

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
October 13, 2015
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon via Telephone
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick**

City Staff

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Economic Development Director, Javier Betancourt
Assistant City Manager, Carmen Olazabal
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-1 [Start: 11:31:16 a.m.]

A Resolution authorizing the waiver of City permit fees and assisting in the permit process for properties assessed as part of the Miracle Mile and Giralda Avenue Streetscape Project for any façade-related improvements and/or improvements to the sidewalk pavers within private property along storefronts made during the project construction.

Mayor Cason: H-1 – City Manager.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor both H-1 and H-2 reflect request from the City Commission making less expensive the permit process addressing victims so that if they are coming in for permits they don't have to pay for permit, and also making sure with H-1 that we

encourage property owners of the Giralda and the Miracle Mile areas to renovate their projects during Streetscape. So I'd like to have Charles Wu present H-1, which provides incentives for façade-related improvements in that Miracle Mile/Giralda area, and then also later H-2, which makes some changes to our permit process to make it more price-friendly. I'm sorry, it's a joint venture, it's both Charles Wu and Javier Betancourt, so they can both come forward.

Mr. Betancourt: Good morning again, Javier Betancourt, Economic Development. This resolution would encourage businesses and property owners assessed as part of the Streetscape Project to renovate their facades and also participate in a program to modify the paving area within their property during construction of the streetscape, by waiving City permitting fees and also assisting those businesses and property owners through the permitting process. It would authorize the City Manager her designee to promulgate guidelines detailing the specific parameters by which those waivers will be granted. This would be communicated to the businesses and property owners in a variety of ways. We are working with the B.I.D. and the Chamber of Commerce on communicating the streetscape project issues to those businesses. The B.I.D. can speak more to their efforts with the block cap. We will also be holding an open house in mid-November to communicate all the aspects of the project; and finally, we are working on some mailers and questionnaires and digital communication devices to reach those businesses throughout the process. This is part and parcel of some conversations we've had with the businesses, with the B.I.D., with Commissioners; we feel it's an appropriate time for those property owners to take advantage of the streetscape being completed to also do their facades.

Mayor Cason: Would this be a menu of options and what about the owners who live in Chicago? A lot of these buildings are not owned by people in the Gables, so how are you going to get – I guess the idea is we want as much uniformity and much of the beauty that's going to be in the project to go right up to the storefronts, but there is a lot of absentee owners.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Well the B.I.D. has a list of every one of those property owners, of all the contact information, addressees, e-mails. What I would suggest is we ask the B.I.D. to communicate whatever it is we vote on today to....

Assistant City Manager: Olazabal: Right. At this point, the intent of the resolution is basically, if there are any property owners that is planning any storefront renovation or anything happening in the front of the façade to take advantage and do it now when we are doing the construction, so we can coordinate that and it can look like a seamless streetscape project. So we are creating this incentive so that they come now and they can do their project right now. In coordinating Miracle Mile project, we are working with the B.I.D. and we are disseminating information and we are collecting information as to how they want us to communicate with them throughout the construction; and right now we are working with Block....which are B.I.D. members, they are basically going to own that block, and they are going to be communicating with the...they are going to be communicating with the business owners to make sure we have those lines of communication very open and we are very pretty much out there to resolve any construction issues that arise.

Mayor Cason: But if they chose not to take one of the examples that we would like them to take, do they still get the benefits of the permit. In other words if they want, if what they have right now is cracked and they want to change it...but not the way we want.

Assistant City Manager Olazabal: It will still have to be something that is acceptable to the Board of Architects and it's consistent with what we are trying to do. But yes, the permit, the waiver is for anything that's happening on the storefront so that, that happens now at the same time as construction is happening. So if you have anything that is in the planning stages, now is the time to take advantage of that and now is the time to move it forward so we could coordinate it with the construction.

Mayor Cason: Any discussion? Have a motion?

Vice Mayor Quesada: So moved.

Commissioner Slesnick: Second.

Mayor Cason: Vice Mayor makes the motion, Commissioner Slesnick...

Commissioner Keon: Can I ask one question before you go further?

Mayor Cason: Go ahead.

Commissioner Keon: ...there is an issue along the Mile with some properties are historic in some ways and I think Dona was involved in that discussion.

Assistant City Manager Olazabal: I'll call Dona Spain to answer that specifically. I think she can identify which are the properties. Some of those properties, I believe, have been sold or TDR's and that's what makes it a little bit more complex.

Mrs. Spain: In fact, all of the historic properties other than the Miracle Theater on Miracle Mile had sold off the TDR's, so they may not have the ability to increase the square footage on the property, but I was involved in a discussion of this and I'm absolutely in favor of doing this for the property owners. We'll take their concerns if they want to modify the storefronts, we can take them individually.

Commissioner Keon: Other than the Miracle Theater, all of the property storefronts can be modified, is that right?

Mrs. Spain: Well the historic properties would need to go to the Historic Preservation Department and/or Board. It's not saying that they can't do it, but it would have to be reviewed in addition to any of the Board of Architects; those properties would need to come to the Historic Preservation Department.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And Commissioner just as clarification, Dona is saying that there are historically designated properties on Miracle Mile, other than Miracle Theater, but they have all sold their transfer development rights, so they are limited in their square footage for footprint, but they can still paint and do some improvements through the historic process.

Mrs. Spain: Right – change the fronts, but they may not be able to bring them back up to the property.

Commissioner Keon: But how many more square feet could they possibly acquire by some change in that storefront?- it's not significant enough that's its going to make a difference, is it?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: No – those that had sold their TDR’s – the only way that they could probably encourage more square footage is if they oriented it more out to the outside and take advantage of the wider sidewalks.

Commissioner Keon: Right. But a little bit of square footage that they may take up by that change, isn’t significant enough that we should not let them do it. Even if they sold the TDR’s that little bit of square footage is not significant. They could get no increase, they wouldn’t get any TDR’s for that little bit of space. I mean if they are doing it to improve the aesthetics of the property to update the Mile.

Mrs. Spain: And we have done that with the store properties. We have allowed them to update their storefronts and so that’s certainly something that we can look at for each of the properties.

Commissioner Keon: And these are the ones that have like stone...storefronts or whatever that you walk along?

Mrs. Spain: Yes – the 1940’s that goes in.

Commissioner Keon: OK. You know if they can figure out and get better looking storefronts along the Mile, I really think that we should encourage that to happen and if they have to...the issue with regard to...then I don’t think that we can do it as a Commission.

Mrs. Spain: I think that’s certainly something we can look at and they may have some square footage left in order to make that happen, so we can work with them.

Mayor Cason: So we can address that in the future with an added incentive if it’s required, if that situation comes up.

Mrs. Spain: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Alright...

Commissioner Keon: I’ve heard from a number of property owners that they can’t do it because – I don’t want to hear from property owners that they can’t modify their storefront, because of the historic designation.

Mrs. Spain: I don't think that's the case. I think we need to look at each of them individually, but I would encourage whoever would want to do that to come talk to me and we can work with them.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Vice Mayor made the motion, Commissioner Slesnick seconds. City Clerk.

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

[End: 11:40:31 a.m.]