

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-5
March 9, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant to the City Manager, Solanch Lopez
Senior Sustainability Analyst, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-5 [Start: 4:46 p.m.]

Update on Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Program
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Commissioner Mena: G-5 is an update on Keeping Coral Gables Beautiful Program.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have that with Vice Mayor Lago.

Commissioner Keon: I think that's the only difference.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here. Solanch, take it away. I appreciate in advance, before you give the presentation, I appreciate all your work. You guys have worked tirelessly to get this done. So, I congratulate you on that. Thank you. This is going to be something special that's going to set the city apart. Its going to bring a lot of people to the city to do some great things.

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Ms. Lopez: Good afternoon Mayor, Vice Mayor, members of the Commission. Can we get the PowerPoint up please? So, Solanch Lopez, Assistant to the City Manager.

Mr. Anderson: Matt Anderson, Senior Sustainability Analyst.

Ms. Lopez: We are just going to go over very briefly, the results from the latest program that we initiated under Keep Coral Gables Beautiful and some upcoming events and programs that are coming. So, the Christmas Tree recycling program encouraged residents to recycle their natural Christmas trees after the holiday season. Recycling a Christmas tree helps to preserve the landfill space and provides the opportunity to repurpose this valuable resource as mulch and ground covers in our parks and planting areas throughout the community. Our brief overview of the program. The program timeframe took place from December 28, 2020 through January 15, 2021. It was available to both single-family homes and multi-family. Single-family had a specific schedule where they can put their trees out in front of their homes on the swale for pickup and collection based on the area where they live. And multi-family homes had the option to drop off their natural Christmas tree at the War Memorial Youth Center. We did outreach for this program through our ENEWS, social media and Facebook advertisements. We were also featured in a Miami-Herald article that spoke about the different recycling programs in Miami-Dade County and Broward County. In the ENEWS we had inclusions of the program in every city weekly ENEWS starting on December 23rd through January 15th to make sure that the word got out and our residents were informed about what the schedule was and that they had this opportunity available to them. We also had multiple posts on Facebook, Tweeter, and Instagram, and did two Facebook ads to increase the program awareness and reach. The cost of those Facebook ads is refundable to us through the FDOT grant that we received earlier in the year. So, this is a picture that Matt took of the trees as they were being collected over at the Public Works facility where they were being kept before being chipped. He can talk a little bit more about what that was like going out there.

Mr. Anderson: There were a lot of Christmas trees out back at Public Works. I like to joke with staff that it smelled like Christmas there all the way through February. And we had about 2,800 trees that our staff was able to collect through this program. So, a really huge success to build upon this in coming years.

Ms. Lopez: This is that mountain of trees after it was chipped. We estimate that we collected roughly 140,000 pounds of mulch, based on the average weight of a 6 to 7-foot Christmas tree being about 50 pounds each, and knowing that we collected 2,800 trees. Some additional information that actually came up as a question at the Sustainability Advisory Board meeting by one of the residents in attendance. They wanted to know when we provided them with these results, how much this program's essentially saved the city in tipping fees, since we mulched the trees ourselves and are using it for ground covering in our parks and open areas instead of taking all of

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those trees to the landfill. After speaking with our Sanitation Director, Al Zamora, he gave us some numbers and insights, and this is what we came up with. The program essentially resulted in savings between \$2,975 to \$5,075 in tipping fees, depending on the disposal location. And we have a quick breakdown there of the price and it varies whether they would have been dropped off at the Waste Management facility or the county facility.

Mr. Anderson: And before we move on from the Christmas tree program, I did want to take an opportunity to really thank our Sanitation Department and also our Landscape Division. They were really the ones putting in the work and really helping us have this program come to fruition and the success behind it. So, I did want to take an opportunity to thank Al, Brook, and both of their teams for their assistance in really making this program a big success.

