

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C-1
June 13, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena**

City Staff

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
Deputy City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Safety, Frank Fernandez
Interim Human Resources Director, Karla Green
Police Chief, Edward Hudak**

Public Speaker(s)

**Maria Magdalena
Maria Cruz**

Agenda Item C-1 [0:00:00 a.m.]

Presentation on Police Recruitment, Hiring Process, and Crime Report Update.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And the first item of business is the police recruitment, hiring process and crime report update. Madam City Manager, you wanted to say a few words.

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Agenda Item C-1 – Presentation on Police Recruitment, Hiring Process, and Crime Report Update.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Of course. Before we begin in the hiring process for police recruitment, which is a critically important objective for the City, I wanted to have the organizational chart pop up, because if it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an entire city to hire a police officer. And, I wanted to give a shout out for some of the other departments that are critically involved in it. It's hard to see from here, but as you know, we've always had two Assistant City Managers. What has changed was in the old days, we had a Finance and Administration, and they were in charge of the financial health of the City. Critically important, but now they report directly to me. And we had an Operations. So, Police, Fire, Parks, Public Service, all of that would be under one Assistant City Manager. So, when I came in, the first thing that I did was listen to the September 2014 tape, where our residents called for a strategy. They called for new ways of doing our police work. And so, I took notes, I identified, and I reformed how we shaped our City. So, today we have an assist -- still two Assistant City Managers; one is in charge of Operations and Infrastructure, Development Services, Public Works, a \$200 million capital plan, Parks, Parking, Economic Development, and Historic. And the other side of the shop, critically important, is Assistant City Manager for Public Safety; Police, Fire, Emergency Management, IT, Human Resources, and Labor Relations. And you'll see how these pieces all come together for the strategy not only of new, bold initiatives for public safety, but also in the hiring process. So, one, you see Finance reporting to me. We have to fund those new initiatives. No one should think we are saving money. In fact, we are investing heavily in public safety and in the hiring of new police officers, as well as new infrastructure and technology. We have funded, at your allowance, NSAs, the Neighborhood Safety Aides, and we're hiring two more. It is our intention to grow that also in the daytime as well as night, and we'll talk later about how we're doing it. And we had to fund higher salaries for recruitment in order to be successful. And so, Finance played a very critical role. We had to get the message out in very creative ways, so CGTV, 30-second videos, paid sponsorship and Facebook. So, on the coldest days of the year, you see a Coral Gables bicycle officer in short sleeves riding through the neighborhoods, as everybody else is putting up Chapstick, is cold and is having a miserable February. You also see us now on YouTube, eNews, and now we're venturing into

Twitter. Public Works, lighting, fleet, traffic calming, they are partners in the process. Parking, lighting, cameras, security guards, and they're covering the perimeter now. Development Services, Code and Wayfinding, community recreation, park ambassadors, security guards and perimeter. So, while some of it is directly in my shop and some of it is directly in Peter Iglesias' shop, the Assistant City Manager for Operations, the vast majority of the strategy and the hiring and the push is in Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Safety. So, Labor Relations reporting to him, contract negotiations, higher starting salaries, extending the DROP two years so that we can catch up on the vacancy issue, revising the pay plan, updating the multiplier -- sometimes the public may not be aware, but it's critically important in recruiting police officers that we are competitive. We are above what everybody else is asking for in order to do successful recruitments. You all allowed a 25-year up in our multiplier that gives a retroactive three multiplier. That means if you're going to invest your career in Coral Gables, you are going to benefit from that increased multiplier. And also, we have a referral fee. Our police officers are good, hardworking people. They know talent out there. And so, they get paid if they have a successful referral fee. So, that whole Labor Relations contract addressing hiring. IT, Shield 12, CCTV, license plate readers, CrimeView, GIS; they are partners in it. Police, critically important. They are the interview panel. They reach out to other departments. They are the background investigators. We previously only had one background investigator that was reviewing Coral Gables police applicants. Now, we have six. We also have Journey & Associates, a private firm, that is doing the review for Fire and for high-level City departments, so that our police background investigators --, which are doing an excellent and exhaustive job -- can really focus on police hiring. At the end of the day, though, it rests with Human Resources. They are doing targeted recruitment. You allowed us to hire an HR public safety analyst, whose only job is police and fire. They're out with police officers at expos. They're managing career fairs. We have another one coming up July 8. Two hundred and fifty people came to the last career fair. I know because I shook everybody's hand. I found out why were they coming, how did they hear about us and what are they looking for in a city. And then they also are very expert in the follow-up of forms. Hundreds and hundreds of applications. If they sit at the desk, good people go somewhere else. We want to push them through the process. So, I just wanted to

provide a citywide framework on how we're approaching public safety recruitment. And with that, I'll turn it over to the Assistant City Manager/Director of Public Safety.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, members of the Commission. Thank you very much. As the Manager said, we have a very strong initiative on recruitment. This is not just a local issue. It is a national challenge for police departments to recruit qualified, certified police officers in this field. Some of the reasons why it becomes a challenge is because throughout the country, we're seeing significant -- a refined view. It gets hypercritical reviews of police officers and their actions. Therefore, it makes this career a little bit more difficult people to take on. Additionally, a low unemployment rate makes it difficult for people to attract -- to be attracted to government. And, those are some of the distractions that we have to deal with, regardless of the high level of intensity and the high level of attention that we have on our recruitment process. Nonetheless, we're being very successful today with recruitment. It'd like to thank CGTV, all of the members of the City that have been contributors to making this a successful story. We've recruited more people today than all of last year so far, and we're only half the year so far. So, with this, I'm going to pass it over to our Interim Director of Human Resources, Karla Green, who's going to provide you with some overview of the process and where we're at today. Ms. Green.

Interim Human Resources Director Green: I'm going to go ahead and give you an update on police recruitment. We currently have a total of 15 police vacancies. We just hired three as of yesterday. Three applicants have been extended final offer letters. There are two final hire -- there are two in the final hiring phase. There's 13 in background -- in the background process, 6 which are in the final stages of the background check, 2 in the testing phase, that includes polygraph and psychological, and 5 are pending interviews. An additional 5 are in preliminary background phase, that includes -- they're doing credit checks on them, driving and criminal history checks. To date, we have received 620 applications, compared to 384 total applications received in 2016 calendar year. That's an average of 116 applications per month, compared to 36 monthly average of last year. Over the last two years, we have made several modifications to

our recruitment plan. In October of 2015, as the City Manager mentioned, a public safety recruiter was hired whose only focus is on recruitment for public safety. In the last year, we hired two additional part-time staff to support our public safety recruiter. They help him out in screening of the applications while he's at job fairs. They're processing paperwork and just doing all kinds of support to this safety recruiter. The Police Department continues to support the recruitment efforts with a liaison who attends events and networks with local agencies. Police senior staff is supporting HR with national recruitment. They have been assigned different regions to network with other law enforcement agencies, colleges, universities and police academies. We usually get a status -- we have meetings every Friday, and collectively, we exchange ideas and they let us know who they have reached out to among the -- nationwide. We began hosting biannual citywide career fairs. The first one took place in January of this year. We had over 200 candidates that came in. The next career fair is going to be scheduled in July 8. So, we identified a low percentage of applicants turning in the full application package. In January, as a result of that, we began to hold monthly workshops to help the applicants complete the application, their packets and the application process. We are trying to hold these monthly meetings, so we can facilitate -- these forms have to be notarized a lot of times. So, we have notaries. We do it at no cost, free of charge. We notarize all the forms. We help them -- guide them through the process, facilitate it so that they can turn in the packets. In coordination with the Public Relations office, we have developed flyers, recruitment videos, posters, which have been distributed at career fairs and posted through social media and the City's website. And with the support of IT, we had made changes to the website for applications and created a new web link to police jobs. We also created the JointheForce@CoralGables.com email account. And all this was done to streamline the process, make it easier for applicants to be routed to those links and to the email. In case they need or have any questions, we're always ready to answer any question they have. In 2016, a sign-up bonus was increased to \$2,500. It used to be \$1,500. We implemented a one-time payment of \$1,500 to City employees who refer an applicant who's hired in a public safety position. Of course, this does not apply to any senior staff, anybody in HR, or anyone that is part of the selection process. We're excluded from receiving that bonus. And all of these efforts have contributed to the significant increase of applications we have

received since the beginning of this calendar year. We're not only focusing on numbers of applications, but rather on the quality of candidates that we're receiving. So, that's all I have for now.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Thank you. So, Mr. Mayor and members of the Commission, as you could see from hearing the City Manager and our Interim Director, we have a very comprehensive strategy to attract applicants, and it's been very successful just by the sheer numbers. And we're down to 15 vacancies as of yesterday. We anticipate that those are in the pipeline to being hired, and that we should be in the single digits very soon. Our challenge is not so much that we can't hire. We are hiring. Our challenge has been and was last year hiring at the attrition rate. So, we're hiring more and we're hiring, but we're not hiring enough to keep up with those that are leaving. As the Manager mentioned, now that we have a two-year extension on the DROP, that's going to help us retain those officers a little bit longer, helping us to catch up. I would say that this is a national problem. You could Google it. And, I think I've met with everyone up here to show the demonstration that we have on our -- you know, an A through Z process on how to hire, how to recruit, how to retain. That process has been detailed. I've actually -- I've brought -- we brought in outside experts, HR directors from Broward County and Dade County to look at our process, to identify where can we do better. What are the process improvements and where's the waste in that process that we could eliminate. Additionally, we've actually assigned green belt -- Lean Six Sigma certified green belts to look at this as a process improvement as a Lean Six Sigma process. We've done everything we can in terms of analyzing that process, but nonetheless, it still continues to be a challenge. We continue to persevere. We'll push forward. We identified new flaws in the system. We meet weekly. We meet every Friday at 9 am with the whole group to continue to look at this process and refine it every single week as we move forward. I do anticipate that we are going to get -- gain some headway here just because of the sheer numbers that we're seeing coming in, so you should see some relief going in terms of those vacancies. I do want to point out that 8 of those vacancies out of the 15 were new positions hired in '14 that never preexisted in the -- that were not

