

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item D- Public Comment**  
**May 23, 2023**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

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

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**  
**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Maria Cruz**  
**Rip Holmes**  
**Gordon Sokoloff**  
**Zully Pardo**  
**Robert Ruano**

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Agenda Item [1:25 p.m.]  
Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Can we move to Public Comment please.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker today is Maria Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. This is not what I had prepared for Public Comments today, but I had no option but to discuss something else. I guess about three hours ago, I heard the Mayor say that following Robert's Rules, first of all, everything goes through the Mayor, every single item goes through the Chair, whoever the Chair is, that's Robert's Rules. The other item was items for discussion are not open for public comments. I took the time to look at the agenda for today. There is a section called Discussion Items, and there are no items under Discussion

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Items. There are items, actually that's Section L, there's no discussion items. There are eight items under Mayor's Comments; there's 15 items under City Commission items; there are Manager items; there are no City Attorney items; there's no City Clerk items. I think the Manager items were five. So, if you add up those items, if you expect anyone to be able to discuss all these items in three minutes, might as well move to Havana, Cuba or Moscow, or any of those places, because it's impossible. You are trying in a very not...to silence us, and that is not acceptable. I'm going to tell you right now, the only items that the public, the residents, the taxpayers will be able to speak on would be two on the Consent Agenda, and nine public hearing items, that's it, because the rest is under items, not Discussion items, Commission items, Mayor's Comments, those are not discussion items, those are comments that people are expressing, and we should be able to express what we think about items that are presented, that if we're not going to have anything to say, you know what, might as well don't have elections, become a dictator, do whatever you want and I guess we'll have to find a way to see you in court, because in the City of Coral Gables you're changing precedent. We have been able to discuss anything that's brought up here. This is our city, this is our Commission, this is the place where we live and we're entitled to express our opinion, and I'm sorry, you're not a dictator, you're the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: If I may, Mr. Clerk, I'd like to respond very quickly. Madam Chair, will you tell us who the Chairman, who Chairs the Commission, please.

City Attorney Suarez: Yes Mayor. The Mayor serves as Chair of the City Commission meeting, yes.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you very much. And also, in regard to discussion items, what I meant was, City Commission items. Like I said before, we can discuss any item here on the agenda and there's an opportunity why I wrote a piece of legislation that allows for one hour of public hearing, so you can have a conversation about any issue. As was clearly evident by the last Commission which lasted over eleven hours, where I did not have any of my Mayor's Comments addressed, because I allowed my colleagues to speak on their items, so I passed all my items to this Commission meeting. The meetings are lasting longer and longer and longer. So, it's very simple, anybody can have a conversation about what they like. They can talk about it here, it's very simple, but in regard to discussion items, the City Attorney can give you a little further feedback. Would you like to give a little further feedback in regard to discussion items?

City Attorney Suarez: Yes Mayor. So, public comment is not legally required when the City Commission is not going to take any official action. So, when the Commission is discussing items which many of the items that are listed under City Commission or described as discussion items, if there is no official action taken, public comment is not legally required. I do want to clarify that when there are resolutions, for example, all the resolutions under the City Manager items, public comment will be allowed during those, if requested, but for discussion items where the Commission does not take action, public comment is not legally required.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Fernandez: Can I get a clarification.  
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Mayor Lago: Sure.

Commissioner Fernandez: Not legally required does not mean we cannot have it.

City Attorney Suarez: Correct.

Commissioner Fernandez: So as a sponsor of an item, I can say I would like to hear public comment on the item, correct.

City Attorney Suarez: I think you could ask the Mayor as the Chair.

Commissioner Fernandez: My question is, can we reserve the right to listen to public comment on items that we're putting up.

Mayor Lago: If you want to override me, you can get three votes from the Commission and you can override me, that's fine. But at the end of the day, a discussion item is meant for the Commission to have a discussion item in the sunset, and if an item would like to be discussed, there is a public hearing, which is one hour, we can have every single item here. This is the way every other city does it, and this is the way that as the Chair of the Commission, I'd like to run.

Commissioner Fernandez: So how can we place an item on the agenda in order to ensure it's open for public comment?

City Attorney Suarez: It would be a resolution or an ordinance. If you draft a resolution that will be voted on or reconsidered, then there would be public comment should be allowed.

