

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-1
August 24, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Fire Chief, Marcos De La Rosa

Police Chief Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Mark Trowbridge

Aura Reinhardt

Agenda Item D-1 [10:35 a.m.]

A discussion on maintenance responsibilities in the Downtown Business District.

(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Now we move on to the Mayor's comments. So, I have several items, one official, which is D-1, a discussion on maintenance responsibilities in the Downtown Business District. I'd

like to invite Aura from the Business Improvement District, and our 15-year veteran, Mark Trowbridge, to join us.

Mark Trowbridge: Aging by the minute.

Mayor Lago: Yes. So, I want to give a little bit of quick context. I know we have a very long agenda, but this deserves -- I want to give my colleges -- and the purpose we put this on today was to be able to talk freely in the Sunshine so you can be aware. And I want you to engage, please engage with these individuals, because I'm preparing a memo. I'm preparing a memo that will be delivered this week, and we've been working on this. We've had two meetings. We're having a third meeting this week. And we're doing this and working collaboratively because I don't want to catch anybody off-guard. I know that Chelsea was going to potentially put up some photos to give you an idea of why I've sat down with Mark and Aura to discuss our Downtown. Our Downtown is critical to the future of the City of Coral Gables, critical. Twenty-seven percent of our tax base comes from the Downtown. If our Downtown is not beautiful and upkept, people will stop coming, rents will fall, and it would not look like the City that we -- that everyone envies, that everybody -- it won't be that shining hill on a city. Our City, every corner that you look, is overrun with vegetation, garbage on the floors, masks. There's every -- these are just me walking the Downtown. But now what I have done -- and Mark will speak a little bit further about it because I know that I tainted him after I showed these photos that now he starts paying more attention and looking down and seeing the situation that we're dealing with. Our alleys are covered in green matter around the walls, where the streets meet the walls. These are things that need to be maintained. We need to address who is responsible for this maintenance. Is it the business community? Is it the City? Do we need to revamp the hundreds of thousands of dollars that we're spending on maintenance of the Mile and Giralda? Maybe those aren't the best way to spend the money. Maybe that company -- when that contract ends, we need to move in a different direction. Maybe we need to bring it in-house, but there has to be an answer. And we need to address it because this is getting out of control. There's garbage everywhere, and the weeds are growing uncontrollable throughout our Downtown. So, I wanted Mark and Aura to be here because we're

working on this together. You know, and I can't do this -- the City can't do this without having buy-in from the Chamber, from the businesses, and from the Business Improvement District. This is critical to our success. This is part of my strategic vision, strategic plan for the next two years. And we need to find solutions, just not throwing more money at it. We need to find solutions on where there's personal responsibility. Because when you walk out of your business and you see all these weeds growing everywhere, you should say, "Hey, listen, let me clean this up." The sidewalks haven't been cleaned. That's an issue of Code Enforcement. Code Enforcement needs to move forward and aggressively explain to staff -- excuse me, explain to the residents, explain to the business owners that this needs to be -- occur on a quarterly, on a six-month basis. Because if not, we're going to see the slow, you know, deterioration of the quality that we love so much in the Downtown. So, I, you know, swing it over to Mark and Aura, you know, to kind of give me their feedback in regards to this.

Aura Reinhardt: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, thank you all for allowing us to address you all or to be here for this conversation, because in fact, we've had two meetings with you already. And we've heard exactly and seen photographs -- which you've had the opportunity for the rest of you to see as well right now. We've also had the opportunity to walk the streets for the last two weeks. And I know Mark made some comments about how he's now observing more things...

Mr. Trowbridge: Yep.

Ms. Reinhardt: And I have done the same. And I think that I've taken a lot of pictures as well that I have at the BID. I think that there are several things -- if we can go to them. The majority of the photographs you showed were about the plants and the growth. And quite frankly, we've had an incredibly wet season and we do live in the tropics, this does happen. So, it's a question of how do we control it and how do we maintain it. I would also let you know and suggest that some of the buildings that you photographed and the ones that I am very aware of tend to be City buildings. There's the -- there's behind the theater...

Mayor Lago: Everybody's responsible.

Ms. Reinhardt: All around the block there -- no, no, totally.

Mayor Lago: Everybody.