preexisting in the police department prior to that. So, we are making some headway. I'm here available to answer any questions you may have. So, that's the end of our presentation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes. I would like to...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Yes, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Address some of the things you have mentioned.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I'll start by saying -- you know, addressing your very last comment that 8 of the 14 vacancies -- or 8 of the 15 vacancies are new positions in 1914 -- I mean, in 2014. I think it's pathetic that since 2014 we have not been able to fill those vacancies. That's three years. And we've had those vacancies open for three years. Let me continue here. And you -- I got a presentation in January when I was a -- in fact, January or February when I was a candidate, and it was a very impressive presentation, a very impressive process. But, if you've had -- you had 384 applicants last year, and you've had 640-some this year, and you've only made three offers, there's something wrong with the process. We've had a thousand -- yeah, almost a thousand -- more than a thousand applicants, and we've had three offers to police officers. To me, there's something wrong in the process, not the system. I remember some years ago when the City of Miami was criticized for having too few policemen, and then they went out and hired all sorts of -- shall I use the word crooks? And we don't want to do that. We don't want to do that. But out of a thousand applicants, to our police force being the police force that pays the second-highest salary in the County and having a \$2,500 bonus, to have three offers, to me, that's not working. I'm sorry. The process may be beautiful, fantastic process. I mean, I was very impressed. But it ain't working. It just doesn't work. Public Safety is our most important function -- what we offer the residents of our fair city, but you know, you go to career

fairs, you -- advertising. You have tapes. You're in Facebook. You are in whatever, and you're facilitating the application process. It ain't working. It ain't working, and if you tell me...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Excuse me, Mr. Mayor. With respect, please don't think that the three offers -- that we only offered of a pool of 1,000, we only selected three. For every one -- for every 70 applications, 70, we're able to select one from those. They're disqualified, because of credit. They're disqualified, because their social media had racial discussions in it. They're disqualified, because of a criminal history. You want us to disqualify. What we have here is a python that has swallowed and the process is -- has within it about, you know, several hundred applicants that are going through the process. These three that we just hired were a process that started, you know, at least eight months ago and is going through. So, I promise you, it's not that we discarded 1,000 applicants. It's that in the process that had actually started months and months ago, it had gone through the process and we were able to select three, but hundreds of applicants are in the process and we will continue to go through -- push through to make sure that we are not compromising on our hires, but we are moving them as quickly as possible.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We should not compromise on our standards. I agree with you, and I think all of us would agree with you a thousand percent. But, I think the system is not working, and it has to be the process. I don't know how many people have to interview these applicants. Are there 17 different interviews? I mean, when you explained it to me in February, I guess it was, there were so many interviews and so many reviews and so many steps in there that it makes it almost unworkable, because for any reason that somebody doesn't like him or her, that person is disqualified. I think the system is not working. And, we sitting up here are responsible for the fulfillment of those positions. To have had eight new positions since 2014 and then tell us that they're not filled, because they're new positions -- new positions as of three years ago. That's pathetic, I think. That's pathetic. But, I just don't think it's working, and I would like to call the Chief of Police, if he's here, wherever he is -- there he is -- to tell us about those, because it is his

department and I am really criticizing the police department, and it is his department and you're being very much criticized.

Chief Hudak: I realize that. I believe that, you know, the process -- and there's been several revisions to the hiring part of what we look at. We do, as the Director has said, we look at this every Friday at a meeting with the Police command staff, Fire command staff about where we're at in the recruiting. The additional resources have been we had one background investigator and sergeant. For a long time, we had three. There was a -- and then we upped it to the six with the background files as well. As far as the system itself, I think it's an all-encompassing system between HR and ourselves as well. And then, as we alluded to, there's the review and the books and the meetings that take place. I believe we strive all the time to try and shorten the time period. I know that's been our direction to review and either come up with recommendations. It is a very long process. In talking to some of my colleagues, I think it's probably one of the longer processes, but we're getting good candidates out of it, and that is the review that we're looking for. As far as the revisions of it, I see them in my role as the director of this department, along with the HR Department and the like. I realize the criticisms are out there, and I realize that they fall on me.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It was very much of an election issue, and you know, the process and we don't want them to lower our standards and whatever, but it is very, very troubling. It is very troubling. And I don't -- from what you're telling me, I don't see any improvement in the process, I really don't. Another -- and I want to -- now that I have you up here, when we had the discussion the last time about Major Molina, I think it was -- was it Major Molina?

Chief Hudak: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Major Molina, she called me, and I took her -- she called me because somebody had asked if she could call. I said, yes, of course. But, she said because the Police Department is all divided and this is all a political move, and that Chief Hudak hates me and the

department is divided. Why is the department divided and all this? She said it. I'm not asking you because --, but I think that you should be able and you should run the police department, and you should report to the Public Safety Director, but he should have nothing at all to do with the running of the police department. It is your department. You are responsible for it. You're going to get the blame. And if he -- and you should make the appointments that you want to make, and you should be responsible to the Public Safety Director and the City Manager for qualifying those appointments. But, the impression I got from this lady was that the police department today was dysfunctional, and that troubles me very, very much because our first responsibility is public safety. And, if we have a dysfunctional police department and a police department that can't attract police officers -- out of a thousand applicants -- maybe it's not three. Maybe it was ten, but that's one one-thousandth. That's pathetic in my opinion. And, I would like to address -- and I'd like to hear from my fellow Commissioners, because if a police department is dysfunctional, then it shouldn't be dysfunctional. And, if it's dysfunctional because you can't run your shop, your operation, because of interference from the Public Safety Director or other departments, HR, or whatever, that should not take place. You should be your boss. You should run your department, and report to the Public Safety Director or whoever the City Manager recommends, but you run your department. Now, I'd like to hear from other Commissioners, please. Anybody?

Commissioner Lago: Well, no, no. I mean, I agree with you wholeheartedly in reference to all your comments. I think that we've had this discussion for the last two or three years, since I've been fortunate enough to serve here, and I think it's something that, at the end of the day, it's -- we have very -- we have commentary that sometimes there's X amount of vacancies, or there's -- we have this many conditional offers. What I want to really get my hands around is how many sworn law enforcement officers vacancies do we have right now, as of this moment?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: As of yesterday, we had 18.

Commissioner Lago: Okay.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Those were signed -- three were signed off, so we have 15 budgeted vacancies. But, I do want to clarify that we -- out of the three that we just talked about, that's just the current trend of applicants that came in. But so far, from what I hear from the HR director, we've hired six this year, so far.

Commissioner Lago: But those are conditional offers, right?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: No. Those are hired. Those are signed off, been through the process and reviewed.

Commissioner Lago: So, okay, let's say in comparison to what we were doing in the past, how come all of a sudden you have now so many -- I think it's great. I mean, if they're qualified and they're going to serve this community, I think it's a great thing. What I want to really understand is what changed in the past? Because, again, we've been getting, I think, about 100 to 115 to 120 submissions or applications probably on a monthly basis. How did we get this uptick now? What did we start doing that is different? What is the Police Chief doing? What are you -- what is it, and I want to know exactly.

Chief Hudak: Well, the -- if I can, the...

Commissioner Lago: Because from the last time I checked, I think, a few weeks ago, it was 26. We had 26 vacancies, correct?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: No, sir. We never had 26 that I'm -- budgeted vacancies.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So, I think one of the issues is people were counting the police officers that were on -- deployed overseas. Four of those have come back. Another one comes back in -- this month. And so, while people viewed that as a vacancy, those are positions

that we are saving and we solve it through overtime. You have more police officers on the street today in zones, in neighborhoods than you did since 2013.

Commissioner Lago: No, I mean, I understand that, because I'm the one that pushed the legislation to make sure that there was zone implementations. I'm aware of that. But, I just want to make sure -- I want the people to really understand where we are, and I want to get -- I want to deviate from the continued discussion where some people are saying you have X amount of openings. And I know it fluctuates. I know people retire. I know people go into the DROP, but as of today, where are we in reference to -- and explain the difference between a conditional offer and a non-conditional offer and the transition...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well, I'd like for the Police Chief...

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, the Police Chief.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To answer that.

Chief Hudak: Again, I think conditional offers -- and this is an HR policy. And if I can back up for just a second, so -- and I think this might put some clarity on the issue and the different variations, Mayor, that come out about the process itself. Originally, when I took over, we had a background unit, we had a recruiter and an Officer Denham, who it was pretty much her responsibilities to go out there and recruit. We advertised in the normal ways. Those processes would take place. They would come up to the Chief's office. We would agree to move forward, not move forward. There was a question about the interview panel having to be validated, and this was almost before my tenure started as Chief. Subsequent to that, those questions that were used on the interview panel, which is police officers, were validated, so we reinstated the interview board of which can be a pass/fail point. At that point, if the background was done, the summation was actually given along with the file. It was reviewed by my or by the Chief, and an offer was given at the time to the individual and we would move forward. I would submit to

you, though, we can do all this and still -- and we have had to and I have had to release people on probation that could not cut the job for various things. So, I know the focus right now is on the process of getting them hired, but the total evaluation of a police officer does not end until the year after they are sworn in. And, they can be released at any time if they're not --, and it could be as simple as just it's not coming together. After that, and then when the Director came on, and in the meeting with the Manager, still, as the interim, we started to look at the process and just finalizing and refining the process to have more input to look deeper into what we're doing as far as what the background is, probably more oversight over the background cases. It was pretty much a one- or two-person shop at the time, and now it is -- to what you saw on the board is the steps that we go through. At any given time during that, they can be released, but they're also given what we were calling conditional offers. So, in order to do a polygraph, in order to do a psychological, which are exit points, a conditional offer has to be made, all the way to the final bluebook review, which is the entire case file that is gone over by my complete staff. There's the panel interview. There's an interview with myself, the Direct, the Assistant Chief, and then we move forward to a bluebook review of my command staff, as well as HR. And if everyone's okay with that, then it goes to the Manager's office, and then we do the same presentation to the City Manager, and then the final offer is done at that point.

Commissioner Lago: Is that common practice?

Chief Hudak: I can't speak to a lot of other places. I think it's a very thorough process, but I haven't done the work. I would defer to the Director, who -- or HR, who's validated along everything else.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So, when you said three, just so that you know, sir, those were three that were being hired. I signed off on those three. I met with the staff, reviewed the questions, asked additional information, and so it was -- it's not a matter of like a conditional offer that then they're still in the process. These are we want you to report to academy, if they're

not already certified. We want you to report to academy on this date. And if they are certified, then they move into a field training program...

Chief Hudak: Correct.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: That the Police Department manages.

Chief Hudak: There's -- and there's...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So, these are hired.

Chief Hudak: For even more specific, once they get out of the academy or get in, there's an eight-week orientation just in-house, where they're not with the FTO program. Since last week, I've promoted and the other effect -- and I think this is where the constant differing of numbers, because, as you said, Mayor, I know I'm responsible for the vacancies. What you see at times is to promote a major, which, by contract, has to come from within the department -- the only external promotions can be commanders and assistant chiefs. That has to be -- that vacancy has to be filled within 30 days, per the collective bargaining agreement.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Have you...