Mayor Lago: And we're doing anything different than any other city does. All we're trying to do is be as effective and streamline the process and I'll tell you why again. You've been very vocal about it, it's about residents. Residents have called me and said, Vince, we came to the last Commission meeting, we couldn't speak, because we didn't have the time to speak because there was so much public comment and there were so many comments that were made that we didn't have time to speak on the presentations. Look, we just took this item, which is time certain, we took it an hour late, we haven't even had lunch yet, it's 1:30 p.m. We still have all the Mayor's Comments, which I'm going to defer again for another meeting and then we have all the items commencing from F-4, then we have all the City Commission items which are 15, and then we have all the City Manager items, which are 15, and then we still have to have a negotiation in our lunch in regard to union negotiations. If you want, we can do this all night till 9, 10 o'clock at night, like we did last time, but the point is, we're not squashing speech, it's very simple. Anybody can have a comment here. They can talk and that's why I wrote the piece of legislation such a long time ago, to ensure the public hearing is available for everybody here.

Commissioner Fernandez: I agree. The question that I have though is, to your point, with all the items on the agenda, if residents wish to speak on more than one item – I can give you the example. We had a candidate forum where we were given a minute to address two different issues, we didn't have time to address those two issues, because we're asking residents if you want to speak on

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seven different items, basically you have to break it down to about 20 seconds per item. There could be a compromise. We can maybe offer in these discussion items when the sponsor would like to open up for discussion, maybe a one-minute comment from residents. I'm trying to compromise with you.

Mayor Lago: Listen, it's very simple. I run the agenda. I'm the Chair. There are multiple opportunities to speak on issues. If you'd like you have to be disciplined on these issues. If you want to speak about an issue that's up for discussion, speak about it in public hearing for three minutes. Wait for the following items, resolutions and ordinances to speak on those items. A person could speak, if they want, 15, 20 times, 30 times, 40 times, 50 times in today's meeting, but the only item which is being reserved, as the City Attorney just mentioned to you, is under City Commission items. That is a time for us to have a conversation about issues that we view as pertinent, very simple, and it's in the Sunshine and we have that conversation. If not, we will never end meetings. Look at the length of today's Commission meeting, it's already 1:30 p.m., and we still have probably, Madam City Attorney, 50 items left on the Commission.

City Attorney Suarez: I don't know. I haven't counted them.

Mayor Lago: Plus, a negotiation during our lunch which we're supposed to have, which I don't even know if we're going to be able to have it during our lunch. Yes ma'am.

Commissioner Castro: There's a separate section that says, for discussion, right, that I'm not seeing here.

City Attorney Suarez: It's at the end of the agenda.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Could I move some of my items for discussion, because for me, it's really important to hear what the residents have to say, according to the discussions that I want to have.

City Clerk Urquia: That portion is for discussion amongst the members of the City Commission.

Commissioner Castro: So, is there any way we can change that, or what's the legal proceeding?

Commissioner Menendez: We have resolutions.

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor, can I chime in?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Attorney Suarez: First, I'd like to clarify one thing. It's not because an item is listed under City Commission that makes it so that public comment is not legally required. It's because it's not an item on which the City Commission is going to take official action. If you all discuss an item and you decide to take action, which typically items on what you're voting on should already be on the agenda, the resolution or whatever action, but if for some reason there's an exigent circumstance or something that you would take action, certainly you know we would allow public

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comment before that action is taken. But when there is just merely a discussion item, it's not legally required. The discussion section of the agenda is for informal discussion. So oftentimes, or not oftentimes, at the end of the meeting, the Mayor will ask if anybody else has anything else. You all sometimes bring up items of interest, and so it's informal discussions. But a discussion item like the ones that you've listed under City Commission items, public comments not legally required, but certainly it can be allowed, as we have done in the past, but it's not legally required.

Mayor Lago: Do we have any other further public.

Commissioner Castro: Me.

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am, go ahead.

Commissioner Castro: So, how do I – I want the residents to be able to talk.

Mayor Lago: They do.

Commissioner Castro: How do I move forward?

Mayor Lago: They do. They have...

Commissioner Castro: No, but on my item, not before I talk.

Mayor Lago: Then there has to be a resolution or an ordinance.

Commissioner Castro: Can we move forward, or no?

Mayor Lago: Unless your item is a resolution or an ordinance you can't move forward.

Commissioner Castro: Its up for discussion.

Mayor Lago: Then they can't speak. They can speak about your issue under public hearing. They can come and speak at the beginning of the meeting. Just like every other municipality does it, completely the same thing.

