job. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Would you like --? You have a motion and a second?

Vice Mayor Anderson: We do.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk?

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: All right, moving on to Item E-2.

City Attorney Suárez: Mr. Mayor, can I just make one clarification about...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

City Attorney Suárez: Just I want to assure the Commission, I know you're aware, but just to assure once again that when a representative of my office is attending a meeting, such as the Board of Architects meeting, our role is just to ensure that the process is followed. And in that case, with

the Board of Architects, with the Med Bonus specifically, there was certain criteria. And if those criteria are met, then that's how the Board of Architects makes its determination. The design review is also something separate that follows, and other considerations are made during that process.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.