Ms. Lopez: Also, to Community Recreations for allowing us to use the space at the Memorial Youth Center, as the place for the multi-family homes to be able to drop off their trees, so that they too could participate. So, next is the Great American Cleanup, which is coming up now in the spring. The Great American Cleanup is one of the staple annual initiatives of Keep America Beautiful. The Great American Cleanup unifies and beautifies communities across the country in a grassroots spring-cleaning movement. It prompts individuals to take greater responsibility for their local environment by conducting grassroots community service projects that engage volunteers, local businesses, and civic leaders. Quick program overview of what we're planning. The program timeframe Great American Cleanup runs through the spring season, so essentially March 20th through June 20, 2021. We already have two planned events and are looking and considering some other initiatives during the season, but we want to activate as well. As of right now, we'll have a kick-off event on March 20th, Plugging at Matheson, which we'll get into a bit more in just a minute; and then, towards the end of April we'll have the bi-annual household...collection event. Under consideration is solar cleanup similar to how we did last September for International Coastal Cleanup Season, where we'll encourage residents to do their own cleanups in their own neighborhoods and then just collect the data of how much trash they collected. So that's under consideration and we are looking into that a bit more before bringing it back. And we'll look at possibly doing additional smaller group cleanups, maybe towards the end of the season just to close out the Great American Cleanup Season as-a-whole. So, Plugging at Matheson is going to be our kick-off event to the Great American Cleanup Season on March 20th. Keep Coral Gables Beautiful will host the Plugging event at Matheson Hammock Park to kick-off the season, along with the start of Earth Month, since its right around the corner as well. Plugging is a combination of jogging and pluck up, which is Swedish for "to pick up." It's a new movement that started in Sweden that's really taken off in cleanup groups and organizations like Keep America Beautiful. And it entails, essentially jogging, while quickly stopping to pick up trash on the go. This event will be at the participant's pace though, so they can walk, jog, run, whatever they prefer. Some of the program overview of the event will take place on Saturday, March 20th

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from 8:00 a.m. to 10 a.m. Pre-registration is required, and we will have a participant maximum of 50, just to keep it safe with Covid numbers. We are also going to have scattered check-in times. So in the planning of this event, we made contact with the staff at Matheson through our counterparts at Keep Miami-Dade County Beautiful, as they are also affiliates, and we also checked the high tide calendar to make sure that whatever date we selected for the event was low tide, if not we wouldn't really...

Mr. Anderson: Can't access parts of Matheson when we have high tide, so want to make sure it was the right time.

Ms. Lopez: The event, like I mentioned, will require pre-registration by participants and it will be capped at 50 participants. Walk up participants will not be accepted the day of the event, due to safety Covid restrictions. Check-in times are scattered to limit the number of participants in the check-in area at one time the day of the event, and participants will select their check-in time during the registration process, so they'll select whether they check in at 8, 8:20, 8:40, or 9 a.m. and that's where they'll collect their supplies and the like. This is just a rough sketch of what the event layout will look like. We've identified two trails for the event. The main trail, which is in red, essentially it goes through the nature bike trail that's already in existence there, where Matt and I walked it and there is a lot of garbage there, especially after a high tide, because it all comes in through the mangroves. That's the main trail and then we have a shorter trail that kind of goes along. It's the blue area and it kind of goes along the beach area, just for any families or anybody that doesn't want to walk that long trail, but still wants to participate, so they'll have the option of doing either or. Those participating in the main trail can choose to complete the entire trail or they can stop at the halfway point, which will be around the area where the guardhouse is, where you normally would pay to go into Matheson, and then turn back if they don't want to do the full thing. During the check-in process, participants will be provided with gloves, a picker, and some garbage bags. The filled garbage bags will be returned to the check-in area where staff will weigh it and record the weight of the garbage collected for our records. The garbage bags were donated by Keep America Beautiful. Its part of the in-kind donations that they provide to affiliates for these types of events. So, we received 300 – 33-gallon bags and the pickers were purchased with the FDOT grant monies, so we wanted to show you some of the pickers and what they look like. We got two sizes; they are both branded with Keep Coral Gables Beautiful and have our website. This is the adult one, which is fold up for convenient storage, and the child one, in case we have any families that want to attend, smaller children, this is a size that is better for them, so they don't have to carry around the heavier one. The cool thing about the child size one is that, this is made out of 50 percent post-consumer recycled products, so it helps in that way as well.

Vice Mayor Lago: I can tell you one thing though, my two girls, we do this every weekend, and let me tell you, I showed them a picture of what's going to be provided and they were like beyond
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excited. Its like Christmas for them. So that's going to go very well with families. A good time to go pick up garbage, see who can pick up the most

Ms. Lopez: We already have the link to register up online available at coralgables.com/keepcoralgablesbeautiful. We've had it up for about a week now. It actually went out on Tweeter a few minutes ago and it will also be on our ENEWS, if anybody wants to register, and again, just keep in mind that pre-registration is required, and we do have a cap.

Mr. Anderson: I also want to mention to give thanks to the county in partnering with us on this event. They were excited to have our group put on an event in there; and also to our Chief Bay Officer, Irela Bagai, who I know is on our Sustainability Advisory Board, who connected us with the folks in the county that run the Bonanza event that typically takes place all throughout the county. So, we really have a good ongoing relationship with Miami-Dade County and partnering and they are happy to be a part of this event as well.

Ms. Lopez: They were kind enough to provide us some in-kind donations to give away to our volunteers setting up the event, so we have some shirts and masks and safety tips that they provided from a past event they had available.

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

Vice Mayor Lago: Great work. Looking forward to the event.