Ms. Reinhardt: The museum is a place that I would love to see a super effort go in, which is more than just pulling the weeds in the actual courtyard, but in the back alley where the back doors are to the museum. There are trees -- actually trees growing back there that shouldn't be there. So, you're absolutely right. There's a lot that needs to be done, and I think the opportunity we have today is to better understand where we begin the process of cleaning up. Because many of us in the past would have picked up plants, would have picked up cups and today we don't do that for many other -- for health reasons. So yes, we do have an opportunity to hear from you all as well, how you think we can do it, because we're here to help. Because we -- like you, we believe in the City Beautiful.

Mayor Lago: So, if I just may respond. I wasn't clear. There is no -- I'm not blaming anybody.

Ms. Reinhardt: Oh, no, no, no.

Mayor Lago: I'm blaming myself. I'm blaming myself because I'm the one -- I pick up garbage on the street, but there's a dead palm tree on a swale for two or three years, like there's been one at the Merrick Park Circle. And there's ones on -- you know, in front of -- on San Amaro. Those need to be taken care of. There is a responsible party; it's either the City -- there's a development agreement with a project that was done when the swales are just all weeds and there's no trees left, or the trees are half dead. And when you look into a small patch of shrubberies that are there, like a green island ficus in a median and all you see is the amount of garbage that's in there, you know, people have to be put on notice. Either we -- we have to define the responsibility. And if people have forgotten, or they've never been noticed on who's responsible for it, let's start noticing them.

But I'm telling you, if we don't take steps now, our Downtown is slowly moving in a direction that, again, it'll be unrecognizable. It'll be unrecognizable, and I think that we can do much better than that.

Ms. Reinhardt: We won't let that happen.

Mayor Lago: No, I know. But I'm just saying, I -- that's why we're working on this and we're meeting so many times.

Ms. Reinhardt: Yes, yes.

Mr. Trowbridge: So, Mr. Mayor, thank you again for the opportunity to chat with you today and for putting this item on the agenda as a discussion item. You know, two immediate thoughts: one is that it is a collaborative approach. I think when you pay attention to something, you suddenly see those items pretty much everywhere. And so, I personally am much more cognizant of not only the weed issue, but our litter issue. I've noticed that not only in the Central Business District and adjoining streets, but you know, down in the new project development, Lifetime, down off of Ponce de Leon, just a lot of discarded water bottles and trash. And you know, we used to lean down and pick those things up. Now we're told don't touch anything because of COVID. And so, I don't know if this is a direct result of that, Us paying more attention to it, or just the fact that, you know, folks haven't been as available in the Downtown, and so things kind of grow out of control, you know. The weed issue is unfortunate because what you have there is sort of a belief -- I suspect -- that someone else will take care of it. Maybe there's a belief that that's a City role or a property owner role or somewhere in between. I know that when we were doing the streetscape project, we had a lot of discussions about ongoing maintenance, who was going to be responsible for that. But this goes far beyond Miracle Mile and its surrounding streets. We're seeing it throughout the CBD, and of course, we're seeing it in other areas as well. And so, you know, thanks to you, we've had a couple of sit-downs and an opportunity to share our thoughts before we brought it to the Commission for discussion. I hope that all of you will allow Aura and I to come and individually

chat with you a little bit about what we're seeing so that we can work collaboratively and bring something back comprehensively to the Commission. We sat with Mr. Kinney and talked about the block-by-block agreement, which again, the City manages wonderfully. And even in that discussion, we came up with some other ways to communicate even more, but it may need to be a conversation that goes beyond the current scope. And just because we are seeing significant situations -- you know, we call ourselves the City beautiful, not because it's a great brand, because that is who we are. You said something earlier, Mr. Mayor, that made me think about how this would resonate. And that is when people reach out to us, our first answer is, "Well, yes, what can we do?" That's why Aura and I are here working with you and bringing your colleagues to the table in today's discussion and in a follow-up. But I hope that anybody who's listening today, you know, sort of helps kind of take care of business, whether they own a particular property Downtown. You know, think about your storefront. It isn't just what you're selling behind the windows. It's as you approach and as you come into that. And I know Aura discusses that on the daily with many of her constituents, but our constituency is broader than that, and we're seeing that, as I mentioned, throughout the City. And now thanks to you, I notice every gum wrapper and piece of litter on the ground and every weed that's growing. Weeds, I'll pull, but my father used to say, "You pull it; it comes back bigger."