Chief Hudak: And so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Filled those vacancies?

Chief Hudak: Pardon me?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Have you filled the vacancies?

Chief Hudak: Not all of them.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why?

Chief Hudak: I have the major's position I just filled. And again, the constant barometer that that is affecting is make sure we have enough staffing at the bottom end. So, to do it at the top -- so, if I promote a major, I have to promote a lieutenant. If I promote a lieutenant, I have to promote a sergeant.

Commissioner Lago: How long have those positions been open?

Chief Hudak: The major's position? Two years, I think (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why?

Chief Hudak: Again, it was my decision not to make the Assistant Chief's position, but then again, making sure we have the bodies on the ground is what it is. The only thing that I have discretion is making the major's decision -- making the major's promotion.

Commissioner Lago: Let me tell you why -- I mean, I'm happy that the Mayor put this on the agenda, and I explained to you, because I imagine that my colleagues feel the same way. I probably have a resident on a weekly basis come up to me and ask me what's going on in regards to recruitment, and I have to go into a long, detailed explanation explaining, you know, the DROP and what we have done as a City to make it as attractive as possible, so people can come and join the City of Coral Gables. Increasing the DROP from five to seven, taking that into consideration, what are the numbers in reference to the police officers that are retiring this year? I know, obviously, it should be...

Chief Hudak: Scheduled to retire was four...

Commissioner Lago: Reduced because now...

Chief Hudak: Right. Well...

Commissioner Lago: They will obviously want to take advantage of those additional two years, which was part of our collective bargaining, along with a \$2,500 bonus, second-highest starting salary in Miami-Dade County, new forthcoming facilities, brand-new facilities. We're going to have the most up-to-date facilities in South Florida, in my opinion. I know I've said this before and maybe people don't like to hear this, but it's an honor and a pleasure to be able to work in the City of Coral Gables. The environment here is like none other. Okay, it's a pleasure. What else can we do? And how many positions do you expect to be open this year as a result of retirement?

Chief Hudak: The DROP program gives us the opportunity to retain, but it is not a guarantee. It is not something -- I believe the decisions before any of us here of when we were hiring put us in that same quagmire that the Director talked about where just because somebody has been extended two years -- and I can think of two people off the top of my head within the department that are leaving early, and that's their right to leave early. They will leave "money on the table," but for whatever reasons, they are moving on from the department. That's going to create a vacancy. If it's a command staff person, a lieutenant, that creates a vacancy ultimately at the bottom, because that lieutenant has to be promoted, that sergeant has to be promoted, and therefore, that staffing goes. We have a minimum staffing in the patrol division of 72 bodies. It has to be. That has nothing to do -- other than the fact that these are as many bodies that we have to have in this division.

Commissioner Lago: And you're achieving that via overtime, correct?

Chief Hudak: No. The overtime kicks in when we have to have a minimum of 12 people on the street. So, if we are not -- or if we have taskforce -- and we can talk about that in the crime -- that's from the vacant body position that this body gave us to do. To the Mayor's point -- and I just -- I don't want to go off from -- ex-employees and current employees can give their opinion. I mean, we have reporting protocols as directives by the Manager, the Director. I mean, I make my recommendations. That's what I do. I make my recommendations how I see fit. We have discussions. And then we go on from there. This process is a memorialized process of the decision-making that goes on, on a daily basis in the police department.

Commissioner Lago: So, how many retirement -- how many people are retiring this year that you expect? What are we looking at?

Chief Hudak: I believe we have three that are possible; one that's definite that has announced his retirement.

Commissioner Lago: So...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Commissioner Lago, if I can interject. So, we have had -- just like we did with Fire -- we have had conversations with the Finance Department of our desire to overfill. We will not stop hiring qualified police officers in anticipation of exits. So, we will have, at -- once we're fully ramped, we'll continue to hire, and we will have more police officers than budgeted positions, because we will project exits. And so, I think we're just working on creating that momentum to get us to that point. But, we are tracking who's in the DROP; where are they in the process and recognizing that they may not stay the five years or the seven years. But, I will tell you, moving it for two more years, which is for this contract only, was a very attractive -- 99 people voted for that contract; 17 voted against it. They liked those two years added.

Commissioner Lago: But, let me ask you another question. So, we're averaging basically about an 8 to 10 percent vacancy rate here at the City right now in reference to police officers, at the present moment with the 15. My question to you is, what are neighboring cities that are in the same caliber as the City of Coral Gables, what are they averaging? You know, our Police Chief, what do you -- Assistant City Manager Fernandez, what is -- I'd like to hear from both of you in regards to that issue.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Chief Hudak.

Chief Hudak: Well, I believe some of the -- we can take Miami-Dade, much bigger scale, much different requirements than we have, not better or worse. They got so far ahead of it with their own academy that they actually stopped their hiring process; because they were up ahead what Mayor Gimenez had projected they needed to do.

Commissioner Quesada: What do you mean up ahead in the sense that zero vacancies?

Chief Hudak: They were able to attract and hire and put people in the academy faster than they anticipated in their strategic plan, so they were able to slow down the recruiting.

Commissioner Quesada: Got it.

Chief Hudak: Now...

Commissioner Lago: And, that's what I find so odd. I mean, again, I know you have to qualify - - there are certain qualifications that the City of Coral Gables -- certain higher standards, but why wouldn't anybody want to come who meets our standards and work here? I mean, we have the second-highest starting salary...

Chief Hudak: Now, we...

Commissioner Lago: And a signing bonus.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: May I add some perspective?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Look at historically -- I want to know, historically, have we always had that problem? And I've been involved in Coral Gables politics life for 30 years, and I've never heard of having 10 percent vacancies in the police department. This is new.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: If I may just provide some perspective. I got here in late 2015. This situation was here. As the Chief said, we had one background sergeant and one background investigator. The background investigator we have right now worked part-time, so it's not as if we have a full team going out there full-time doing background checks, but they do a great job, these part-timers. To hire the part-timers, it took time. It took them time to do it. I don't think anybody's flawing in terms of the City. I think they're all doing a good job trying to push through. I think they all want to work cohesively to try to make this the best process possible. Having been in three departments now, I don't think this process is longer or shorter than any other one. The Manager's asked for a thorough process. You've asked for a thorough process to make sure that we bring the best to Coral Gables, and that we don't have those issues that you talked about in terms of hiring and then having the regret. There's a theme that I like to go by, which is easy to hire, difficult to fire, and I think you've talked about it in the past most recently, how difficult it is to release an officer from their position. So, we've got to make sure if we're going to make that 30-year investment, that it's a proper investment and one that's been vetted out carefully. But we've done our due diligence. I submit to you that the holistic approach to this process is streamlined, but we do have a shortfall. When I came here, we had two part -- two people doing backgrounds, a very limited recruitment process. It's my understanding historically it's been a challenge for Coral Gables to attract those officers. Some of the challenges are the 54 credits that are being required that are not required for Miami-Dade and not required for Miami, so that limits our pool. We are looking at that now to provide other

opportunities to get a greater pool of individuals coming in. But, the 54 credits do provide a challenge. It doesn't mean we can't do it. It just means it's a little bit of a challenge. We have departments across the country -- most recently, several of them have reduced their standards to allow people to come in without their citizenship -- to come in without a citizenship and then allow them through that process to go through it.

Commissioner Quesada: So, you think the biggest impediment we have is that we require an Associate's degree?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: It is one of them that we require -- not an Associate's, but 54 credits.

Vice Mayor Keon: It's not...

Commissioner Quesada: How many municipalities have that?

Vice Mayor Keon: It's not an Associate's degree. It's only a certain number of credits.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Fifty-four credits.

Vice Mayor Keon: Credits.

Commissioner Lago: Before we move on to the benchmarks...

Commissioner Quesada: But...

Commissioner Lago: Before we move on to the benchmarks, I just want to -- I want to get an answer from out of the Chief or Frank in regards to what are other municipalities suffering from? What percentages are they in reference to vacancies?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Well, if you Google it, you'll find out -- and we've talked about it before. This is a nationwide problem, police shortages. Miami-Dade, he has the -- he'll give you the direct answer. I know Miami struggles to keep up. They've had this issue come up before at their Commission meeting, same contentious situation where, you know -- they want to find out -- the citizens want to know why can't we hire officers. And, I would submit to you that in every city that I've seen, when you fall behind -- and this is no fault of Chief Hudak, because he's been here, you know, and he inherited this problem in terms of the shortages. Well, so did I. But, the challenge is that once you fall behind, it's difficult to catch up. And, unlike in any other position in the City, where you could hire and put them in positions, even with Fire. We hire, and within eight weeks, they're counted as a body. With Police, I would say it's about a year and three months to a year and six months before we could say, okay, that's a body that we can count out on the street. So, in terms of getting ahead, we have a plan for that, as well. We're utilizing it in Fire, where once we reach our maximum number of budgeted positions, we then look six months out or four months out and identify those people that are in the retirement process or in the DROP that have to leave. And then we have it in the budget where we hire those positions. When we get to those positions here in the Police Department, our plan is to do the same succession plan as we have for Fire, so, as you've heard earlier, we try to stay ahead of the situation, so it doesn't occur again in the future. But, this process is very thorough. It is what you've asked for in terms of a background check to make sure we have the right qualified people. I mean, I've had everyone look at it, and I submit to you that it is as streamlined as it could be, other than just removing some of the other areas. But, our biggest challenge is the background process takes a significant amount of time.

Chief Hudak: And...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Have we -- excuse me, sir. But let me ask, have we hired people to process the police applicants?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: We've hired two part-timers to assist the public safety analyst in processing these applications very, very quickly, which is why we've added additional elements. I'd also like to add that -- just a scenario from 2016, which is -- you know, 2015, I look at it, the last part of the year when I came in. We were developing processes, trying to analyze what is it that we have on hand. 2016 created a challenge, which is the contract. I mean, I came before you many times in 2016 regarding the CBA. Well, the union stood up here and said, look, we're short of officers. We're short of officers because of our benefits, because of our salaries and people weren't coming. This is what they said up here. We addressed the CBA issue. We addressed the contract. As the Mayor said, we have one of the highest starting salaries now because of that issue. So, that's value number one added to the process. Number two, we extended the DROP to allow for better retention and allow for that attrition rate to slow down, so we can catch up, and all of you voted on that issue as well. So, these were challenges that we were faced with last year that today are providing good results for us. That's why you're seeing a significant number of additional applications. We have more so far in the first five months of the year than all of last year. And, we have a very thorough process delineated out that everybody can see. It's very transparent, so nothing is hidden. Everything is out in the open. It is reviewed thoroughly every Friday at 9 am. As the Mayor said, it's a very thorough process. The interviews that we're talking about -- there were no interviews, as you heard earlier. They went a whole year without interviewing officers and interview panels for hiring. That was before I got here. That process was vetted out now by Miami-Dade. We have now two sets of validated questions that we could work from. Those things take time to prepare. We believe that this process that has been developed holistically, that momentum has built up and you are on the heels of momentum. This is it. Momentum has built up, and you're going to see some results coming out of that. The results are evident. Three hired. We have several in the process now. We've got nine and should go through that process without any significant problems, so we should be down to single vacancies very, very soon.

