

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-2
June 28, 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, Jr.

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Deputy City Attorney, Cristina Suarez

Assistant Public Works Director, Deena Bell-Llewellyn

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-2 [Start: 4:55 p.m.]

Update regarding the replanting of all trees and shrubs on Ponce de Leon Boulevard.
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto G-2. Ms. Bell always a pleasure to see you. Very quickly, how are we looking for a start date?

Ms. Bell: For North Ponce we just finished the bid review. I hope that we award the bid this week, and we award the contract and get started on scheduling the work.

Mayor Lago: How about all the shrubbery throughout Ponce that we are going to be working on?

Ms. Bell: I have a presentation, Mr. City Clerk, for G-2, if you want to pull up the plans, I can show a visual. This what you're seeing is a design we did from Miracle Mile north to Minores; and this is all the medians and the right-of-way on the side. Scope of work – removing the Ficus

*City Commission Meeting
June 28, 2022*

Green Island, replacing it with three or four different plant types that naturally stay lower than 18 inches high for visibility, and offering some interesting color, because I think we are overloaded on the Ficus Green Island, and it has many problems. It grows aggressively very tall, blocks visibility and collects a lot of trash. So, we are going to take care of that problem; and this is just a blow up of what one typical median would look like. We are leaving all of the palms that are there and we are replacing the Ficus Green Island with a combination of low-growing Juniper Liriope Purple Queen. We are trying to add interesting color through the district, beautify it. And recently we just went up to Ponce and 8th Street and replanted that whole island and added color. You can hear about that later. It was a community, a volunteer activity we did with Keep Coral Gables Beautiful, but we had volunteers help plant flowers, and very successful. I don't want to steal the thunder of the Keep Coral Gables Beautiful people that are going to talk about it. But this project is the first one. We are ready to get going on as soon as we award the bid. Any questions?

Mayor Lago: Perfect. What about going south?

Ms. Bell: Going south. We have written a new needs request for budget to move from Miracle Mile south to Ponce Circle Park, and then skipping over Ponce Circle Park area, because that's a current project under design. Then Ponce Circle Park down to U.S.-1, we've recently come in and relandscaped the area at Bird Road in the median. I think it looks very nice. It's the same plant material pallet, as you see on these drawings here, so we are trying to create some consistency through Ponce. I'm going backwards.

Mayor Lago: When do you think we'll be able to do that?

Ms. Bell: We've already completed that one.

Mayor Lago: I'm saying from Miracle Mile down, Ponce Circle Park and around, all the medians.

Ms. Bell: That is a new need request for next year. So, I've written a new need budget request for that whole area.

Mayor Lago: I was hoping we would get it done earlier. But can you keep me in the loop in regard to the cost so I can see what we can do with the budget. Its important. I would like to get that done. I think it's something important. I know we've been waiting a long time for north and I'm happy about that, especially in front of Zucca, its shameful, its shameful. We need to get those areas really cleaned up. I need and I've been asking for it, I've been asking for it for some time, I need a meeting with Merrick Park. I'm leaving out of town next week; I've been asking for a meeting for...

Assistant to the Manager, Solanch Lopez: This Thursday morning.

Mayor Lago: Super excited. I'd like to Sunshine that meeting. I'd like to have my colleagues come, if they are available.

Commissioner Anderson: Conflict on the schedule, but I would love to be there.

Mayor Lago: Maybe we can have you on the phone and I'll carry you around and I'll show you what I'm thinking about, because...

Commissioner Anderson: Tough on Thursday, Wednesday afternoon.

Mayor Lago: Let me tell you what's going on, just so you're ready, because I hold you guys in the utmost respect and staff does a wonderful job. I drive everyday in front of the relandscaping efforts around the circle. Its embarrassing. It's the bare minimum of what you could do. Its literally dead trees, they threw mulch in there and they planted one or two trees on the circle. We need to do much better. We need to do much better and I'm going to point it out and I'm going to show you what needs to be done. This is a multi – I don't even know how much that property could be worth, a lease that is peanuts with the city, peanuts. They've got to step up. They can do so much better after not doing anything for 15 years. We need to understand who is responsible for the circle, who is responsible for where the palm trees are. They are keeping all that landscaping which is probably 20 years old that is all half dead, there are no leaves. We need to replant it. The whole point, we're the City Beautiful. So, on Thursday morning I welcome all of staff to please join me. I'd love to make this a family affair. I'd love to have your input. I'd love for my colleagues on the Commission to join me. I think its important for Merrick Park to understand. Let me give you an example so you understand. Before Tuesday morning, drive into Merrick Park, look at the landscaping inside Merrick Park. Why does it look so different outside Merrick Park? So why is the landscaping so nice inside Merrick Park, but the landscaping outside doesn't look so good.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll delegate my comments...

Mayor Lago: Makes you wonder why LeJeune, why Ponce, why the bare minimum is being done. I know it falls on us, its incumbent on us to hold people accountable, I know. Thursday, I'm asking, please for somebody from Merrick Park to be there. If they do not comply, I'm asking Suramy Cabrera to start fining them. Do not give mercy to people who on city property, who again, are not putting their best foot forward. Does the Commission support me on that?

Commissioner Anderson: I do. I just will delegate my comments for Ms. Deena Bell Llewellyn to take, to make it beautiful. That's all I say.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Just want to make sure we're on the same page, that I'm not going – I don't want to step if my colleagues think I'm overstepping.

Commissioner Anderson: No, no, it looks horrible.

*City Commission Meeting
June 28, 2022*

Mayor Lago: Because it looks horrible. I'm not the only one.

Commissioner Anderson: It looks horrible. I drive by and I always wondered why.

Mayor Lago: And also, the signs; the metal signs are rusted – Merrick Park and Valet and they are broken and there are some on the circle that are bent and twisted that face streets. We can do much better. It's been like that for years. Is it just we have to let it be, because they are Merrick Park and they are not going to do it, so we just got to accept it? No one takes mercy on us, so why are we taking mercy on them? I know. I know. I know. Guys, I've got a year here, one year, I'm not stopping, just so you know. We are going to do this every single meeting. Mr. Clerk put this on the agenda for July. Thank you. Deena, I love you, you're the best. We are seeing actual results with you pushing and with Suramy and with the team, but we've got to push harder, we've got to push harder. We've got to hold people accountable.

Ms. Bell: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Deputy City Attorney Suarez: Mr. Mayor just for clarification for the Clerk, the item you want at the next meeting is the landscaping.

Mayor Lago: Again, the same one, same one.