Mayor Lago: Yeah, but you know -- and the whole purpose of this today is -- we're having a third meeting this week. We're going to present a memo to the Commission. And I'm going -- and I want to make sure the Commission is well aware of where we stand.

Mr. Trowbridge: Sure.

Mayor Lago: But I have visited other communities recently and I have walked, and there is -- the amount of garbage that I'm seeing and just the lack of interest in correcting -- you know, when you have a business, a storefront, and you walk into your storefront, you know, you want to make sure it's appealing for the people who are going to spend their hard-earned money. And the amount of garbage in between the sidewalk and the curb and the masks -- there's masks everywhere,

disposable masks everywhere. And we have to take that moment in the mornings before business commences to maybe just do a perimeter walk. We all do it at our homes. I do it every day when I get home, and when I leave, I make sure there isn't -- and I live in an area that's high trafficked, in front of University of Miami. And when I leave, I pick up garbage; and when I come home, I pick a garbage. But think about if I didn't pick up that garbage. It would basically be there until the landscaper came and cut the grass. So, we have to take a little bit of just personal pride, in my opinion, and I want to be part of that conversation. And I want to really emphasize on potentially revamping the process. And I think that's going to set us apart if we do that. I think we're going to really deliver on a -- you know, heighten the world-class experience that we already have in our Downtown. I don't know if my colleagues -- I would recommend that you please sit down, have a conversation, so you're pretty well-versed before we deliver that memo because this is something that I'll be bringing to the September Commission for your consideration, after having a conversation with the Manager, to see what plans we can come up. Money's tight, but we need to find a solution. And we need to find something which incorporates the business community and delineates very clearly who is responsible for cleaning the sidewalks, who is responsible for picking the weeds and making sure that you don't have a forest growing, you know, in front of your property. We have to have that personal pride in the City of Coral Gables.

Commissioner Menendez: I want to just comment. It's interesting that we talk about the weeds. A week ago or so, I was driving just south of Miracle Mile in the City, I think it was Public Works had a truck, and a gentleman had like a hose type of -- and I figured he was spraying where the sidewalk meets the street. And I noticed there were weeds. So, in my mind, there was two things possibly going on: A, he was watering them to help them grow; or B, he was spraying something that killed the weeds. And then we talk about the situation, you know, in the Miracle Mile area, where we're having weed issues. One is the City's taking care of it just south, and perhaps, you know -- I'd be interested to see when this comes back, what it is exactly that the company that's, you know, contracted to do this, how are they addressing it? You know, what approach are they using? And I agree with your statement earlier. Sometimes just maintaining something clean is good, but long term, there's probably more that we can do to enhance the experience. And I agree

completely with the Mayor. When you go walk into Miracle Mile, you want it to be inviting and you want it to be a pleasant experience. And to a greater part it is, but as time goes by, that probably will be less and less. So, hopefully, we can come up with a comprehensive plan, not only to clean it and maintain it, but to see what opportunities there are to enhance the beautification and the experience that everyone -- residents and non-residents -- have. I look forward to that.

Mr. Trowbridge: Yeah, and I will tell you, we have learned that, you know, using some of the chemicals that may have been used 10 years ago aren't in use anymore because they're environmentally hazardous. There are moratoriums on using them, and so some of that maintenance either goes by the wayside or you see the result of not having a more aggressive approach, and so you have to do something different. And we need to adapt as well, but I go back to the Mayor's comments, that this isn't a look to, you know, blame anybody, or suggest that A or B or C aren't doing their thing. It's a collaborative approach. That's why we're here today. It's why we sat with the Mayor. We're going to come and chat with you. But I want to also encourage all of our business owners, do as the Mayor has talked about in his own personal life. And it's that when you arrive at your storefront, don't just check to make sure the windows are clean. Look in front of your store. You know, we had long discussions when the streetscape project was being debated for years and years about who was going to help with the maintenance of this beautiful street that we spent over \$20 million to invest in and over 20 years to get done. The Manager knows very well because he was here in a previous capacity, really shepherding that to the finish line. But it was always what happens after you score the touchdown. We want to do the dance every day -- right? -- and celebrate, but we can't do it if our Downtown doesn't have that beautiful, pristine look to it. And all of us need to play a role in that.

