

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-9
May 9, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Community Recreation Assistant Director, Carolina Vester

Public Speaker(s)

Nancy Howard

Deborah Register

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Update on Dog Park Enforcement.

(Sponsored by Mayor Lago) (Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: In regard to G-9, I'd like to talk about the park and the discussion really quickly about whether we will split the park adjacent to the Coral Gables Country Club, its certainly used by a lot of families, whether we split the dog park for left the way it is. I'm in favor of leaving the park the way it is.

Commissioner Anderson: I have a meeting on Friday.

Mayor Lago: I want to show you a video that was sent to me. I talked to a lot of residents – a video and I want to show you an idea that I would like for staff to potentially flush out to see if it would work. Do you have the video?

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Commissioner Anderson: You might save me a trip on Friday morning.

[Video Presentation]

Mayor Lago: This is a video of the park. Obviously, the dogs are loose, not on a leash, this happens all the time, you're seeing the dogs. This is just one example of it. This is being sent to me by residents in the area. Happening more and more. Its becoming frequent. You have kids playing in the grass, the grass is being scuffed up, but we have to be a little bit more careful. I think that park should be left – you want to bring your dog, it's on a leash, perfectly fine, but it's got to be separated. Either we bifurcate the park, and we make it a park, a dog park, actually at the end of the day, bastardizes the purpose of why we did that park. I remember finding that piece of land, bringing it to the city and the city bought it for like \$500,000 and we made a beautiful park. Can I show the picture that I just an idea – don't shoot the messenger, just for information, you like it, you don't like it. I was thinking outside the box. This is in front of Burger Bob's. This is a piece of property that has a beautiful green area on the golf course, yes, in an area that, I'm not saying we should put it here, but we should find something like this. An area that has the middle use that doesn't have a putting area, that's not a T, maybe on the other side of Burger Bob's there's a little green area, maybe we can do something where we can have a dog park with a shaded area. Maybe we could find something like this adjacent to the park. This is literally 30 – this is across the street from the park. I know you guys are always in the area.

Commissioner Fernandez: It's the only open green space that we have in that area.

Commissioner Anderson: That's my concern.

Mayor Lago: But there is another space. You know where, I didn't get a picture of it, across the street from this next to the other side of Burger Bob's where they have the putting area, you know what I'm talking about, right.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right. This one, you're talking about this one.

Mayor Lago: Yes, but on the other side.

Commissioner Fernandez: Oh, okay.

Mayor Lago: Across the street, next to Burger Bob's there's a little putting green. Adjacent to that are two big Black Olives in the corner, maybe we could do something there.

Commissioner Fernandez: There is also an open green space on the block behind Merrick Park, which is a triangle park. I've seldom seen anybody there, but it's a pretty large area. I don't know if you're familiar. It's right on Granada, if you're heading north on the right-hand side, on the block behind Merrick House.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. I know which one you're talking about. Let's look at how they're being used. My concern is, we all know I love dogs, but I don't want to take space away from children to be able to play, kickball, soccer, baseball, all those types of things and I'd like to keep the dogs and the children separate for a variety of reasons, besides from dog poop.

Commissioner Fernandez: But I think Majorca Park, the patrons that are bringing their dogs have been pretty cooperative. They clean up after their dogs. We were there on Sunday, we didn't see any dog issues there, and there were dogs that came with their owners, they had them on their leash, and we were able to share the space.

Commissioner Anderson: About the meeting on Friday morning with some of the residents there complaining about barking, etc. Well, certain breeds bark, you're not going to change that; greyhounds don't bark that much, but one of mine does. Go ahead.

Commissioner Menendez: Sorry, I just want to say that I'm open. Obviously, we found out that enforcement is the biggest issue. No matter what we do to a park, if people decide to do whatever they want to do, we can build a cage and they still will go outside. But my only question, because I think we started a process as to – I'd like to know where Community Recreation is in the process, because they were doing an outreach and I want to be sensitive to that outreach.

Assistant Director Vester: For Majorca Park we did have a community meeting. What we've been doing in Parks and Recreation is, we've been doing a 30-day input process, so that allows people to before the meeting and post meeting to still have an opportunity to comment. So, by the end of the week, I believe, I'll have to double-check on the date, we will be closing the community input process. We'll summarize the dialogue, what happened at the meeting. The meeting minutes, I mean, sorry, the Zoom meeting has been posted on our Parks Project website, so you can already see it, so it's very transparent. I believe the consensus is that the community is still split on what they want there, and the immediate neighbors were not in favor of doing the dedicated dog park, but there was a lot of input on both sides. So, we'll summarize the findings, and we'll share them with the Manager's Office.

Mayor Lago: Alright. I don't have anything else.

City Clerk Urquia: We have a member of the public requesting to speak, Mr. Mayor, Ms. Nancy Howard.

Ms. Howard: Hi, Commissioners. Thank you so much for the time. My name is Nancy Howard, 1217 Venetia Avenue. And I just want to revert back to a comment that Mayor Lago made, it piqued my interest. It was regarding the utilization of the Granada Golf Course for a dog park, at least in a small part portion which dovetails into a question that I have and that residents brought up all during the pandemic and have brought up before the pandemic and after the pandemic is, the golf course utilization, and if there was even an entertainment or a thought that a dog park

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could be allowed on the golf course. Then I would dovetail that into a question, can we have a review of whether the golf course utilization can be expanded to having a walk/jog path or more access to the public use of that big, huge public space. So, it's not related to the dog park enforcement, but rather a comment that Mayor Lago had, and I'd love the feedback on the golf course utilization. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. This is something that has been a contentious point for many, many years. I'm a believer that there should be a path on the golf course at some point. People are running on the street; people are running on the grass. Some of the residents have not wanted it, but I think there's been a change and that's something that we could bring up in the near future to have a conversation. We extended a little portion of it on Greenway, a little bit of asphalt, so that we could connect a path that ended on Coral Way and then brought it down to Greenway and people have enjoyed that. I think that at one point, maybe it's worth having a discussion. I know that there was also a resident at one point that was willing to donate to the path, they were willing to pay for the path, because they thought it was important to get people off the street. I would hate to see an accident one day. People are not going to stop running. People are not going to stop coming here and at the end of the day, maybe it's something we could have a discussion in the near future.

Commissioner Fernandez: In the current partial path, it's highly utilized. There are people there at all hours of the day.

Mayor Lago: All hours.

Commissioner Anderson: I went there, and I'll make this short, with staff, and I'll highlight for you, their concerns. One is the golf balls flying back and forth. I've used the path. I've used the non-path for running around the dogs. I don't think whether you have a path there or not is going to stop people from utilizing it.

Mayor Lago: Just get them off the street.

Commissioner Anderson: Get them off the street and...

Commissioner Fernandez: And we can also create the trees too, we can maybe plant some trees along the path which they'll protect the golf balls.

Commissioner Anderson: I've got one put there – Cassia Fistula I got there.

Commissioner Fernandez: There you go.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Let's move onto G-7, Commissioner Anderson.

Commissioner Anderson: Can't hear that well, I'm sorry, my ears are getting old.

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Ms. Register: One thing is that a path on a golf cart is not safe whether on a golf course. Jeannett Slesnick, who lives across the street daughter was hit by a golf ball from the golf course, okay. Two, my husband plays golf, and he doesn't appreciate when a golf ball goes into a pile of dog poop, and he's had that happen. So, dogs should stay away from golf courses because balls go all different ways, they are not always down the street.

Mayor Lago: We'll figure it out. Thank you for the insight. G-7.