

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-3
August 24, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-3 [5:01 p.m.]

Discussion regarding funding mechanisms for historic City assets, Fire House 4, and Phillips Park. (Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

Mayor Lago: Moving unto G-3, Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: As we clearly understand there's so many important things that we handle and we are trying to get funded, but the one thing, two things that are we've been dealing with the last few months, I think going back before the summer is, obviously the importance of getting Fire House 4 done and also the value, the importance of getting the Master Plan for Phillips Park up and going, because Phillips Park because of the size, location, it could really provide so much for so many families, actually for the entire community. So, we've been bouncing about ideas back and forth, so I've asked the administration to present to us ideas of how both Fire House 4 and Phillips Park be funded going forward. So, I turn it over to the administration to see what.

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Agenda Item G-3 – Discussion regarding funding mechanisms for historic city assets
Fire House 4, and Phillips Park

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City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, thank you. Fire House 4 right now is being permitted; the permitting is almost over. We are looking at, Mayor, straight bid coming first quarter of next year, hopefully when some of the escalation comes down, as it is coming down. And we can currently fund Fire House 4 based on additional funding that has been available since the July estimate of the real estate tax estimates. We can fund then using two years of those additional funding. Of that additional funding we could start the Phillips Park project in 2025, without going out for any kind of bond, or any kind of loan. So, we would fund in '23, Fire House 4, again with the additional revenues that we received after the initial real estate tax.

Mayor Lago: When would we start construction on the Fire House?

City Manager Iglesias: I'd like to start construction bid it out the first quarter of next year.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

City Manager Iglesias: I'm waiting for a little bit of escalation to come down and we are permitting, it's in permitting right now. By the way, so is the mobility hub in permitting right now. And so, we will go direct bid for Fire House 4, first quarter of '23, and then two additional years of taking that additional funding for Phillips Park and then starting Phillips Park in '25. We have enough funding to start the design of Phillips Park now, having the resident outreach and so forth, finishing design by the end of '23, going through one more funding cycle and starting in '25.

Mayor Lago: Let me ask you a quick question. So having built a lot of parks, including the Miami Circle, very complex park that I built in Brickell. That park took me almost two years to build, even though it doesn't look like it's a lot, but it took a lot of work with the sea wall and a lot of things that have to do with historic.

City Manager Iglesias: Very complicated.

Mayor Lago: Very complicated park. I think the design and the outreach, and the permitting should take probably 14 to 16 months.

City Manager Iglesias: That is correct, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: On Phillips Park. So, let's get it started now, now, fund it next year, correct?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes. We have already started outreach, because we have enough funding to start now. So, we've already started; the idea is to get it finished by the end of next year and one more year of funding and then.

Mayor Lago: How long do you think the construction on that project would take?

City Manager Iglesias: I would say probably 14 months.

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Mayor Lago: Okay. If we can catch this in the next 14 months and finish up the outreach and design, why can't we commence construction on a project in '24, not in '25. I know we are going to be short on money.

City Manager Iglesias: The time is very tight, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We are going to be short on money, we are going to be short on money, but as we continue through the process, there's delays in projects, there's a lot of things. We can maybe get started in '24, I know it's important to the Commissioner, I want to get it done for him. There is a reason why I'm going to mention that now; and get it started, break ground, start working, maybe it's a two-phased project, maybe there is a delay of three or four months between Phase I and Phase II, maybe there's a three- or four-month delay, there is always a delay in construction, let's be honest with ourselves. Right now, we are having issues getting HVAC equipment, its taking almost eight months, nine months, to get HVAC equipment, no one ever thought that. Projects are being delayed no matter what. We have that delay, and we could literally start a year in advance and maybe only fund 40 percent of the project in that year in advance, and then the lag, the next year would be the 60 percent. I just want you to think about that.

City Manager Iglesias: We can look at that.

Mayor Lago: See what Finance can do.

City Manager Iglesias: And we can look at that phasing option, Phase A, Phase B.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: At '24-'25, we can also take a look at that, so the Commission agrees to that, then we would, again fund, go out for bid, Fire House 4, first quarter of next year, and then look at design can start now. Our Parks Department has already started outreach, so we should have the design finished by the end of '24, and during that time we'll look at funding sources and look to see, Mayor, as you mentioned, to have maybe a Phase A, Phase B.

Mayor Lago: We can start ordering long items for Phase B months in advance, the construction has already started, because it's going to take time to get certain things, depending on the complexity of the construction. Let me tell you why I'm asking for that. The Commissioner has been very flexible, this is legacy project for him, for the Commission, legacy project for him. I want to deliver. I want him to have this win. I think it's important and I think it's important for all of us, but I want to make it clear on the record here, because Phillips was an important project, but he took a step back knowing very well that while parks are very important, life-safety is uncompromised. We had a previous encounter here with the head of the unions from the county,

who called into question our commitment to public safety. We are going to spend, I hope its \$6 million, but it's probably going to be \$7 if not, \$8 (million) on a world-class fire station.