Commissioner Menendez: I think what you mentioned about the shop owner is a good example. It's not a shop; it's not a Miracle Mile, but just thinking about my childhood, when you arrive at the Magic Kingdom, before you even go through turnstiles to go in, you see the beautiful landscape. You see how everything's clean, pristine, and it's inviting. You want to go further to see what else you're going to find. So, I think we can get there in a collaborative way...

Mr. Trowbridge: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: And find solutions.

Mr. Trowbridge: That's a great analogy. And also, what brings people into those storefronts -- that's why we encourage our businesses on the Mile and surrounding streets to have beautiful windows. Well, you can't get past that if you're walking through a pile of weeds.

Mayor Lago: Thank you so much.

Mr. Trowbridge: It's a pleasure.

Commissioner Anderson: And just to add just two quick comments.

Mr. Trowbridge: Commissioner.

Commissioner Anderson: With regard to the pressure cleaning, I would urge you all to do a comprehensive approach, so we don't have these lines of demarcation where it's clean and not clean and confer with our Public Works Department. We did work with the Sustainability Board at one point to come up with an environmentally friendly weed killer that will help deter the big weeds from coming back after -- once they get uprooted.

Mr. Trowbridge: Yes, they do. They're aggressive. You know, I'm glad you mentioned the pressure cleaning because we have a different system for the Mile, of course, and Giralda, just because of the pavers that are there that might be used on a traditional sidewalk that you might see just adjacent to those two districts. So, you know, we're even kind of dealing with that approach, that one is maybe a little bit easier versus one that is, you know, a little more, you know, nuanced, if you will.

Vice Mayor Mena: I just wanted to add, you know, I appreciate the sentiment of nobody wants to cast blame and all that. I get that. But as we proceed, I do think we need to be definitive and clear about it who's responsible for doing what and have a system that holds people accountable. And if that's the City...

Ms. Reinhardt: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Mena: That needs to be held accountable for not carrying its end of the bargain as to something, then the City should be held accountable. I think that's the Mayor's point. And if it's...

Mr. Trowbridge: Agreed.

Vice Mayor Mena: The store owner, then the store owner. But there needs to be a clear delineation of who needs to be doing what, if we're going to have a system that is effective. And so again, I'm with you guys as far as not casting blame. It's not about the blame, if you will. But it is important that we delineate...

Mr. Trowbridge: Responsibility.

Vice Mayor Mena: Who's responsible so that we can...

Mr. Trowbridge: And I think there are some items in our Code already that sort of...

Mayor Lago: Yeah, but...

Mr. Trowbridge: Speak to that. Are we following that, enforcing that? I don't know. I think there's a lot of different, you know, sort of things happening right now, just because we've had an 18-month window of just complete chaos related to COVID and storefronts pausing, closing,

closing permanently, new items coming in, and you know, we haven't had the same ability to be as connected to our businesses. We've done a lot of that virtually. You know, I give Aura a tremendous amount of credit in terms of her role as the BID director coming in and literally going door to door and assessing everything from, you know, challenges with lights to what we're seeing with the Mayor's points.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I don't doubt that the challenges of the last, you know, year and a half have kind of exacerbated things, but I mean, part of this is a discussion we've had going back even further than that. I remember the Mayor addressing this issue, boy, maybe two years ago now, about the area surrounding Village of Merrick Park.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, it's still a mess. It's still a mess.

Vice Mayor Mena: And some of the maintenance issues in the sort of, you know, swales and landscaping areas, who was responsible, who isn't.

Mayor Lago: And we were talking about -- and if I may interject. The Vice Mayor's correct. I mean, listen, I don't want to blame anybody. I'll take the blame. And the reason why I'll take the blame is because we haven't been following up. The business owners are very aware of what -- are well aware. It's just common sense. It's common sense. You know, if you get home and there's weeds at your front door, you're not going to allow weeds to stay at your front door. You're going to pick those out. And if you don't do it yourself, you're going to tell your landscaper, "Hey, listen, you come every two weeks. Take care of those weeds. Make sure they get taken care of." If it costs a few extra bucks, it costs a few extra bucks. But everybody knows; it's in the Code already. But we haven't done a good job. And like the Vice Mayor says, it's notifying of where the clear lines are and who's responsible. If not, we have to rewrite them. I spoke to the Manager. I go, maybe we have to hire somebody for the entire Downtown whose job -- the entire Downtown, not just the CBD, the entire Downtown -- whose job is basically putting people on notice, putting people on notice, walking up and down saying, "Listen, sidewalk is dirty." And then take into a