Commissioner Lago: But, can you do me a favor?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Lago: Because obviously, I'm not going to get an answer to my question. Can we find out for the next Commission meeting, maybe the neighboring municipalities...

Chief Hudak: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Lago: In Miami-Dade County?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Sure.

Chief Hudak: Just...

Commissioner Lago: And where...

Chief Hudak: For clarification -- and I want to echo what the Director said. The interview process, the three-panel process, which was in place for a long time before I took over, was questioned by HR and needed to be validated and it was stopped. Therefore, there wasn't a three-panel process. But the background investigation, as it was, was still in place. It still came up. They still had to review with me. To the Director's point and to the Manager's point, back in 2014, when I was put here and in charge and responsible, I was subsequently asked at a Commission meeting by the Mayor what do you need. Do you need more officers? And every report that I submitted to you, the biggest threat to our department -- I said in 2014 -- is obviously our hiring, understanding that we added seven additional bodies. The Communications personnel -- we haven't even touched on Communications. There's a bunch of men and women that work up there and, you know, that's the same challenges that we have to find people that are cut out and can do that. And I'm going to be very honest with you. I've been a call taker many, many years ago. I don't think I could do it now. It is not something, you know, to be taken lightly to be the calm voice on the other end of somebody who's really

experiencing tragedy real time. To find men and women to do that is not easy. As I was looking at the process, my wife pointed out something and we've had this conversation is she can give birth in the time it takes us to find someone and put them through the process. And every day we have these meetings, we continually go back to see what can we narrow, scheduling, putting them together, getting in. As the Director said, we are having a conversation to look at recommendations from HR, recommendations from our staff psychologist. Some of the movements were in the department have been moving a major over to this area that oversees this to make sure that we have accountability. Mayor, I fully understand that, at the end of the day, the hiring process is my responsibility within the Police Department for police officers, as well as for the Communications people that serve both us and the Fire Department. I've tried several times to give the Communications to the Fire Chief; he won't take it. All kidding aside, I realize it's always been that way. I was here when we started our new communications center, and I saw what those men and women went through when they were on 12-hour shifts for three years. So, I'm acutely aware of this. The process is -- and if you look to this day, the first thing I wrote on my whiteboard in my office is what I thought our strategic target had to be. We had to hire 20 a year for the next three years to get where we were going to be and we have the numbers over there, okay. When I came on, I think our number was like 23, and then we started looking at the processes. We had a lot of other issues. We didn't get a lot of -- we were washing out a lot of candidates in the pool and we had maybe one, two, three, four would trickle in. And, now that the process has gained familiarity, because there have been revisions, we're moving forward. Will we get there? I think you're going to see every other department has the same issue. I'm not for changing the standards. We were the first ones to request 54 college credits. And, the only adjustment I would make to that throughout the department is what we're talking about now about opportunities for promotion within the department. You know, would I have made major's promotion sooner, yes, but a lot of other factors play into it, including how it affects the bottom line of the officers down below. But, for us to move...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would like -- my personal opinion and I'll hear from the Commission members, to make you responsible for police processes, for the running of the police department,

for recruiting, for whatever. You're the Chief of Police. It's our finest department, our highest responsibility to our citizens. And you will report to the, you know, Public Safety Director, but you should be responsible for running the police department, including recruiting, which is a very important issue.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor, I'm going to insert my responsibilities as the City Manager in charge of personnel, in charge of budget, in charge of these types of responsibilities. There are instances where in order to accelerate, we have made mistakes in the recruitment process and we have had to correct them. I take full responsibility to the challenges that you're bringing up. I take full responsibility in my commitment to resolve them, but I will not have individual departments have additional authority if it is inconsistent with the best interest of the City. It is my responsibility. I'm happy to speak to each one of you. I'm happy to speak to the Chief and to the Director. I am happy to address this issue, but I will not compromise this process in order to create some type of expediency in the recruitment. I can...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Nobody...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Give you examples as to where bad decisions were made and how we had to chase after them to resolve them, and I do not think that that serves the citizens. I feel, obviously, very strongly about this issue. I'd like to continue to talk about recruitment on a general basis. But, to assign any one department responsible -- responsibilities beyond the human resources, beyond finance, beyond administration, I think puts the City at a tremendous risk. And as Manager, I cannot sit back and let that discussion continue.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, I take it as stated. And you are responsible, you're right. But for the running of the Police Department, the Chief of Police should be responsible. And if he's not cutting it, then maybe we should get another Police Chief. And, I'm very confident that Chief Hudak is doing the right job. He's very -- the people want him and I worked with him for the last 30 years or whatever it is. And, somebody has to be -- one person has to be responsible for

reporting to you, and you having the ultimate responsibility, but I think the Chief of Police should run the Police Department.

Commissioner Quesada: Mr. Mayor, if I may. It's a little tough to get a word in in this conversation. Thank you for bringing it up. It's an important topic. You know, the way I see it is, what's the underlying issue? The underlying issue is crime. Is crime up or down? And you know, this very item, your proposal right now that you've made is something that I've wrestled with. And to me, it's been, you know, the proof is in the pudding, you know. I've known that obviously, there's been a tension here with this current structure, but crime is down. And although I don't like to see any kind of tension in any kind of department, again, crime is down, as far as my understanding, unless I'm incorrect about that. I know -- I believe the -- you know, unlocked vehicles -- that maybe that is up. Is that -- I know I did not define that properly, but I know we have one portion that is up, but it's down. So, you know, when I look at the hiring, yes, of course, we want to be able to hire more and yes -- and I've had a number of disagreements with Frank Fernandez about this, just about some of the requirements that we put on the applicant. The speeding one, which was the biggest one for me that we discussed maybe about a year-and-a-half ago, two years ago now. So, I've had some disagreements there as well. But, again, when I look at it, crime is down, which is why, you know, I held any kind of hesitation to make any changes at this point when we've been trending in the right direction.

Vice Mayor Keon: I have to agree with Commissioner Quesada. I also -- I mean, I really -- when we each were elected to office, you know, we took an oath to uphold the rules and regulations and whatever and the Charter of this City. The Charter in this City is a City Manager form of government. And you know, I know that we reserve the right -- and in that Charter, we can make those decisions, but this is a City Manager form of government. And, I think they have structured our staff the way that they are structured and, personally, I also tell you that crime is down. There's more police on the street than there's ever been. I think that if you want to change the way that this whole thing is, then you change the Manager and not worry about this. So, either, you know, you support the Manager or you, you know, chastise the Manager or

whatever else, but this all comes down to the Manager. So, you either give her the authority to run the City -- because I will tell you, it is my opinion that that Manager has more knowledge of the day-to-day operations of every single department in this City based on her involvement in fact than we have as elected officials, based on rumor and being here on a part-time basis. So, I would, you know -- and I do believe that, you know, actually the function of the police department absolutely the Police Chief should run. Whether recruiting is a part of that, I don't really know. I don't think other departments necessarily go out and do their own recruiting. I think all the departments do recruiting through HR. They all do recruiting through HR, so I don't think that that should make a difference. Do you feel like it would improve if you were solely responsible for recruiting, or do you think it is an HR function that is a function...?

Chief Hudak: To if we...

Vice Mayor Keon: Of more members than just you?

Commissioner Lago: There's a clear example. I mean, when you first became Chief in, I think it was 2013 or 2014...

Chief Hudak: 2014.

Commissioner Lago: 2014, how many individuals did you recruit? I think it was like 20 or 21 people you signed that year.

Chief Hudak: There were 20 or 23 hires.

Commissioner Lago: And how many...

Chief Hudak: That year.

Commissioner Lago: And how was the retention on that? That's the highest -- this is the highest...

Chief Hudak: We might have had to let go maybe three people out of those hires that didn't make it through the FTO process.

Commissioner Lago: So, those individuals are still with the police force.

Chief Hudak: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: So, we had probably the highest recruiting year we've had in the last 25 years.

Chief Hudak: Yes. The only other...

Commissioner Lago: And you -- that was under your auspice.

Chief Hudak: That was under myself and Chief Weiner. I mean, it started...

Vice Mayor Keon: It was under Chief Weiner.

Commissioner Lago: But he was Chief.

Vice Mayor Keon: No.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: No.

Chief Hudak: Up until September.

Vice Mayor Keon: Weiner was Chief.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: This is really an important discussion.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes, it is.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And it's critical that we're all...

Vice Mayor Keon: I think we have all the same facts.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Excuse me, Vice Mayor. And we're all under oath and we're speaking the truth in terms of the timeline where those positions that were hired, some of which we did have to let go because the background issues came up later, and I can speak to that. But, that process of when those 22 people came in were really initiated months before. And so, I think we need to be accurate in what we're reporting. I also think that there needs to be the, you know, honest discussion that this police department has had a history of dysfunction long before my arrival or anybody in the -- you know, long before my arrival or Director Fernandez's...

Vice Mayor Keon: Or long before...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Or before he...

Vice Mayor Keon: Chief Hudak was Chief.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Or before he was Chief.

Vice Mayor Keon: Was ever appointed or before he was Chief.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And so, that is something...

Commissioner Lago: Madam...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: That we're...

Commissioner Lago: Well, I -- that's the reason...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Wrestling with.

Commissioner Lago: Madam City Manager, I wasn't finished with my statement. You interrupted me. My comment was and that's the purpose why we're having this transparent discussion. And, I love to have this before the Commission, not because I want to tarnish the image of the City, because I don't want to have -- I don't want to be accused or have this Commission be accused that, you know, we're not handling our business and that we're doing backdoor deals. So, let's have this discussion before everyone here. So, at the end of the day, my question was for the Chief. When you were chief, not when Mr. Weiner was Chief -- how was the hiring protocol before Mr. Fernandez was here? How many people did we hire? Was it an easier process? Did we keep the same standards? I still haven't gotten a response to my previous question in regards to municipalities and the vacancies that are in other municipalities. I hope I'll get that in the future from somebody here in staff. Maybe they can present on a...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: We'll get it to you.