Commissioner Castro: So how is somebody going to...

Commissioner Fernandez: You can override the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Or you can vote to override the Mayor if you'd like.

Commissioner Castro: So how is somebody going to speak on something I haven't spoken on yet?

Mayor Lago: They can speak about it in public hearing.

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Commissioner Castro: Right, before I speak.

Mayor Lago: Yes. That's the way that all the other municipalities do it. They literally line up, nobody responds, they line up, and they are very proficient, and they move through it. You've been to many Commission meetings in Hialeah, in the City of Miami, in Miami-Dade County, and they move through the process, and they put their items on the record, and then the Commission meeting commences. It's pretty standard protocol.

Commissioner Castro: I know that this is very lengthy, and I feel it, trust me, I do when I get home, but it is very important that I get input from residents.

Mayor Lago: They can get it here on public hearing, they can also come on open-door Fridays, they can come to Town Hall meetings, they can submit an e-mail. Literally, they could speak all day in the Commission meeting, but during discussion items its meant, as the City Attorney just said it, it's not my legislation, it's the way it's written in the code.

Commissioner Castro: But we've done it different in the past.

Mayor Lago: But this is the way we're doing it now.

Commissioner Castro: So, you're saying no.

Mayor Lago: No.

Commissioner Castro: And there's no way I could say yes, right.

Commissioner Fernandez: You could override.

Mayor Lago: You could override me, if you'd like.

Commissioner Castro: How do I proceed to override him?

Commissioner Menendez: Through the Chair. I had complaints from residents that the longer these meetings go, the harder it is for them to even track the items that they're interested in, because they assume that on a normal day, by lunchtime, their item comes up and it could be at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. So, the length of the meetings is having a negative impact on a lot of the residents' ability to stay engaged, that's a given. The good news is, if history is any indicator, which I think it is, that we missed an entire month of Commission meetings because of the election, so everything is really backed up. I would hope that in the next couple of meetings, we catch up and our meetings aren't marathons, but they are actually manageable, and you have people more engaged, more being able to participate. So, my only question in regard to your – so on an individual item that's up for discussion. I'm not into necessarily doing a blanket motion or blanket to do it, because I respect the position in our Charter of the authority of the person who is the Mayor, because those are the powers that they are given, right, so it's in the Charter. But on an individual item, a discussion, can we then decide as-a-whole if that particular discussion item we want to open up.

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Again, I'm not comfortable doing a blanket, because that's the authority and the power of the Mayor. Look, could we instead of doing a blanket, if there's a discussion item that we feel is very heated and very involved, we have the ability to at least on a particular item, gauge the interest on that item.

City Attorney Suarez: So, certainly on specific items, the Mayor on his own can decide to allow public comment and if he does not, then a member of the Commission can make a motion to allow public comment on a specific item, and if a majority votes to approve, then yes, you can have public comment on a specific item.

Commissioner Menendez: I don't want to step on – could be Mayor Lago, could be future, past, I want to stay clear of the way the Charter reads, you know, it's something – I don't want to mess, tinker with that. But on an individual item, if there's options, then I think those are options we can approach.

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioner, again, I'm reasonable, I'm the one that put the legislation for public hearing, but we have to have some structure.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: In the first meeting, you let that person speak, you let that person speak, so we have to have structure. We had people that left the meeting last time, that were here to speak on an issue, said, I can't stay here, I have to go to work, I have to pick up my child, I have to do this, and I'm also to blame. We should not be having public hearings at 1:30 p.m. Public hearing should happen literally at 9:15, 9:20, 9:30 a.m., whenever that happens, right after we're done with our protocol documents, if not earlier. So, this is simple. Residents, business owners, or any interested party, as long as it has to do with the city can speak on a litany of different issues, flexible, I'll be more than willing to take it on a case-by-case, but I have to crack down on pushing the meeting forward, because we haven't even had lunch yet and it's 1:30. If you'd like to speak on an ordinance, you have 50 opportunities to speak on an ordinance. If you'd like to speak during public hearing, you could speak to public hearing. If you'd like to speak on an item during consent, you can pull that item during consent, correct.