point Commissioner Anderson's comments. Let's do blocks, blocks, so that you don't have a hodgepodge of clean and non-clean. But for a long time, we've been talking about this, the Vice Mayor, Commissioner Fors. We've been talking about this, and it's very simple. And the Manager said we don't have in place right now the ability because we were -- for years, they've been trying to get everything organized for a new technology software that's coming in. We have these development agreements that we sign every time that we approve a project. And I've been saying it for years, along with my colleagues to my left and right -- my other colleagues, who just recently got here, are now going to carry the baton, the torch forward, because they're going to realize it because I'm going to mention it right now. When you go before a project that was built 10 years ago and you see the hedges are dead, who's responsible for those hedges? All they do is they come, and they clean them. It's in the Development Agreement that if a tree dies, you got to fix it. So, who do we contact? What's going on? We have to take that personal pride, that personal pride to say, "Contact the homeowner association, contact the building," and say, "You have to replace that tree. That palm tree's been dead for 10 years." So, that's happening at the retirement home, at the -- excuse me, next to Miracle Mile.

Ms. Reinhardt: The Palace.

Mr. Trowbridge: The Palace.

Mayor Lago: The Palace. If you look at the streetscape of the Palace, the grate's full of weeds. It's their responsibility to maintain that. It's not just clipping the green island ficus. It's pulling out the weeds, replacing the trees that are dead; that's part of your development agreement. But we have to, as a City, follow up with that. And maybe it's time that we bring somebody who is thorough and willing to work with the Chamber and to work with the BID and just go up and down and put people on notice. Give them a warning. You have a month to take care of this. Set up a plan on how to properly clean the sidewalks. I'm telling if we do that -- and that's my goal. That's my end goal, and I know my colleagues are on board. And I want to bring this forward over the next two or three weeks. Bring the memo forward, present it to the Commission, to my colleagues,

let the Manager run with this, devise a plan over the next month and a half, two months, and engage. Because if we don't do this, you're already seeing what's happening. Even if you go to North Ponce -- as you go by North Ponce and you start walking in those areas, you start seeing -- it just doesn't look right, the amount of garbage underneath the trees and the green island ficus. It just looks terrible. It looks terrible. So, I look forward to your hard work. I'm eternally grateful for us collaborating on this issue, and I think this is going to pay significant dividends. So, I appreciate you being here. Thank you.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you.

Ms. Reinhardt: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Other issues I want to talk to Aura really quick, and I'm happy you're here. Please sit down with my colleagues, explain to them the lighting issue that we're working on for Miracle Mile. We talked about working on it collaboratively, trying to find a 50/50 solution, maybe 75/25, whatever we can figure out. I'd like to bring that before Christmas to figure something out. And if I can find the money in the budget, it's an important issue for me. So, please meet with my colleagues so that they can buy in, and you can explain to them a little bit of the costs and how it will look and how -- let Miracle Mile -- how it will basically change the look of Miracle Mile, you know, and it would be a good opportunity to do it.

Ms. Reinhardt: And these are not the Christmas lights. These are the everyday lights.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, the ones that we talked about. But let's stay on that; I haven't forgotten about that. I know that's important to you and to the merchants. Other issues: the one that I want to talk about is COVID testing. I know that many of us have been reached out to potentially doing some COVID tests. Right now, money is very tight, but I have brought forth to the Manager two firms that are willing to do it for free because they do some federal funding -- they have federal funding in place, and they also provide the option to bill your healthcare provider. And they've also

promised me that if -- for someone who's a resident that can't pay for it, that they would do it for free. I told him that I would like to see two options to let them monetize the station, one for Coral Gables residents and one for non-residents. I wanted to get your input on this. You know, people are nervous. The lines have gotten pretty long, even though the numbers have gone down recently over the last two weeks. But I want to make sure that we offer the residents that security where if they want to get tested -- I know that we are doing -- by the way, I commend, the firefighters who have done a lot of testing for the elderly in our community. And they go to the homes, and they've taken care of that for a long time. But I wanted to make sure that we offered that and get my colleagues on board, but I do not want it to cost the City any money. And those are the entities that I brought forward for your review. Thank you, Chief.