Commissioner Lago: Maybe they can present it to us on a quarterly...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: I don't have it available, but I'll get it to you.

Commissioner Lago: On a quarterly basis. I'm not asking on a monthly basis. I just want to see what other cities are doing. I know they have less stringent standards than us, so, obviously, I

would expect people to, you know, not meet our standards and it'll be a little more difficult. But, I also just want to have that as a piece of mind, so I know what I'm talking about. While you were here and while you were running the recruitment before Mr. Fernandez came to the City, how many individuals did you hire in a one-year timeframe?

Chief Hudak: Well, I would have to...

Commissioner Lago: If it wasn't a one-year timeframe, maybe it was six months, just give me the numbers. I want to know the numbers.

Chief Hudak: I would have to -- and I have never, ever said or taken responsibility for the hiring in 2014. I started in September. I make it very clear -- and I said that every time I've ever talked in public that this process was in place before. The changes that I made in the process was we looked at what the FBI did for uses of marijuana, because that was an exit point. That was a change to the process. As far as the requirements, the college credits, the driving records, that was all in place long before I got there. The number for that year was around 23. Of those, I would have to break it down to tell you what it was from September 2014 until September 2015, which is when I was -- had -- was started in office.

Vice Mayor Keon: Do we -- and we don't know that...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And looking at the date of...

Vice Mayor Keon: Date, right?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: When those applicants applied.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Because we all -- everyone in this room wants what's best for the City. You know, obviously, there's some rough and tumble pieces of this, but we do not want to compromise on the recruitment of a police officer that we give a gun and they can take away your civil rights. And so, the process is long. It is easy for us to go back and look at the number of police officers that were hired during that time and when they started in the process. We are all trying hard to work together. These kinds of discussions, although they're -- create great sport, also create great -- further rift in the department. We are working hard to have everybody work together, and that is the best interest of the City.

Commissioner Lago: I take offense to the fact that you consider that we would do this for sport.

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, I think sometimes...

Commissioner Lago: I mean, I...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Sir, that's not my intention.

Commissioner Lago: But I mean, again, like my colleague said, I mean, this is -- for me, this is not a part-time job. I'm here every day. And on Friday night, I was riding until 4 in the morning with police officers. So, I don't -- taking time away from my family. So, this is not a part-time job for me. This is a full-time job for me. So -- and I don't do this for sport. I do this to get to the bottom of an answer that was -- that a lot of people campaigned upon. And, I want to make sure that people understand what the crime rates are here in the City. How, like Commissioner Quesada mentioned, crime is down, three years running. I have been a supporter of the neighborhood safety aides. I will continue to be a supporter of the neighborhood safety aides, but I want to get to the bottom of, like I mentioned, the recruiting issues, you know, how many people are retiring. What are we going to do as a City to address the issues, for example, like we're doing with Chief De La Rosa at the Fire Department, how they are over-hiring in an effort to meet the goals for the near future. I want to put this behind us. So, there has to be a response.

Because like again, we've made exceptions to hiring people and, again, we talked about, in the beginning, social media, you know issues where content was racially charged. We made exceptions. We made exceptions for people. So, again, this is not about choosing the Manager or the Police Chief, in my eyes. This is not sport. This is about getting to the end of an issue that we've been dealing with for almost four years now, so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we...

Vice Mayor Keon: I'd like to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Could we...

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah, I was speaking...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm sorry. But we have...

Vice Mayor Keon: But it...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A time certain.

Vice Mayor Keon: Went another way. One thing that I really think is important that we add -- and this idea of recruiting and how long it takes us to get the right people to give that responsibility to that police officers hold to ensure that we have high-quality police officers on our department. The front page of the Miami Herald today is a story that even cops who are murder suspects are reinstated. Now, I know that I met with you after the discussion on Major Molina to ask about the hiring and the firing and what are the disciplinary actions on police officers. And you told me yourself that every officer below the rank of major has the right to ask for arbitration...

Chief Hudak: Binding arbitration.

Vice Mayor Keon: If they are -- binding arbitration -- if they are terminated.

Chief Hudak: Correct.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm sorry.

Vice Mayor Keon: And in every single instance that that has happened, what's happened?

Chief Hudak: They've been reinstated. My understanding...

Vice Mayor Keon: The arbitrator has sent them back...

Chief Hudak: Is that they've been reinstated.

Vice Mayor Keon: To the City. Some people that you have had to change their responsibilities. You have changed where and when they can work, because you have grave concerns over the actions of that police officer. But, the arbitrator is sending them back, and they are back on our police force, and they are back on the street. I will tell you, I think that the recruiting process is good. I think it is thorough. I think the background checks are exceedingly important. I think this continuous discussion about how many vacancies we have comes from rumor brought forward to you by generally residents or -- and some of your police officers that you should ask to stay out of this.

Chief Hudak: Well...

Vice Mayor Keon: I'm asking you to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I...

Vice Mayor Keon: Tell them to stay out of it, because the number that is given to us by HR has always been consistent.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I...

Vice Mayor Keon: Has always been consistent.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We...

Vice Mayor Keon: You know what, and they are counting officers all the time that are on leave that we are required to hold that position by law. We are required to hold that position. We can't fill their position, so that position is required to sit and it is not -- cannot be filled while they're gone. So, I think the information that we get from HR is accurate continuously. I think the process that they go through to hire a police officer is exceedingly important, because we know that you -- to get rid of a police officer that's a bad officer, a bad officer, is nearly impossible. I'm telling you, they are putting them -- the arbitrators put them right back on the force. There have been at least three articles over the last two weeks in the Miami Herald about officers under -- that have committed serious crimes or are under investigation for very serious crimes that are put back on the force. We are waiting for -- I understand that we are waiting for a report on a shooting that it hasn't been finalized yet.

Chief Hudak: That's correct.

Vice Mayor Keon: That's right. And when...

Chief Hudak: Not a shooting.

Vice Mayor Keon: You have it -- when you have that shooting where somebody lost their life, I want you to share it with every single person on this dais.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I...

Vice Mayor Keon: Every single person on this dais.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I...

Vice Mayor Keon: You know...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Interrupt you a minute, please?

Vice Mayor Keon: But, I -- we go through this over and over and over again. And I think what they have told us is -- I'm going to believe that what you tell me is true.

Chief Hudak: Just to clarify, Commissioner, if I may. The shooting case -- the (INAUDIBLE) of that shooting case you're talking about is a closed case.

Vice Mayor Keon: It is a closed case.

Chief Hudak: Right.

Vice Mayor Keon: But, under your policy...

Chief Hudak: The other...

Vice Mayor Keon: There is a...

Chief Hudak: The other...

Vice Mayor Keon: Report to be filed. Is that right?

Chief Hudak: Correct. Now, there's...

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay. And when you...

Chief Hudak: An existing Internal Affairs finding...

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Chief Hudak: On that case.

Vice Mayor Keon: And when that is...

Chief Hudak: But that has been disposed of.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay, but when it is, I'd like you to share it with -- individually with everyone on this Commission as to why...

Chief Hudak: I will do that.

Vice Mayor Keon: It is so important that we only hire the best, the best.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I interrupt for a minute and we can continue this in a minute? But we have Item I-3, which is a resolution on sidewalk cafés downtown, and these -- there are a lot of people here on that.

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And they had to go serve lunch...

Vice Mayor Keon: Absolutely.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And whatever. So, if we can take Item I-3 out of order. It was time certain at 9:30, and now it's 10:25. Item I-3, a resolution.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And we'll have...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes. Are you on I-3?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. We're going to take this one first, ma'am. I-3.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So, we're going to ask Javier Betancourt to come forward. This is the -- and Ramon Trias to come forward. This is the sidewalk café ordinance, Mayor, if this is the discussion that you want to have, the resolution.

Commissioner Quesada: Mr. Mayor, just real quick, just for benefit of the audience, just for the people that are following the police item agenda.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll be back.

Commissioner Quesada: Will we be revisiting that after this or...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're going to take this -- they have to go to lunch.

City Attorney Leen: Yes. Just so everyone under...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE) Miracle Mile.

City Attorney Leen: Just so...

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's right.

City Attorney Leen: Just so everyone understands, the Commission has to take this item, because it's been listed as a time certain. I don't think it's going to take that long, and then the Mayor can decide when this will come back up.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah. We'll come back.

(THE COMMISSION TABLED DISCUSSION ON ITEM C-1 TO TAKE UP A TIME CERTAIN ITEM)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll go back to Item C-1, the police recruiting. I think we've heard enough for -- from the police, from the Assistant City Manager. We have requests from two people to talk, and the first is Maria Magdalena.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Police, police recruiting.

Commissioner Quesada: Coming back to the original item.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Maria Magdalena: Thank you. While I was hearing all the pros and cons that we're having right now, they were saying -- and I think it was Commissioner Quesada, that the rate of crime is lower. The problem with that is that you are not taking into consideration -- and that might be true, but it's not my experience. In our neighborhood, we've had three burglaries and one carjack.

Commissioner Quesada: What's your neighborhood?

Ms. Magdalena: It's 21 Madeira.

Commissioner Quesada: Okay.

Ms. Magdalena: Okay, and that one was at gunpoint. Now, you can imagine how I feel. And I've been going to the police department complaining that it has been escalating. Now, this is how I think that we are having the problem here. I didn't know that we had it since 2014. It's either you are not competitive with other cities, your standards -- and I'm not saying that we want you to hire crooks, like Mayor Fauli said. We don't want that. We want high standards, but maybe your standards are extremely high, okay. So -- and I heard Ms. Cathy saying something about they take into consideration the credit. I think that that is a mistake, because we've had very rough times, you know, and credit should not be one major portion of the background. Then social media. Well, if you go by social media, there's a thing here now whether it's -- the problem with the freedom of speech and the problem that we have with PC, if

you were going to hire me and you went to my Instagram, believe me, you would not be hiring me. And that's -- I mean, I don't say anything wrong. I don't say anything offensive, but since I state my point of view, that could be interpreted as racist. It's homophobic, whatever you want. And then will that be fair? Because these standards that you're going by nowadays, PC is so powerful that freedom of speech is no longer freedom of speech. It's hateful -- whatever they call it. So, I think that maybe you can look into that and see if that has any weight on that. Also, the -- how much are you paying? I believe that you start with \$55,000. I don't know. I'm not sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're the second-highest in the County and we give a \$2,500 bonus.