City Attorney Suarez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: You can basically speak on everything, on the Manager's items, on the City Attorney's items, you can speak on everything, but when it comes to discussion item between the Commission, I'll be making the decisions just like I'll be making the decisions in regards to adhering by the time clock, which I think we've done a pretty good job, and I've tried to stop everybody in a very respectful way – thank you very much, moving forward, just respecting everyone's time. Yes, Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm going to make a couple of comments because I was one of those people waiting in the audience to talk and waiting and waiting in a prior point in my life, and it becomes unbearable at a certain point. I'm sitting there with the computer trying to run my business at the  
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same time, having to step out doing phone calls, hours go by. We all have a number of discussion items, and they are just discussion items. We're going to get to a point where we can maybe do a resolution, but I think the discussion will be beneficial for the public if they could hear first and then come back to us and provide us with their comments on our discussion. Each one of these items that we have on here are important. I think it's important for us to get the discussions done so the residents can hear it, and then provide us with feedback. So that would be my preference.

Commissioner Fernandez: Watching meetings over the years, I have seen though that residents have come up with valid points that have enhanced the discussion that the Commission has had, but that's why. My compromise would be on items that the sponsor would like to offer the public comment, I would just ask for your deference on one minute of public comment from residents and we can limit it to the items that, I guess, I will commit to opening it up to the items that I think are of more public interest. Items that may not be, we'll make sure to let folks know ahead of time to submit comments. It's a compromise.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, at the end of the day, one of the few privileges that I have is making sure who is the Vice Mayor and who gets to sign for the Vice Mayor position, along with running the agenda. We are going to run the agenda the way that I want to run the agenda, which I think is more proficient and respectful of the process. I always take everything under advisement. I'll consider it, but moving forward we are doing it the way that I have delineated today. It's very simple and it's nothing, again out of the norm. You look at all the other 34 municipalities in Miami-Dade County, that's exactly how they run it. This is not a debate; this is not a debate for too long. We had a debate up here back and forth and back and forth and back and forth. Put your concerns on the record, give us your guidance, give us your input, and we move forward. There are multiple opportunities to have a conversation on all these issues.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll make a motion to override, because I cannot stand idly by as residents are silenced.

Commissioner Castro: I second.

City Attorney Suarez: Just so we're clear, what is the motion though.

Commissioner Fernandez: The motion is to override the Mayor's restriction of public comment on discussion items.

City Attorney Suarez: As a general matter.

Commissioner Fernandez: General.

Mayor Lago: But not on discussion items, obviously on Commission items.

Commissioner Fernandez: Commission items.

Commissioner Castro: I second.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: No  
Commissioner Castro: Yes  
Commissioner Fernandez: Yes  
Commissioner Menendez: I'm open on a case-by-case, but not a blanket situation. No.  
Mayor Lago: No  
(Vote: 3-2)

Mayor Lago: Alright. Let's move on.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Rip Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes, the floor is yours.

Mr. Holmes: Congratulations. We've got a lot of uninformed and misinformed information coming in being flooded by Mr. Fernandez and the Coral Gables Neighborhood Association and it's hurting me on my parking and the Mobility Hub which needs to stay as is. I need to alert both our sacred Mr. Iglesias and the sacred City Attorney, Ms. Suarez, I need to bring something up slightly controversial, but the attorneys here can understand that if I don't and if I need to file, let's just say, God forbid, a lawsuit to preserve the Mobility Hub as it is with a safe and successful design, and if I don't bring this up now, I have to put something on the record so that if need be I can appeal it, and so here I go. I believe that Ariel Fernandez made dishonest or misrepresentations to me during the campaign which induced me to change race from running for Mayor to running for City Commissioner and that has had a very deleterious, it's an ambush, okay, on the Mobility Hub. He induced me to change races which his assistant or friend Javier Banos said, actually changed the outcome of the race. We're talking about fundamental election integrity here, and I'm saying so that I can appeal it if need be and file a lawsuit, if need be, that Mr. Fernandez undermined the integrity of our elections in relation to this Mobility Hub and I'm the victim. Do I have any time left?

Mayor Lago: You have 51 seconds.

Mr. Holmes: There's two reasons to keep the present design; number one is safety. I've covered that a few times; number two, is the city's tax base. When we have – women do not like parking garages, but they do like a safe one like we have the safest in the state, the safest in the country, if we stick with what we've got. So, if women who do the shopping come because it's safe and they say, oh, I'll go shop in Coral Gables, at least I'm not going to get mugged. Then we make more money, not only the property owners nearby where people are parking for, but the entire city, and so, we have more money. One of the things that Mayor Lago has been saying, where are we going to get the money. Well, we get it with the present design of this parking garage.