City Manager Iglesias: Chair -- Mayor, we have here the Police Chief and the Fire Chief that will answer that question. And my understanding is that we have to provide the actual place and also -- similar to what we were providing before. The only cost is that we're not paying for the actual testing itself. But we do have Police and Fire costs and those issues I will let Chief De La Rosa and Chief Hudak respond.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So good morning, Mr. Mayor. If you allow me, I'd like to give an update as to the recent developments with regards to COVID and where we are as a City in managing those developments. So, the first thing that's important -- and we're working with our Communications Office to provide our residents with the proper education and guidance. And the first one that I'd like to bring up to is that even in media, the word "booster" and the word "third vaccine" are being used interchangeably. And the reality is, is that they're not interchangeable. So currently, residents that are immunosuppressant or slightly immunosuppressant -- so anyone who, for example, is a transplant patient and takes immunosuppressant medications, anybody who is currently receiving chemotherapy for a blood cancer, those would be individuals that could qualify for a third vaccine. So, if you've had your two vaccines, you're 28 days past that, you qualify for your third vaccine. And that you would need a attestation letter from your doctor stating that you're eligible for that vaccine. That is different than the booster. Those of us that were vaccinated

originally and now you're beyond your 28 days, it is recommended that you receive a booster. CDC guidelines is that that will be opened up to everyone who is eligible for a booster after September 20th. So, they're being used interchangeably, but as we educate ourselves on it, they're not interchangeable. So, with that being said, and with the height of the Delta variant, what the City or Emergency Management has done is: One, as soon as the guidance came out for the third vaccine, we started to coordinate with the Department of Health. As of last night, we were advised that the Department of Health will allocate vaccinations for the third vaccines for those residents that we vaccinated back in January that are eligible for the third vaccine. From there, they'll begin to incrementally give us or allocate vaccines for those that will be eligible for the booster following that. In addition to that, we have put in mission requests with the Department of Health for a pop-up site in our City that will provide both vaccinations and testing. We've also coordinated with County EM to attempt to allocate the same service through the County. So, we worked it at the State level and at the County as well. Lastly, as the Mayor mentioned, there are vendors that can provide the service of testing and vaccination. With regards to the vaccination, the contingency is that us as the City have to allocate the vaccines. They will administer the vaccines. We've received one contract that we submitted for legal review to our legal department. I have two more that I reviewed that we'll be submitting, and we'll go through the procurement process for all three.

Mayor Lago: Chief, if I can just add something.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Sure.

Mayor Lago: I submitted two of those contacts; they reached out to me. I welcome anybody else who has contacts that are interested in COVID. Please, these are not my -- I'm not affiliated with these people. They just came to me, and they said we're willing to offer the service. I passed it on immediately to staff. So, if anybody's interested or has a solution, I just was very, very, very clear. I do not want to spend money as a city. I want to be very frugal, very cognizant of the fact that we've lost significant money because of COVID, but I think that this is important to offer the residents of our community, and they said that they could do it for no cost. So, my biggest issue

is, I want to see a plan to start this as quickly as possible. When do you think we can move forward?

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So, as I stated, we're working through the procurement process with the three vendors that we've identified.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: There is some adjustments I'd have to make to the proposal for the first one that was reviewed, so I'm working on that. And we're working, like I said, with the mission request that we made that would be the same thing through the County. So, a timeline would be however expedient we can make -- we can work through the procurement process on our end and their response back to us.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I think -- can you clarify though what the costs are? Because I understand that the vendors are not charging, but there's costs associated with...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: They do...

Vice Mayor Mena: Manning the location, Police, Fire, et cetera.

City Manager Iglesias: There is -- yes, Commissioner -- Vice Mayor, excuse me. Vice Mayor, there is the logistical issue of setting this up. They will just perform the actual testing or the actual vaccination. But it would be...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: That's correct. So, the infrastructure towards reaching those individuals and the site management is on the City. So, for example, it is contingent on us using our call center and the scheduling that we've done in the past. It's contingent on us allocating vaccines and providing for site security with Police, as we've done in the past.