Ms. Magdalena: How much is that?

Commissioner Lago: 52,000 and change.

Ms. Magdalena: Now, let me tell you...

Commissioner Lago: From my understanding (INAUDIBLE)...

Ms. Magdalena: Nowadays...

Commissioner Lago: Is that correct? I want to make sure I'm correct on that. Starting -- 55, excuse me. Thank you.

Ms. Magdalena: Okay. So, nowadays, these guys are risking their lives 24/7. This is not the same country like we had eight years ago. Things have changed dramatically. So -- and they don't have support from anybody. So, it's a very complicated situation for them. I think that they should have a higher salary and...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ma'am, I think that for a 23/24-year-old very, very qualified person, a starting salary of \$55,000 is a lot of money.

Ms. Magdalena: But you're risking your life, Mayor Fauli.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Ms. Magdalena: Mr. Mayor, I mean, you know what I'm saying? And then it seems...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: How much do you pay them?

Ms. Magdalena: They walk out...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: How much is a life worth?

Ms. Magdalena: I would start from 65...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Two million dollars?

Ms. Magdalena: Up. And I'm the one that we're paying the taxes, and I'm willing to do that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Ms. Magdalena: They are risking their lives.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Ms. Magdalena: But, we need safety in our neighborhoods and we're not getting it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think you are getting it.

Ms. Magdalena: And I don't want to hear anybody else saying, well, the crime rate is lower.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why do you say...

Ms. Magdalena: Because I don't care about that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're not getting it? The crime rate is the lowest it's ever been.

Ms. Magdalena: But it -- but you see, then you have to see then these sections. Maybe I...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And our crime rate is -- car break-ins and stealing purses from front seats and...

Ms. Magdalena: Like I told you, sir, three burglaries and one car hijack. I mean, that's serious. Gunpoint.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, ma'am.

Ms. Magdalena: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Ms. Magdalena: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Maria -- Ms. Maria Cruz, please.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And as Ms. Cruz comes forward, Mayor, you asked about the vacancies through the years, and so we have a chart that calculates that, from 2010 to -- they're all the same. We're just passing them out.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good morning -- no, good afternoon -- no, good morning, Ms. Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Good morning.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please.

Ms. Cruz: I -- let me start by saying that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Three minutes.

Ms. Cruz: Once again, we had a wonderful presentation, but we always end up talking about what we're going to do in the future, not what is happening today. For example, -- just a simple example, but it came to my mind. The neighborhood policing, I still haven't met the -- whoever the neighborhood police is in my area. The safety aides, we don't have it all over the city yet, but we're talking about the future. We're always planning for the future, but it never happens. Okay, yes, we do have a divided police department. Yes, we do. It is very hard not to have a divided police department when you have two people leading the department. Actually, one Police Chief and somebody who supervises the Police Chief. So, if I'm a policeman or if I'm an officer, if I -- and I don't like what the Police Chief is going to tell me, it's like mommy and daddy. If I don't like this one, I go to the other one, okay. Now, I heard -- and let me tell you, I've been researching this for quite a while. Public Safety Director is the head of the police agency, not the Police Chief. Things that come from Tallahassee to the head of the agency go to the Public Safety Director, not to the Police Chief; number one. Number two, I could not find any local police department that the Police Chief reports to an assistant city manager. In this City, there are several departments that report directly to the City Manager. You know what, to

me and to most of our residents, the police department is probably the most important department. And there is no excuse for the Police Chief to report to the Assistant City Manager and not to the City Manager. Okay, another item, if you -- going back to the public -- to the head of the agency, if you look -- if you go to the FDLE website, there's only maybe two people that are not police chiefs, and the only one is the sheriff, which is the same. It's a different name, same position. Okay, the only one that is not the police chief is ours. Okay, now, I -- I'm -- I was a little offended this morning with Ms. Swanson's, I guess, upset about this is a strong city manager. Yes, we agree. We have a strong city manager, but we have a Commission that we, the citizens, elect to make sure that what's happening is what we want. And, you all are the supervisors of the City Manager, okay, very important. I also was upset when we talked about, you know, hearsay and rumors. No. When I talk, I don't have hearsay and rumors. As of May 22, from Karla Green and from Jose Rodriguez, we had 22 vacancies, May 22. This is less than a month later. 22 vacancies. Not people in other places, 22 open spaces. And 15 other, people that I know we have to save their spots. But you know what, if there's 15 people some place doing something else, they're not here to protect me.

Commissioner Quesada: What do you mean 15...

Ms. Cruz: So, in real...

Commissioner Quesada: What do you mean 15 others? What's the others?

Ms. Cruz: Yes, people that were...

Commissioner Mena: Military.

Ms. Cruz: In family leave...

Commissioner Quesada: Oh, got it.

Ms. Cruz: Military...

Commissioner Quesada: Got it.

Ms. Cruz: Suspended, ill.

Commissioner Quesada: Employed, but not working.

Ms. Cruz: Yes.

Commissioner Quesada: Got it.

Ms. Cruz: To me, to the residents, if you have -- 22 plus 15 is 37 out of 192 that are not here to protect me, so that 22 is very important because, see, the 15, we can do nothing about, but the 22, we can.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's wind it up.

Ms. Cruz: Okay, I'm going to do it right now. Okay, let me see because now you -- okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Take your time.

Ms. Cruz: We're talking about mistakes. You know the issue about recruiting, after we -- if we do it faster, we're going to make mistakes. Well, if we do it faster, carefully, we don't have to make mistakes. We have recruited people and taken people into this police department that couldn't drive, just got a driver's license and were hired. And you know what, after the academy, we give them eight weeks to practice driving. But yet, other people were not hired, because they couldn't drive. Okay, we have made exceptions for some people, but not for

others. I think it's important that the direction be whatever the rules are is for everyone. And, if the rules are such that keeps good people from coming our way, something is wrong.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, ma'am. Thank you very much. Let's -- you know, we've discussed the matter. Are there any other comments...?

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You wish to make so we can...

Commissioner Mena: I haven't had an opportunity to address this yet, because we had to switch...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Commissioner Mena: To the other matter earlier. And I actually had a follow-up question to a question that Commissioner Lago asked earlier. I'm not sure if Assistant Director Fernandez or Chief Hudak would like to address it. When he asked how many people we were expecting to retire or come off the force this year, I believe you guys gave an estimate of three to four.

Chief Hudak: That's what's -- off the top of my head, that was the number that was originally slated for retirement this year.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

Chief Hudak: With the extension of the DROP, I believe that was added to push on to another (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Mena: And the reason I'm asking -- I know when we've discussed this issue in the past, Mr. Fernandez, you've -- if I recall your plan correctly, it makes an assumption of 33 vacancies over the next three years. Is that right?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: That's correct. So, what we've done -- and we did a complete study...

Commissioner Mena: So, where does that come from and how does that relate to this -- if we have three or four this year, are you telling me we're expecting 28 to 29 the two years after that?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: No. The 33 come from a study conducted in the last six years looking at the average attrition rate. The number of people to actually leave the department came out to 11. So, we used that as a factor to look at how many people do we have to hire to go beyond the attrition rate.

Commissioner Mena: But, that's not actually based on...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: This is not reducing it, by the way.

Commissioner Mena: Specific officers that you expect to come off the force. You're just using general estimates for that number?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: No. No, we went back and looked at the last six years. How many people have separated from retirement or separated from just an abrupt leave and they changed their career course. Whatever the circumstances may have been, they separated. The department averaged about 11 per year. So, that's how we came up with a three-year plan with the 33 vacancies, above and beyond whatever vacancies we have.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: But, now these three -- actually the DROP -- the extension of the DROP, we believe is going to lower that number 11. So, those three are incorporated into that 11, but we believe it's lower, which is going to give us an opportunity to catch up. And, you see in front of you the number of vacancies the department's had throughout the last five, six years. It's been quite constant. It's been quite constant throughout the last five or six years. And so, the -- as I mentioned before, the challenge for us as a department is to hire the number of officers that are leaving. I just want to make the point. We're here to make sure this process works. We want to make sure it's fair. We want to make sure that it's equal across the board for everyone that gets hired. We want to meet the needs of the community, you know, in terms of what we're doing for putting more officers out on the street. Yeah, today there are more officers out on patrol, patrolling those zones that we've had in the last several years here. I've been here just short of two years, and I will tell you that everyone's been working closely at this. Not one person has come up and said, look, this is dysfunctional or this doesn't work, and I'm talking about staff. And we meet on this on a weekly basis. Additionally, the police psychologists look at it. We've got professionals in the field of HR outside of our department look at it to see where can we make this process better. You know, so when I hear that we can make it shorter, I will tell you, I've been through this process before. It's a process that can be done. It is being done. Our challenge are resources. We've got part-timers doing background checks that work 20 hours a week. And we've got some challenges in that unit. They started with two and it took a while to hire those background investigators, and it takes a while to train them. So, we are now at the point of gaining that momentum, and you can see it in the numbers. The numbers are very, very positive. So, we're on the verge of getting it done. You know, to the point of why don't we promote majors. I will tell you that we were here last year on the heels of a union contract, contentious issues about whether we get a contract or not, and the unit came up here and said, look, our officers are working 12, 15 hours of overtime every day; they're getting burnt out. It's an officer safety issue. At that point, as you heard from Chief Hudak, the position of major was held back. Why? Because we wanted to put more boots on the ground to make sure that we don't have officers working 12, 15 hours. That was at the request of the union, because they said

their members were working too many hours. Today, we've increased that minimum staffing, as you heard earlier, to 72. Today, we actually have 80 today working in Patrol. So, those vacancies are not in Patrol. Those vacancies are throughout the department. But, I will say that our department has a vacancy -- I mean, I'm sorry, a ratio of citizens to police officers much higher than many other cities, much higher.

Commissioner Mena: Understood. The other point you referenced earlier -- and correct me, if I'm wrong -- I believe you said the current requirement, as far as college credits is 54, you said?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Mena: Did I not recall correctly, you know, that that may have been lowered at some point recently to 32?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: No. The -- we met with the police psychologist, the whole staff, probably about 15 of us to identify where can we gain more applicants because Miami doesn't have that problem or Miami-Dade, because they have -- they hire from a high school degree.

Commissioner Mena: And that's...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: So...