Mayor Lago: Thank you sir. I appreciate you adhering to the time.

City Clerk Urquia: Gordon Sokoloff.

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Mayor Lago: Doctor, good afternoon. How are you feeling? Don't worry, we won't start your clock till you get up here. It's okay. Take your time. You're not going to have to move that quick. You're fine. Take your time.

Doctor Sokoloff: Last time I had one cane I played the role of Tiny Tim at Coral Gables Elementary.

Mayor Lago: So, what's going on, talk to me. How can we help?

Doctor Sokoloff: Thank you very much for your time. I'll keep it short. Just two things I wanted to mention on some upcoming issues that are on the agenda, one on the Mobility Hub. I've already spoken to you many times about it, no one, including Commissioner Fernandez is saying let's take down the Mobility Hub and lay grass. We all want to replace that parking garage with a new, better, efficient parking garage that is safe, that is well lit, that has a net increase in the number of parking spaces, has all the necessary and new age technology that goes with a great parking garage. I think to make it the most effective use of space and keep the cost low, which they need to be, because of expenditure restrictions, I'm in favor of not competing with Miracle Mile with additional retail on the bottom floor or anything like a park or something crazy on the top, keep parking up there too, but scale it back. The most important thing is that I'm sitting here listening to all the designs and the preservation of Coral Gables and the look of Coral Gables. Earlier today, my office building, Mayor, I had to switch out some of the swale to rock and I have to pick it all up because the rock that I put down, granite color rock to go with my dark gray building is three-eighths of an inch bigger than it should be, that's all. It's three-quarters of an inch and it's supposed to be three-eighths of an inch, so I'm calling my landscape guy and I've got to take it out. We have to preserve the integrity and I respect that, that's what we do. By the same token, however, wouldn't it be wonderful if this city once in a long time constructed a building, a parking garage that had extraordinary Mediterranean features to it, not something that looks futuristic. I haven't seen it. The Public Safety Building is modern. As long as we're giving out a Mediterranean Bonus to every other architect who builds something with a Mediterranean flare, when is the city going to start setting an example, wouldn't it be great to have your legacy pace on something really special and elegant, and there are examples of that. That's my humble opinion on that. Lastly, the resident concierge service that Commissioner Castro has discussed or brought to the table, I just want to say that I love the sound of that, and I believe in this city of all cities, Coral Gables residents deserve a concierge approach. In going through the process of getting my permit and trying to get the job done at my building that I just talked about, pulling teeth was easier for me, which I did for 40 years.

[Laughter]

Doctor Sokoloff: But it really, really was. I don't get people on the phone hardly ever. I called the main number; I never get a human anymore. I think it's time that the city looks at the infrastructure and tightens up their act. The City of Coral Gables should be much better than that.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Could I just discuss that item there with you.

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Doctor Sokoloff: Yes.

Mayor Lago: You mentioned the Public Safety Building.

Doctor Sokoloff: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I'm not an architect, but I'll defer to our Manager. What was the design?

City Manager Iglesias: Mediterranean.

Mayor Lago: It was Mediterranean. Did that go before the BOA?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, it did.

Mayor Lago: And did that receive Mediterranean approval?

City Manager Iglesias: It was a Mediterranean building. We didn't exceed the...

Mayor Lago: This is why, I think Doctor, we're going to have this discussion because I called for my colleagues to have a sit-down conversation amongst the Commission with professionals to come and give us different design ideas. The Mobility Hub is essential and I'm happy to see that my colleagues, especially Mr. Fernandez supporting me on this, it's critical, for the financial wherewithal of our city, because they've changed the tune on that matter because they said they weren't in favor of the Mobility Hub. It's been all over the Internet and I'm excited that my colleagues support that, because 27 percent of our tax base comes from the downtown. So, to me, you can change the design, perfectly fine.

Doctor Sokoloff: Right.

Mayor Lago: You can soften it, you can make it Med style, you can make it more Miami Beachesk, or kind of look a little art deco which I think would be beautiful. You see certain homes in the city that are art deco, that's not the question at heart. The question at heart here now is garnering support and finding the final scope to deliver on the Mobility Hub, critical for the future of our city as a result of the simple fact that in relation to our tax base in the downtown. When we talk about Mediterranean and Mediterranean design, I would like for you, if you could, because I think that you have the voice of certain people in this community, I would like for you to tell me and help us in the next public workshop that we do, a public meeting that I called for, which my colleagues approved, I would like for you to come prepared with ideas of what type of Med design you think is appropriate for that. If the Public Safety Building is not sufficiently Med, what do you think we should design it after? What would you like to see? Help me find some research, help me find some examples of parking garages. As you know, parking garages are basically giant shoeboxes.