Mayor Lago: That's vaccine.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, I'm talk -- yeah, yeah.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: No, no.

Mayor Lago: There have been vaccines being offered across the street here -- and by the way, I want to put that on the record. If anybody wants to get vaccinated, please, across from City Hall, it's being offered. It's being offered in multiple locations in the City...

Vice Mayor Mena: CVS, Walgreen's.

Mayor Lago: For free...

City Manager Iglesias: So...

Mayor Lago: For free; CVS, Walgreen's.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor, but it would be...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: That's for testing.

City Manager Iglesias: The same...

Mayor Lago: For testing.

City Manager Iglesias: Logistical issue as far as the testing is concerned. We simply -- similar to what we ran before...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: What we would not have is the vaccination cost that we paid before.

Mayor Lago: But I think also now, I think now, due to the advancements, I think there'd be less people that -- plus the fact that a lot of people are vaccinated, and a lot of people have already had COVID, there's a certain portion of the community that has herd immunity, that they're not going to be testing. They're not going to be testing as often as they were, not that they're not going to be testing. They will be testing, but they're not going to be testing as often as they were before. So, I just want to put it on the record. I know that time is sensitive today. Please, I'm asking you, I need to have this information before the Commission so that they can make a decision and that they feel comfortable.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: And I will work with both -- you know, all our procurement partners to expedite those contracts. I understand what you're saying.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Fors: Quick question: This testing, would this be something we would be able to make exclusive to Coral Gables residents or not really?

Mayor Lago: If I may say something, you could always make anything, you know, exclusive, but the reason why I think they can do it for free is because, like I said, one lane for Coral Gables residents, one lane for non-residents, and then they can take advantage of the fact that they could potentially charge non-residents that happen to be working in the Gables, crossing through the Gables. And say, "Hey, listen, I don't want to wait three or four or five hours in Tropical Park. I can just get it done here for 15 minutes. Yeah, maybe it costs me \$100, but I got it done. And I

can go back to work, and I don't have to lose two days," which could potentially cost them even more.

City Manager Iglesias: I do believe -- to answer your question, Commissioner -- if we just have Coral Gables residents, it may not be enough volume to actually...

Mayor Lago: Yeah, attract.

City Manager Iglesias: Set this up. However, whatever times that we do open, we must have Fire out there and Police out there to -- something similar to what we did before. The only issue is that before we paid for the actual testing, and we don't have to pay for the testing this time. But from a logistical point of view, we have to control it with Fire and with Police for whatever time we're out there.

Unidentified Speaker: Right, right, right.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Lastly, to your comments, we have updated our website that includes all facilities where you can obtain a test and/or a vaccine within our community. And then the last thing I want to bring up is there has been some discussion on the media regarding monoclonal antibody therapy. The State has identified one site per county in the state of Florida to administer that therapy. Ours is going to be Tropical Park. When we have a communication and directive as when that's going to open and how one can register for that therapy, we will post that on our site as well. That therapy has been shown to be very instrumental in those folks that have -- that are COVID positive, have symptoms, but they're not significant and weren't enough to be in the hospital. So, this therapy is a great intervention therapy to prevent hospitalization or that person getting -- or that patient getting much worse. So, as soon as I have that information...

Mayor Lago: Just a quick point.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: I'll put it on...

Mayor Lago: Just a quick point. For staff, Commissioner Regalado from the County has asked to be here today at 2:30. She'll be here at time certain, so we can ask her as many questions as possible in regards to this, if you have any questions.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: My only point is, once we have everything set up, I want to make sure that we do, you know, the best job possible of educating the community, especially when it comes to what qualifies as immunosuppressant. Because even I had to go online to see what types of illnesses or other conditions qualify. And a lot of folks may not know that they're actually vulnerable because they may have some, you know -- a pre-existing condition. So, the more we can educate -- break it down to the most basic forms, I think the better we serve the community.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: I agree, Mr. Commissioner. Last week, we put out a guidance from the CDC. As early as yesterday, we sent another communications to our Communication Office trying to break that down.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: And you're right, it certainly expands outside of what one would think is immunosuppressant. And every day we're trying to clarify that as best as possible to make sure that they have access to it.