Commissioner Mena: And that's where I'm going from this. If we accept -- which I'm not saying we do. Everybody is working very hard to try to fix this problem. What is the problem? Why is it not happening? What are the obstacles? Because I think there's two aspects of this. There's what can we do to incentivize -- that's compensation. That's bonuses. That's marketing. You guys have done it, and I commend the past Commission on having done that. So, then the second part of it is, what are the obstacles. What is in the process that is preventing

us from hiring people? And I understand the desire not to lower standards, but I have to also question some of the standards. You know, 54 college credit -- I mean, Steve Jobs wasn't educated enough to be a Coral Gables police officer. You know, really, I mean that. I mean, you got to get...

Vice Mayor Keon: Steve Jobs wasn't applying...

Commissioner Mena: I think...

Vice Mayor Keon: For that job.

Commissioner Mena: No, but I think you have to have a more holistic approach. I think we need to give our police department an opportunity to look at the candidate and say, well, maybe they don't have those credits, but they have six years of work experience doing something else or they were a soldier in the army, or you know, whatever the candidate is.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: We do have some exceptions.

Chief Hudak: There is an exception to the 54 college credits for previous police employment, so we have several officers that were long-time officers with Philadelphia Police Department, Florida Highway Patrol. They do not need those requirements. The other waiver that is automatically granted is prior military experience.

Commissioner Mena: But -- okay, but if you have a 25-year-old who wants to apply to the police department -- maybe they didn't have the money to go to college and they graduated from high school and is an otherwise, you know, exceptional candidate, I'm just not understanding why that arbitrary number exists. Why is a candidate stronger because they went to college for a year or two and then dropped out than somebody who, for whatever reason, couldn't go, but if you're looking at the picture holistically, looks like a very qualified candidate that our police

department, in evaluating them, thinks would be a good addition to the force. I just don't -- I'm just not a fan of arbitrary standards that, you know, I don't really see why they're critical to the process. I think they should be a factor considered, but I don't know that they should be a hard bright-line standard because, again, you know, you could have a very good candidate that, for whatever reason, doesn't meet that exact bright-line test.

Commissioner Lago: I think the interesting part about it, if I could just add one item to your comment was all of these individuals have to go through the police academy anyways.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: So, I mean, just because I have a graduate degree versus somebody who has a college degree, in my industry, it's not like being an attorney, like you have to go to law school. You know, in my industry, you're not forced to go to get a graduate degree to, you know, conduct business.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, but 54...

Commissioner Lago: It's just, I chose that. I chose that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Fifty-four credits is one and a half years of college.

Commissioner Lago: No, I understand. I'm not dis...

Vice Mayor Keon: (INAUDIBLE) only.

Commissioner Lago: But...

Vice Mayor Keon: I think the benefit -- go ahead, I'm sorry.

Commissioner Lago: It's okay. Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Keon: No, finish. Finish.

Commissioner Lago: I just think that besides that -- if you're done...

Commissioner Mena: No, go ahead.

Commissioner Lago: I just want to add one thing.

Commissioner Mena: Sure.

Commissioner Lago: Something that Ms. Cruz mentioned -- and again, I just want to go -- I think you just discussed there's 15 vacancies, and in May, there was 22 vacancies, correct? Whatever the number is, it's also compounded -- and I know that -- like Commissioner Keon mentioned -- and I want to be very careful what I say -- there's 15 positions, which we have to maintain open because those individuals are off on leave or they're fighting, you know, for our rights in this country, off on -- you know, in Afghanistan or serving the military. So, it just exacerbates the problem. So, for example, in May, we were down 37 police officers. It causes us to stretch. It causes us to have to have our police officers work potentially more overtime. Some may not complain because, obviously, they prefer to make that little extra money. But, I think sometimes that may result in errors in the line of duty. Nobody's perfect. I'm not perfect. But I mean, after you've worked 15 hours, there's an opportunity -- or 12 hours, there's an opportunity you're going to make a mistake. And these individuals are in very stressful situations when they encounter somebody. You don't know who's going to come out of that car. So, it -- we always -- and that's something that we forget. When we talk about vacancies, we're

not talking about the 15 individuals who are -- can't be considered vacant, but they really are vacant positions.

Commissioner Mena: Can I ask you about that, though? Not having gone...

Commissioner Lago: I didn't bring it up. I brought it up because she mentioned it.

Commissioner Mena: No, of course.

Commissioner Lago: I had completely forgotten.

Commissioner Mena: Of course, and...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: If I could make -- and Commissioner, I apologize for interrupting, but I don't know that number 37 or the number 22. I go by this. But I would tell you, we have one person in the military.

Chief Hudak: Yeah, one person.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: One person legal duty. And we have, I believe, one intermediate (sic) FMLA.

Unidentified Speaker: Right.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: But, these are standard -- if I may, these are standard processes in every business...

Commissioner Mena: That's the point I wanted to make is...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: I assume, not having gone through the budget process yet, but when we budget a certain amount of police officers, we're factoring in the fact that at times, some of them will be in the military or on FMLA, and so on.

Commissioner Lago: But, we had to increase the amount of overtime -- I think, what was that, two years ago? We had that discussion.

Chief Hudak: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: During the budget. So, we have to take it into account. But, the issue is -- I'm not sure if it's 15 or if it's 5 or 10, whatever it is. There are individuals who are not patrolling the streets, because they have other commitments currently.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: My understanding is it's a very small number. It's not -- we don't have 22 or 37 vacancies.

Commissioner Lago: Well...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: We have vacancies in terms of the budget. But, in terms of people actually in positions that are occupying them and are off, one military -- I understand we have a that are on FMLA -- intermediate (sic) FMLA, and one, I believe, on relieved of duty status, correct?

Commissioner Lago: Okay, let's say five. Let's say five.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Plus the other 15 that are currently vacant.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Right.

Commissioner Lago: The positions that are currently vacant. So, we're talking about we have 20 opening right now. Not openings, excuse me. We have 20 positions...

Unidentified Speaker: That we're short.

Commissioner Lago: That are short.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Right.

Commissioner Lago: We're short.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Just know that that's the standard -- that's a standard process for every police department. And the fact that we had 3.8, you know, officers per thousand residents, where the vast majority of departments are 2.5. This department can absorb any type of consistent, you know, deviation of people out on whatever...

Commissioner Lago: No, no, no. Frank, and I agree with you. No one's passing judgment here. All I'm saying is -- I can give you an example. We have 3.8 police officers per a thousand here. Opa-Locka has almost six. So, I mean, it doesn't really matter at the end of the day. We prefer to have as many police officers...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Sure, absolutely.

Commissioner Lago: Per thousand. And I'm so grateful that we have 3.8, and the more, the better. That's why we added those eight positions, because we wanted to have more police officers here.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. But I just...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Mena: The point is that we fix...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: To anyone.

Commissioner Mena: The point is that we fix the vacancies, the true...

Commissioner Lago: Vacancies.

Commissioner Mena: Vacancies.

Commissioner Lago: True vacancies.

Commissioner Mena: Then this other issue of people being out or not takes care of itself and it's part of the normal course of business. And so, I just want to be careful -- you know, I have the director of Public Safety and I have the Chief of Police standing in front of us. They're telling me what the number is. I got to go off that number. I mean, I can't -- there's -- because you know, during campaign season, you hear all kinds of numbers, ranging from 15 to 37. And, we've just asked them and they've told us what the number is, so...

Commissioner Lago: So, what's the...

Commissioner Mena: I understand your point.

Commissioner Lago: So, what's the real issue then?

Commissioner Mena: The issue is the vacant...

Commissioner Lago: Getting back to your point, we're throwing -- if we've done everything in our power to entice someone to come and consider the City of Coral Gables, including what a pleasure it is to work in this city, on all fronts. You've given the signing bonus. You've increased the salaries. You're giving them all brand-new facilities, both in the police department and fire department. What are the reasonings behind why people say, okay, I'd rather join Miami-Dade County at a pay reduction -- at a pay reduction. So, now people are not coming to the City of Coral Gables, qualified people are not coming to the City of Coral Gables. They're saying, no, I'd rather join another municipality at a pay reduction. I just find it perplexing.

Commissioner Mena: But...

Commissioner Lago: When I go out there to hire people -- and you know this, Mike. When you go out to hire people and you bring people to your law firm, you sit there and you want to bring the best and you strive to bring the best, and we got to be competitive. But, I look at every single individual and if, for some reason, there's a problem, you know, I kind of weigh the negative and the positive and get to the outcome.

Commissioner Mena: And that's why I go to the process and the standards, which is it's not necessarily that a given candidate is picking that other municipality over us. It may be that they don't...

Commissioner Lago: They have no choice.

Commissioner Mena: That they don't qualify for ours and they do qualify there. And so, there needs to be something in between hiring crooks and hiring people at our current standards. And so, again, I go back to, just as an example, this issue of, you know, the amount of credits you need. You have less and less people that are making the decision and the financial investment in going to college nowadays and are...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: One and a half years.

Commissioner Mena: Going into different trades -- yeah, but why is it if you go to college one and a half years and you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We are giving these people...

Commissioner Mena: Drop out, why does that make you a better candidate than somebody who's working?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're giving these people the right to deprive you of your civil rights, the right to carry a gun in our city, and I would not be in favor of lowering standards. I really wouldn't.

Commissioner Mena: I just don't understand what that...

Vice Mayor Keon: You know, I think the benefit -- the one benefit to that is that you have an individual that is just a little bit older, a little bit more -- maybe more mature. I think if you, you know -- 17 was a long time ago for me.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Could I -- can I ask...

Vice Mayor Keon: But, I have children that are your age.

Commissioner Mena: But, there's a difference between a factor and a requirement. You can weigh that factor. Is the person old -- you can balance all those things and make a sound decision.

Vice Mayor Keon: And I think that they have. And I think that there are times when they have taken someone with less than 54 credits, when they are in school. And often, the people that are in school and have taken 54 credits are likely to finish college. And, we have a reimbursement program for college. So, you are likely to have a more educated or more well-educated force, which, you know, if you can -- it is much easier to train those that are educated often.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: I'm sorry, may I add...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I interrupt...

Vice Mayor Keon: I think it's an important part of our requirements. I really do.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we wind this down? I mean, Commissioner Quesada, do you have some comments? We've been at it for a long time.