Doctor Sokoloff: Right.

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Mayor Lago: Where Med has been applied and its looked, you know, appropriate and it looks beautiful or its airy and it's something that again, I think will be something beneficial and people would want to use. So, I task you with that, because I've looked, I've looked, and certain people with Med is too Med, too little Med. What is the Med that would make you feel comfortable applying it to the Mobility Hub? I'm not going to ask you for that today. If you could guide me and help me with that, I would really be appreciative of that, because it's important.

Doctor Sokoloff: Off the top of my head, I'd just like to say that the one that is there is Mediterranean in style. There is a time barrel tile, its open air, it really is, and I've parked there for 23 years. I know that lot very, very well. But the one, also behind John Martin's, lies right in it. It's into Aragon Avenue.

Mayor Lago: You think the one, and I'm sorry to interrupt you, you think the one on Andalusia is Med?

Doctor Sokoloff: Yes, I do. I do, and it's got Italian barrel tile on the top and it's got some nice curvature to it, yes, I do. And it's open air, it's very open.

Mayor Lago: That's where we disagree, because I think it's more brutalist and this has just a few little accent tiles. I think that the Public Safety Building has more design elements that are Med than any of the parking garages on Andalusia.

Doctor Sokoloff: Right.

Mayor Lago: This is my opinion, but again, what do I know.

Doctor Sokoloff: Yes. Neither of us are architects. I agree.

Commissioner Menendez: To Doctor Sokoloff.

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Menendez: Through you too. I had the opportunity of the few of us at the symposium on Mediterranean architecture at the Museum and one thing I learned that there is classical architecture which includes Mediterranean, Art Deco, and I learned a lot from that symposium and asked a lot of questions. My mindset is to go within that envelope where you see a variety, not necessarily it has to be Mediterranean or this or that. A question was asked, I asked the architects there, does Mediterranean apply to every type of building? – and I mentioned the parking garages. And Vice Mayor Anderson, I think the answer was, not necessarily, because of the shape of parking garages. It's not the best type of structure to apply Mediterranean, but the concept that maybe the classical architectural style finding the balance is perhaps the way to go instead of perhaps going down one path, broaden that path a little bit more. I think that was part of the discussion we had at a Sunshine Symposium.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor.  
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Mayor Lago: Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We did have that discussion and there was an excellent example where they took a modern building and they put an Art Deco façade on it. You might want to stay for our discussion and then give us comments afterwards, tell us your thoughts on what's presented. Okay. I do have something I'm going to share.

Mayor Lago: And I want to commend the Vice Mayor for her work with that panel. I couldn't stay, I had to leave, but I heard that one of the questions that was brought up, and correct me if I'm wrong Vice Mayor, was the issue of, can you see Mediterranean style being really applied to a parking garage? – and I think it was unanimous. I think you brought that up Commissioner.

Commissioner Menendez: I asked the question.

Mayor Lago: You asked that question Commissioner, I heard, and it was unanimous across the board from architects that it's not really conducive for a parking garage. Why? – because again, a parking garage is a shoebox. There is no articulation, you can't really get the beauty of it. So, its small windows, a lot of concrete, small windows. It's not really the best fit. But again, I just want you to help me out, if you could.

Doctor Sokoloff: Sure. I like the one behind John Martin's, but I appreciate it and I know it's going to include all those other features which I hope will allay Mr. Holmes fears, because it's going to be as beautiful, and I appreciate your willingness and openness to change the aesthetic which I think is the most objectionable thing for the residents. That and there was only one choice. It would be nice to have a few other choices and let us look. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: That's the plan. We asked the Manager to bring a few different ideas and possible design elements to see what we could do.

Doctor Sokoloff: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.

Mayor Lago: Soften the approach. Again, the Vice Mayor has been beating that drum for two years since she got elected. So, I wanted to congratulate the Vice Mayor on her work. Thank you for that. Thank you for your leadership.

Doctor Sokoloff: Thanks Vice Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Zully Pardo.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Pardo, welcome back.