City Manager Iglesias: I hope \$6 or \$7 (million).

Mayor Lago: I hope \$7, it was four at one point, it was four, and then we would have done Phillips also at the same time and laughed about it, because it would have been that simple, but that's out of our control. The union had here said that we do not prioritize public safety. We had stopped every project, mobility hub, we had stopped Phillips Park, we had stopped other projects that I think were incredibly important to the city to make sure that we deliver on the Fire Station. We do not compromise on public safety and that's critically important to put on the record. We do not compromise. You are talking about an area in our city that has good response times, but deserves better, and it's been a priority and its being delivered. And the Vice Mayor is not here, obviously he had an emergency to take care of, but that's part of his legacy in working on that and Frank Quesada's been working on that for years and that's coming to fruition, along with Jim Cason and Raul and people who served in this community and saw that was a critical important part of our public safety. So, I just want to put that on the record, because we got into a heated argument about annexation and all kinds of stuff, and some things were said, don't call into question the City Manager, the City Attorney, the City Clerk, this Commission, our employees, our staff, our directors, our residents when we are committed to public safety. We are bending over backwards to make sure that we can deliver world-class facilities for our firefighters and our police officers. That's why we have a Class 1, that's why we have neighborhood safety aides, nobody is doing neighborhood safety aides, no one's spending that kind of money as another redundancy level, layer on top of this community to make sure that this is the best. And by the way, if we weren't a safe community, we wouldn't see the numbers in regard to public safety that you are seeing them now, how low they are, and people wouldn't want to live in this community. Everybody wants to live in this community, every single person. So, I want to commend Commissioner Menendez for, hey listen, he could have pushed this that I want this now, done now. We are starting the design and we are going to fund it. So, I want to figure out with staff, please make it a priority to figure out over the next few weeks, with Keith, and with the Finance Director. Please, how can we sit down and analyze the Phase A and Phase B to try to make up that year, because that's important. That's important for all of us and it's important for the Commissioner, please.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, if the Commission agrees, as I see that it does, we will proceed through, we will move forward looking into that and will present it as we present the budget.

Mayor Lago: By the way, none of you were here, you weren't here, nobody was here. I walked with the firefighters the first day I got on the job here and I went to Old Cutler, and they showed me the mold that was all over Old Cutler. We always forget, we have very short memories. The U.S.-1, these guys living in there, the wood, the paint peeling, the place was a mess. You drop \$20

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million dollars that place looks like the Taj Mahal now, we forgot how it looked. Listen, we've come a long way, come a long way, and these guys deserve the best. They put their lives at risk, and they make sure that we can sleep at night.

Commissioner Anderson: City Manager, I just want to applaud, because in number of projects that your office handles and the efficiency in which you are doing it is remarkable. So, thank you and I'm very happy to see these projects going forward. Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: Thank you Commissioner.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to add. And Mayor, thank you for the words of support and for understanding. At the end of the day what we do here is try to make our community better and you make it better by making it safer, and you make it better by providing our residents the opportunities to enjoy the wonders of living in our city. So, I think it's a win-win on both ends. I ask that once, with your suggestions, obviously incorporated into the plan that when it comes back that we can adopt the plan via resolution, so that they have the full support of the Commission to move forward that will be their green light, that's what I ask.

Mayor Lago: You want to put it to the next Commission meeting, the plan.

City Manager Iglesias: Let it present it through the budget process, so we can get everything in.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

City Manager Iglesias: And we can look at it closely.

Mayor Lago: We have time. We have time because we are actually working right now.

City Manager Iglesias: Because we are looking at that accelerated year, Mayor, let's see how we can do that.

Mayor Lago: Let's see. Obviously, I'm looking forward to a good tax year, hopefully next year. I'm not so optimistic about the following year, to be honest with you, so we have to be very careful that's why head count and reoccurring expenditures like Keith always says, like Diana always says, we have to be very careful with that; one time items okay, we budget for those, but let's not get ourselves into a situation where in two years when this thing flips on us potentially, its going to happen. You're seeing where we are headed. So, let's be careful on that. So, we'll bring it back then.

Mayor Lago: Item G-5.

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City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor before you move on, Ms. Cruz wanted to speak on this item.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, you wanted to speak on G-4?

City Clerk Urquia: No, G-3.

Mayor Lago: G-3, I apologize, excuse me.

Ms. Cruz: [Inaudible]

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you.