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah, just real brief. I'm supportive of what Commissioner Mena and Commissioner Lago have stated. Obviously, I have the same concerns that the Mayor has stated, as well. What I would like to see, if I can sort of just bring this to a head now, is there are two parts to this. One is the information and the communication. You know, it's tough for us and it's tough for residents, because we hear so many different numbers. And it's funny, if we look at this document that's just been passed out to us -- and I had wrote down a whole bunch of different questions, and it's confusing. I understand because you mentioned that we have, you

know, three officers per thousand and all that. It's so difficult to follow. It really is. And I hate the fact that there's different information out there. What Commissioner Mena just said, we hear the number from you. We heard another number -- I've seen other numbers in writing. How can we be consistent? So, if we can figure out how to please be consistent...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Commissioner, I can provide the...

Commissioner Quesada: And I know -- it's -- so, that's number one. We need clarity on that for everyone.

Commissioner Lago: This is what I'm going to request...

Commissioner Quesada: Hold on. And my second thing is, what I would like to see is -- maybe for next meeting or whenever the Mayor wants to bring it back -- this is his item. You talked about alternatives. I thought Commissioner Mena brought up some great points. Chief Hudak also said that there were some exceptions. Can we see what those alternatives are? Can you bring that back to us, so that we can see in writing...?

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Sure.

Commissioner Quesada: Instead of just an oral presentation that we received in writing prior to the day of the meeting, so that we're not having to make the sausage up here as we're hearing it for the first time, just so we can see it a little bit better. Because I think there's some good points that have been brought up in how we can streamline it, based on what you guys have recommended and everyone thought. So, if we could just -- I would like to see that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: We'll definitely provide a report, Commissioner. I just want to -- just a point of clarification. I don't recall anyone being disqualified for a credit issue, unless it's something absolutely absurd. Also, on the social media, we're not looking for, you know, what political affiliation they have. We're looking for gang affiliations. You know, those are typical reviews that are done. I just want to mention again, just for everybody's clarification, these standards have been reviewed by a number of different people, both inside and out. There's complete transparency in this process. I briefed every Commissioner in the last year. What remains, Commissioner Lago, is the number one variable that none of us can control, and it's time. It's time. It took a long time to get into this process, and you've seen it by those numbers that are in front of you. So, it's taking a little bit of time to get out of it and momentum. The fact that there have been part-time officers -- or part-time employees doing background checks -- we started with two, then three. It takes us three months to train them, and they get the momentum and we build up. These are challenges. And I ask you to please Google police recruitment and police vacancies. And you'll see a number of issues across the country that does not make Coral Gables unique. This process has been thoroughly vetted out. I've asked a number of different questions. It is reviewed every week. We've asked -- Commissioner Quesada's asked questions about traffic. We've made it very, very clear there's a lot of discretion in that traffic. But just keep in mind, many, many officers, greater than 50 percent, die of fatal accidents. So, we want to make sure that they have the driving history and they can maintain control of a 3,000-lb emergency vehicle. And to the point of the Mayor, these are police officers -- I've been doing this for 32 years now -- that carry your livelihood and that of your family in their hands. And it is our responsibility to make sure that we bring them to your doorstep with the highest level of integrity and honor and commitment to their profession.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: And we aim to do that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: Two requests. Like I mentioned before, I would like to see what our neighboring cities are doing and what their vacancy rates are. I mentioned that before. I'd like to have that at the next Commission meeting. I'd like to have it presented. I would also like, on a monthly basis, to know what our vacancy breakdown is. And somebody mentioned 15, somebody -- now, he said it was 5, the positions that we have to hold open, as per their involvement, you know, in the armed services or whatever the issue may be, they have some sort of leave. I want to know exactly the amount of individuals, so that there can be no further discussion or rumors, like Commissioner Keon mentioned before. Third issue. We've had a lot of great discussion over the last year and a half, and I'm super excited about it, like I was about the NSAs, and it has yet to come to fruition. Retired traffic enforcement units...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Lago: When are we going to put these individuals into play? It is incredibly important that we roll this out, because the street -- the streets right now are becoming a battle. There are 700,000 cars that are driving through our city on a daily basis. People, as a result of Waze, disrespect the City of Coral Gables. We have 185 entrances in the City. They basically use us as a sieve to get from Point A to Point B, and we have zero mass transportation in this county, which is effective. Due to the result of that, people are, you know, driving through our streets. They're disregarding our residents, all the young children that are in the city. We need to be -- not only implement the 25-mile an hour, which a reduction in signage, but we need to start putting people on notice that we're going to treat you just like the way Pinecrest treats you. I want the same reputation as Pinecrest.

Commissioner Mena: One...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner...

Commissioner Mena: Can I say one thing?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, no, please. Go ahead.

Commissioner Mena: Just on your point, Commissioner Lago, and I know -- I think you'll like this because I know how important transparency is to you and you've made this point to us before. On the monthly report, let's put it on the website.

Commissioner Lago: Add on. Let's go.

Commissioner Mena: Put it on the website.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: I want to be able to tell residents, you want to know what the number is, here's the page you could go to...

Commissioner Lago: Go to the website.

Commissioner Mena: And see it every month...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That works.

Commissioner Mena: So, that there's no more...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It'll be done.

Commissioner Mena: Disputes about what is it, what isn't it.

Commissioner Lago: That's what I'm saying.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: It's already there. It'll be done. We'll put it on the website.

Commissioner Lago: And by the way...

Commissioner Mena: Make it clear.

Commissioner Lago: Since Commissioner Mena brought it up, I'll take advantage of it. I continue to waste my time sending memos. Some ideas are great; some ideas are insane, but whatever. It is what it is. Maybe you like my insane ideas. One of the things that I brought up was what Doral's doing.

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: You want to talk about transparency, go on the website in Doral. You can see up to the moment, the PO that was written, how much cash, how many checks, where are we in regards to the finances. I commend them. They went through a rough patch. They went through a rough patch. The City of Coral Gables went through a rough patch two years ago. So, you can never have enough transparency. Look at what they're doing. They even have a tab that's called transparency, and it's something very simple that we can offer the residents in this community the ability to be one keystroke away from having all these answers and not having these debates back and forth. You can say exactly these are the five individuals that are currently outside of the City of Coral Gables. They're still employed by the City, but they're not working on a day-to-day basis, because they have the following commitment.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Commissioner, if I may, the three traffic officers...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's get Vice Mayor.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: I'm sorry.

Vice Mayor Keon: No. I think he was going to tell us about the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Vice Mayor Keon: Traffic officers.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Yeah, the three traffic officers -- were finalized yesterday, so they'll be coming on board very soon. These are transitioning in, so it should be a very quick transition. I just want to close by just saying that in regards to the police department, we've got very fine, fine officers out there patrolling the streets. I've seen hundreds, if not thousands of officers. These are among the best. You know, in terms of the issues and characters in the police department, that happens in many police departments. If someone is portraying that Ed Hudak and I have some issue or something, he's never told me anything like that. We never had a discussion. So, I just want to put it on the record that that doesn't exist. You know, if there is an issue, then I will sit down with him and we'll talk about it thoroughly. But, I submit to you that these officers are out there making good arrests. They're out there patrolling and doing their job and doing it very thoroughly. These issues of recruitment, we're going to address it. We just need time. We need time because there's a lot of protracted problems that have occurred and we fixed them throughout, and we're on the heels of gaining some ground here. I thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Vice Mayor...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Commissioner...

Vice Mayor Keon: No, only that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's wind this up. Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Keon: I mean...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Keon: It was -- what we don't take into account is in the -- what was it '13-'14 budget, that we added seven additional officers to this -- to the number and there was no recruitment. When I talked to the HR staff prior to who is here now, there was no active recruitment for that additional seven officers. So, it really has multiplied the problem of vacancies, because it was added, never recruited. They were added in lieu of the fire fee, so it was, you know, the ability to transfer dollars from fire that were supplemented by the fire fee and add additional officers, but it was never done. So, there has been some problems.

Chief Hudak: And again, I just -- to clarify, I don't think the police department was doing the recruiting...

Vice Mayor Keon: No, it wasn't you. It's not -- wasn't the police department. It was HR...

Chief Hudak: At that time...

Vice Mayor Keon: Okay.

Chief Hudak: HR was not doing recruiting for the police department.

Vice Mayor Keon: Oh.

Chief Hudak: The police department was doing its own recruiting, and then we would submit the applications through HR.

Vice Mayor Keon: And people weren't getting hired, were they?

Chief Hudak: So -- well, they were going through the process and they were either washed out or not.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah.

Chief Hudak: Now, the added seven came after a freeze...

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

Chief Hudak: Of the two years before that.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

Chief Hudak: So, there was no hiring. The seven were added, and then we're at probably a bigger disadvantage.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, then, you know, it really...

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Those are the complications that...

Vice Mayor Keon: Bumped up -- right.

Assistant City Manager Fernandez: Compound the problem.

Vice Mayor Keon: That's what really bumped up the vacancy rate and created a problem with the vacancy rate, and it was during some financial distress during the time in the City and the decision made by the Manager at that time. So, all of a sudden, a new group comes in, a new Manager comes in, new people come in, a new police chief comes in, and you know, there -- they are starting from behind the eight ball and it takes a while to move it forward. I think what you have shown is that they are on a roll. They have increased applications, and we are likely now to see this problem be more readily solved and dealt with than it has been in the past and you need to give them the time to do it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Anything else on the issue?

Chief Hudak: Mr. Mayor, if I can. To your...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, sir.

Chief Hudak: First point some hours ago. There's a lot of conversations that go on about the police department. I would submit to all of you that if we were a dysfunctional, out of control, not doing our job department, we wouldn't have seen the decreases in crime. And, that's not because of anything else that goes on at my level. It's because of what the officers and the Communications operators do. I take issue with people that have left the department that want to come back and say whatever they want to say about us. This is a very simply put in my mind, as the chief, a chain of command issue. I have a chain of command. It's very clear. I report to my

bosses, and I'm accountable to everybody, as you said. If you're not happy with what I'm doing, then I'm -- I understand that. I'm a big boy. But, I don't want the people to leave thinking that the officers -- and the Director touched on this -- are dysfunctional. They hate to hear about our laundry as much as I do. And, I think that's what is going on. In retrospect, I think because of our recruiting efforts, this has come to the forefront, because we have done things that we've never done before. The videos, the bumper stickers, the boards, so people are asking the questions. Is it spurring? Yes. We're getting more applications than we've ever had before. Along with that, we've been given the resources, HR's been given the resources to vet those people out. It's not an easy task, but it's being one, and the crime continues -- I know I'm going to segue -- the crime continues to go down. We're going to have peaks. We're going to have valleys. But the arrests speak for themselves. The violent criminals that we take off the street on a regular basis, because of the officers and the way we respond to houses in minutes because of the Communications operators is what I'm most proud of in being in this position.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.