Ms. Pardo: I want to bring up the subject of that lecture that we were present, and you brought up the issue of the parking garage. Mediterranean garages are boxes. I cannot see it as the backdrop for the Miracle Theater nor can I see the design that it is now. It's beautiful, but I don't think it's conducive for the area. As we spoke previously, oh, there was something that was asked of Architect \_\_\_\_ and he said, the best parking garages are the ones that can't be seen. I said, okay, how do I take off on that; and I said, okay, something that complements. If it complements what's in front of it, it's a great addition. So, I think I spoke about this before with Vice Mayor Anderson and Mayor Lago. Why not a green parking lot. There are so many examples. If you go to Miami Beach, there are so many beautiful examples of parking lots that are green and complement the area. Why not?

Mayor Lago: You know I remember, Zully, if I may.

Ms. Pardo: I have all the pictures. Pardon me?

Mayor Lago: If I may, don't worry, your clock stopped.

Ms. Pardo: I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: No, no. I want to give credence to your statement. The Vice Mayor brought up examples of hanging gardens a year ago.

Ms. Pardo: Exactly. At the Sunshine meeting.

Mayor Lago: Of some beautiful hanging gardens in the Sunshine meeting.

Ms. Pardo: Right. So, I'm thinking you know, we could consider something with green. Something even more – I feel the Miracle Theater is more of an Art Deco-ish look, maybe something in that moving towards that end, but that complements as a backdrop to what you have right now. Most significantly, the Miracle Theater, I mean your beautiful modern parking garages, but in this instance, I think we need to reconsider and maybe look. I've gotten multiple pictures that I brought forward, and I know the Vice Mayor had a – remember you presented previously, maybe we could revisit all of that. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. I did a small excerpt of the prior presentation and I have one more Art Deco one that we can ponder and maybe blend them. Take a look what's attached to the item and then they'll be a photograph later on that we'll discuss.

Commissioner Menendez: Very Art Deco Cheo-Pet.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Cheo-Pet Art Deco.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Robert Ruano.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Ruano, hello.  
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City Clerk Urquia: He's there but we can't hear him.

Mayor Lago: You want to come back to him. There he is. We can't hear you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Ms. Sarah Conde.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Conde, how are you? Yes, we can hear you.

Ms. Conde: Hello? Hello?

Mayor Lago: We have anybody else?

City Clerk Urquia: No sir.

Mayor Lago: You want to put her on hold and go back to Robert, see if you can get Robert on?

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Ruano, you are unmuted. We can't hear you, sir.

Mayor Lago: Can't hear you, my friend.

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

Mayor Lago: Robert, do you want to type in whatever your comment is and maybe we can at least get something on the record? You want to try Ms. Conde again.

City Clerk Urquia: We can try Ms. Conde one more time.

Commissioner Castro: He's going to call in.

Mayor Lago: Alright, call in.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Conde.

Ms. Conde: Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am, we can.

Ms. Conde: [Inaudible]

Mayor Lago: I think Mr. Ruano was going to call in.

City Clerk Urquia: He's in.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Perfect. Mr. Ruano, the floor is yours.

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Mr. Ruano: Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Mr. Ruano: Oh, finally. I don't know why. I had a Zoom meeting this morning and it worked fine. Anyway, unfortunately now I can't show you the pictures, because they were on my computer, but I would like to mention something. What I was saying, first of all, is congratulations to Commissioners Fernandez and Castro for your win and for the wonderful campaigns that you ran. I'd like to mention, hopefully some of you have already gone by or maybe will go by. You voted several months ago on some shoreline stabilization on the canal over by Tarragona. What they basically did is rip out a tree, several trees and I think four Palms. There was no permit, there was no communication with neighbors, there was nothing. All the vegetation is gone there now, it's just flat. I realize it's for a certain project, but I was a little bit upset, especially with the city saying how it wants to protect trees that there was no public process whatsoever. Even the times that it was sent to you, they never mentioned the real scope of the project. Unfortunately, I can't show you the pictures, but I think Mayor, you've seen the pictures, because I sent them to you, but I'll be happy to share them after this with the rest of the Commission. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for joining us. Mr. Diaz, would you be a gentleman and please join us. Very familiar with this area. This is right next to my house. So can you explain to us what were the trees that were removed. First off, who is the contractor?

Public Works Director Diaz: I couldn't tell you off the top of my head. I can send that information to you.

Mayor Lago: The contract is with.

