

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Agenda Item B
July 14, 2020
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item B - Public Comments:

Does anybody wish to address the City Commission?

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, just really quick, for members of the public who wants to address the Commission, they can do so by raising their hand under the participants window and if they are participating by phone, they can do so by pressing Star Nine on their phones. We do have a couple of people who would like to speak. First is Mark Trowbridge.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You have two minutes to speak.

Mark Trowbridge: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Good morning, Good to see you and your colleagues, everybody looks fantastic, and I just want to thank all of you for your continued partnership and leadership during these very challenging times for not only our community, but certainly our local businesses. I just want to remind all of those who are listening in today that our restaurants were dealt a pretty significant set-back just about a week ago. So, I want to encourage all of you to

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continue to support them in ordering directly with them, in doing take outs. Obviously, we have had to pivot two more outdoor dining with no indoor dining room availability, but with that said, you know, I want to encourage everybody to continue to support the good work that our restaurants have been doing. Many of them, you know, looked so forward, you know to that day May 20th when... Mr. Mayor, you were there to herald the reopening, and as you know, with the rise in cases, that has required us to take a step back, and while that is difficult, I believe folks understand that, but most importantly, take good care of our neighbors who are for many months now providing you a hot meal and a fresh alternative to maybe just being at home, and please don't put them in any situation where they have to remind you to wear a mask. Please do that for them. Let them focus at what they are the best at which is providing you with a great service and a great meal. Order direct, please, not through a third-party service, that allows them to save up to 30 percent, and most importantly, remember that they are our neighbors, our friends and in many cases, the small businesses that make Coral Gables go. Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and members of the Commission.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, very much Mark. Very appropriate and well said.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, next we have Maria Cruz requesting to speak.

Mayor Valdes -Fauli: Of course. Ms. Cruz, we can't hear you. You have to unmute yourself.

Maria Cruz: I am doing it. Good morning, Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I would like to start by thanking Vice Mayor Lago for putting me (inaudible) report on the agenda as item G-1. I still cannot believe that neither of our two high ranking female officers thought it was important for these two officers to be aware that this report was completed. Why did they allow these two female officers to be blind-sided by the media, to be victimized again? How can anyone be allowed to explain it by saying that the ex-City Manager did not get told either. She was not a victim. How can anyone defend the ex-City Manager when everyone in the City was aware that she and her sidekick, also known as the Public Safety Director, would do anything to embarrass and maybe fire the Police Chief without worrying about any collateral damage. Yes, these female officers were and still are their collateral damage. They are the victims in this case. Someone could ask, why are the investigations taking so long. Perhaps, they do not know, or are trying to forget that the ex-City Manager hired an IA Commander, going against the Chief's recommendation. An IA Commander's job was to put roadblocks in the investigation to make sure that the real culprits do not face consequences. Almost two years were wasted in this office. It would soon be three years that these officers were reduced to try to get to the Chief. How much longer are they going to wait to get the justice they deserve. Let's not forget that justice delayed is justice denied. It's time for you all to request and remind the Police Chief that this investigation needs to be completed and these ladies deserve to get the justice that they have been waiting for too long. Thank you.

Mayor-Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Maria. Okay, we will continue with...

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City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, next we have Eileen Faracchi who would like to speak.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Ms. Faracchi, two minutes.

Ms. Eileen Faracchi: Good morning, can you hear me?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, we can. We can't see you, but we can hear you.

Ms. Faracchi: Okay. My name is Eileen Faracchi and I am the newly elected president of Hammocks Oaks Homeowners Association. There is a petition before the Commission to extend the, there is a... to extend the petition so see if we could increase our Special Taxing District in order to get a roving guard. The premise of this extension is based on the COVID-19, and it seems that we take it very seriously and it is a tragedy to our community nationally and locally. However, communication was only improved as a result of COVID-19. The sponsor of the petition wants to extend it because it did not pass by the original date. We have had special meetings with the Police Chief and John Winklejohn and different community, different security experts where questions were asked were answered. We have a very active neighborhood WhatsApp as a result of COVID-19 where there is conversation going back and forth about the Special Taxing District and communication regarding this issue, and as I said, by the deadline of June 25th, it did not pass. So, therefore, an extension was requested to see if enough votes could be scraped together to override the will of the community. Even the sponsor went house to house gathering signatures on the original petition. So, nothing was hampered by the COVID-19, and the majority of the neighborhood believes no extension should be afforded and the will of the people in this community is to not, not increase the taxes for a roving guard. So I, I request respectfully that you deny the request to extend the deadline to August 25th for this petition.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, thank you very much.

Ms. Faracchi: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Can I? Mayor, is the Homeowner's Association a mandatory... Does everyone in Hammocks Oaks belong to the Association? Is she still on the line?

Ms. Faracchi: Yes, I am here, can you hear me?

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Ms. Faracchi: Okay, it is a voluntary association. However, anybody in the neighborhood, even if you are not in the association is on the WhatsApp. As a matter of fact, the co-administrator of the WhatsApp with me is not in the homeowner's association, and everybody was invited to the
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special meeting via Zoom, because of the fact of their taxes. So, whether or not you are in the homeowner's association or not didn't block accessibility communication and ability to make your voice known.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you. I know that some homeowners' associations are mandatory and everyone within the community belong to it, and therefore, the homeowner's association can speak for the people on behalf of the people. So, I understand what you are saying in that it is a voluntary homeowners association. So, I mean, we will wait until the item comes up then.

Ms. Faracchi: And also, respectfully, do you also understand though, that as I said that every single homeowner in the neighborhood, homeowner association member or not was involved in the meetings, reached out to, its on the WhatsApp. It is not blocked from any communication. Yes?

Commissioner Keon: Okay, yeah. Now, I do.

Ms. Faracchi: Right, thank you.

Commissioner Keon: I just wanted to make sure whether it was voluntary or mandatory, that's all. Thank you.

Ms. Faracchi: Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before you go on, we have one person requesting to speak. I don't have a name, but it says Seckfl. S-E-C-K-FL.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, would you please provide your name and address?

Daniel Seck: Daniel Seck, here I am also a member of the Hammocks Oaks community. Hello Mayor, hello Commission, I would also like to add... The petition basically states that... it appears that it has been presented to the Commission as being unanimous support. I went back and looked at the video presentation by the... Look, the purpose of the homeowner's association and the meeting, the Commission meeting on February 25, when it was approved, and it was really... the individual represented himself as representing the community as the president of the homeowner association. He is no longer the president, and I would just echo Mrs. Faracchi's sentiment that there is neighborhood opposition to this. It is being presented to you in the resolution as being

without challenge, but there are challenges. It is debatable. I think there has been a fair amount of time to get the signatures, I would request as well, no extension. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there anyone else?

City Clerk Urquia: No, no one else is requesting to speak under the Public Comments section.