Commissioner Menendez: Perfect.

Mayor Lago: So, in closing, Chief, unless you have -- Is there anything you want to say?

Police Chief Hudak: No. I mean, the only thing that we were going to add from our standpoint is the more variations we do on a site, the more police personnel is involved. And the Chief touched on the call center and the work we have to do. We are now -- schools are open as opposed to the last time we did this. So, my resources would be on overtime. I do not have the answer yet if we would be reimbursed. When we did this last time, the City was reimbursed for the officers' overtime, and we took people out. So, this would be my understanding, unless we're going to get reimbursed, would be a cost that we would be absorbing for the officers, the staff that we put out. That's it.

Mayor Lago: So, let's -- we have a lot of information. We have vendors. We have multiple vendors. I want to bring this in for a landing this week, Mr. Manager, if we can please.

Vice Mayor Mena: And also, the list you referenced that you have of locations that currently offer testing or vaccines within the City...

Mayor Lago: Spread it.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think we should be pushing that more. Any time we send out an email to residents, somewhere in the email, maybe just have a section that's dedicated to that. Even when anybody goes on the website, maybe it should be something that is either prominently featured or is like a pop-up.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Yeah, as a banner, I got you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, we should...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: I'll work with (INAUDIBLE) on that.

Vice Mayor Mena: Be pushing that. And I would tell you, don't slice it too thin, you know, because of location. You know, I'm thinking like Red/Bird, right? You know, if it's right outside Coral Gables, I mean, that still can service, you know, residents in the City. Don't be too...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Yeah, we did...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Publix, CVS...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Walgreens, and I just...

Vice Mayor Mena: But even if it's right around the City, you know...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's still an option for people.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: That is an option, yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Commissioner Fors: That's going to be a big factor for me deciding whether I'm in favor of bringing it in or not. Because over the past couple of weeks, I've had a lot of people in my family get tested for COVID because they travelled, and we have a new baby in the family. And it's been relatively simple to get free COVID test at CVS or Walgreens right in the area. I haven't gone

myself to that -- to a CVS and Walgreens, but -- and I don't know how that's changed in the last few weeks since we are seeing a surge.

Police Chief Hudak: According to South Miami, the CVS at Red and Bird Road, right on the outside, is a usual steady...

Mayor Lago: That has free testing or free vaccination?

Police Chief Hudak: It has both.

Mayor Lago: Both?

Police Chief Hudak: My understanding...

Mayor Lago: Okay, I didn't know.

Police Chief Hudak: It has both. And so, according to the Police Department, they get a regular flow of people.

Mayor Lago: But don't forget, we were at 56,000 individuals testing positive on a daily basis.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: But when I...

Mayor Lago: And now we're down to -- I think the numbers have dropped pretty significantly. I think we're like 16, 13, 14, fluctuating thousand, around that number. So, the numbers have gone down significantly.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: But when I did the testing of the hyperlinks for the area within the City and the vicinity, they were averaging -- this was a week ago -- we were averaging about 20 to 32 appointments per day.

Unidentified Speaker: Available.

Mayor Lago: But my point is, if they're willing to do it for free and it costs -- and if we can do a small operation...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: And it's small. I'm not talking about it's extensive as we had last time. We could do something small where a person feels comfortable to come to the back of City Hall -- maybe our infrastructure in regards to Police and Fire doesn't need to be that big, and it makes financial sense. If it doesn't make financial sense, we brought it up, we did what we could, and we push people to areas like on 57th Ave.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: I think the objective that we're bringing up is how can we expand the access to vaccination and testing.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: And we have the local sites. We're working with the Department of Health to, you know, tap into their infrastructure, and then we have these vendors as well that can provide or fill in those gaps. And that's how we're looking at it.

Mayor Lago: And plus, you're also doing your door-to-door service, which again...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Is, you know, a program that's offered by the City of Coral Gables, which not many can offer.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we've done at-home vaccination, which is tremendous.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, the firefighters and the police officers have done a great job.

City Manager Iglesias: And it's two vaccinations that we've done...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: At home, the first and second.

Mayor Lago: We really made sure to take care of our most vulnerable and our elderly community, which is important. Alright, thank you. With that...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Thank you, sir.

Mayor Lago: The Mayor's comments are closed.