Public Works Director Diaz: The city – the city is doing a canal bank stabilization on the south bank of Tarragona and there was an e-mail that Mr. Ruano sent around which I responded to, claiming all sorts of trees were being removed. It was a handful of pumps, some Sable Palms, some coconut Palms, I couldn't tell on the top of my head, but there were several of those, there was a Sapodilla tree was the fruit tree that was removed, and yes, in order for the canal bank to be redone, unfortunately. In fact, last year the Commission approved money, Deena's team is going to come up with a design and we are going to replant that area once they finish, and we'll be sharing that with the neighbors as soon as we're done. So, the whole discussion about all these large trees that were removed is simply inaccurate. The Sapodilla tree looked like a fairly nice-looking tree, but that's a fruit tree and generally speaking fruit trees are not treated the same as Oaks, but they still went through the process, there still was a permit for removal.

Mayor Lago: So, it's important to put on the record. It was not an Oak, it was not a Black Olive, it was not a Mahogany, it was not a big, large deciduous tree that we hold so near and dear to our hearts here in the city.

Public Works Director Diaz: Sapodilla.  
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Mayor Lago: It was a Sapodilla.

Public Works Director Diaz: And a handful of Palms. I couldn't tell you how many off the top of my head.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

City Manager Iglesias: May I speak Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

City Manager Iglesias: This also stabilizes the shoulder, because that is a saltwater intrusion structure on the other side when the county Water Management District tends to open it up, it creates a lot of turbulence through there and we are stabilizing the shoulder, so we don't lose our road.

Mayor Lago: So, I think what Mr. Ruano is alluding to, which he didn't mention here, I think is the issue of the sidewalk.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mayor Lago: This is more about the sidewalk that's being considered whether its going to be put parallel to the street or its going to be put behind the trees closer to the property line and the swale of the city. The issue there is when we walked the site, which Commissioner Fernandez was there, along with your staff and Vice Mayor Anderson was there too, and staff mentioned, look, we are going to have to do a winding situation here.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Mayor Lago: Because we do not want to injure all these massive roots that are basically sticking. I recommend that anybody go there and visit these roots; I'm going to be honest with you, the last thing I want is to kill one of these massive Black Olives or Mahoganies that are probably, I don't even know, 75 years old, you think.

Public Works Director Diaz: There is no comparison between the trees that we're talking about.

Mayor Lago: I understand.

Public Works Director Diaz: Which are specimen and mostly Black Olives and the trees on Tarragona. It's complete night and day.

Mayor Lago: The Palm trees – I know that. I'm not talking about that. What I'm talking about is, we have to come to some sort of compromise, and we are going to be talking about sidewalks later, if we ever get to my item, we may have to defer it to the next time again. It's just an update, but I  
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may have to defer it again, is the issue, a very simple issue and that is, we're going to have to find a compromise, putting the sidewalks and also saving the trees, and he is not happy, and I understand. He views that putting them next to the street is not in the best, is not the best use of those dollars, and the sidewalk should be placed behind the trees, more adjacent to the property line. I understand that, but we've got to find some sort of common ground.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor, just a clarification. The trees he's referring to are actually on one of the side streets, they are not on Alhambra. If you cross over the bridge, it's the street that goes along the canal.

Public Works Director Diaz: Tarragona.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes. Correct.

Mayor Lago: Exactly. That was the nexus between the conversation, I wanted to bring my colleagues up to date. Again, I welcome it again, if we want to have another meeting, as we progress through the project, which is a long time. That project has a lot of different pieces. It has sidewalks, it has the stabilization, it has traffic calming, it has the resurfacing. This area has been waiting for that for a long, long, long time.

Public Works Director Diaz: And one of the things that we did do...

Mayor Lago: And bridge repairs.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes. The bridge repairs should be almost done, if not done already. So, we actually put stakes – and we can have that conversation when the item comes.

Mayor Lago: We'll do that.

Public Works Director Diaz: Alright. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, if you don't mind, to go back to Ms. Sarah one more time to see if we can hear her.

Mayor Lago: Alright.

Ms. Conde: Hello, can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am, we can hear you now.

Ms. Conde: [Inaudible]

Mayor Lago: We can't hear you.  
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Ms. Conde: Can you hear me now. Hello.

Mayor Lago: We can't hear you.

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

Commissioner Fernandez: You sound very far away.

City Clerk Urquia: So that's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, we'll move on. I feel terrible that we couldn't hear that.