

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting  
Agenda Item F-1  
December 6, 2016  
City Commission Chambers  
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Jim Cason  
Commissioner Pat Keon  
Commissioner Vince Lago  
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada  
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark  
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias  
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen  
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman  
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Carissa DeCramer**

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

A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, urging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the South Florida Water Management District to expedite Phase II of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project and to take all necessary actions to expedite completion of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project. (Sponsored by Commissioner Slesnick)

Mayor Cason: Before we have lunch, let's do F-1, because we've had some people waiting all day long. Commissioner...

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Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Slesnick, this is your item.

F. W. Zeke Guilford: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, thank you very much.

Mayor Cason: Thank you. F-1's a resolution.

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes. Excuse me, Mr. City Attorney.

City Attorney Leen: Yes, Commissioner.

Commissioner Slesnick: I'm sorry. I wanted to bring this up. The Dade County has approved this in April, a resolution to urge the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to expedite Phase II of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands, and I'd like to have Irela Bague -- I'm sorry, come on up to -- who is on our Sustainability Committee and -- young lady?

Carissa DeCramer: Carissa DeCramer.

Commissioner Slesnick: If you could just -- briefly, yes.

Ms. DeCramer: Yes, and I have a speaker card that I have submitted.

Mayor Cason: Thank you. You may proceed unfettered.

Ms. DeCramer: Your system works.

Mayor Cason: So ordered.

Ms. DeCramer: Alright, well, thank you so much for taking this up. I know -- I will be very brief, because I know that...

Vice Mayor Quesada: Take your time. We've made you wait too long.

Ms. DeCramer: So, I -- my name is Carissa DeCramer. I'm the chief of staff at Biscayne National Park. Biscayne National Park is one of four national parks located right here in South Florida. It's just a stone's throw away. But the park is actually 95 percent water, so water is a big deal to our national park. And as you mentioned, this resolution is to encourage the Army Corps of Engineers to re-evaluate the planning timetable of the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands Project. Right now, that project is planned to -- there's two phases. The first phase will not be complete until 2021. And the second phase will not start until 2020 and not be completed until 2026. That has significant impacts for two major reasons. The first reason is fresh water is key to the resources of Biscayne National Park. We have fresh water that feeds from land, feeds directly into the bay that helps balance the bay and the saltwater in the bay. That's important, because 70 percent of the fish, crustaceans and shellfish that we recreationally and commercially enjoy in this area all grow up right in Biscayne Bay. So, if we have that imbalance right in Biscayne Bay, because there's too much saltwater and not enough fresh water, then we start to get out of whack and we have all sorts of other issues. So, in expediting this project, it hopes to address the balance of the saltwater in that piece. The second major piece is that national parks are economic powerhouses. Last year alone, Biscayne National Park brought \$32 million to the local economy and created 450 jobs for the greater tourism industry. That's important to this area. That's important to the economics. It's important for jobs such as those folks that live in Coral Gables. It also feeds into the quality of life, because many folks enjoy going out...

Mayor Cason: Fishing.

Ms. DeCramer: Boating and fishing...

Mayor Cason: Fishing, that's me.

Commissioner Keon: It's like our biggest playground.

Ms. DeCramer: Exactly.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Ms. DeCramer: So, this project is important to maintain that good, healthy ecosystem. And we hope that in your resolution that it helps expedite that timeline so that we can get the funding that we need invested right here in our local national park and can kind a get this project started.

Mayor Cason: Well said, well spoken.

Commissioner Keon: Is this national funding or is it...

Ms. DeCramer: Army Corps of Engineers.

Commissioner Keon: It's federal funding or...

Ms. DeCramer: Federal funding.

Commissioner Keon: State funding?

Ms. DeCramer: Federal.

Commissioner Keon: It's all federal funding.

Ms. DeCramer: Federal funding.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Commissioner Keon: It's state and federal. So, it's both state and federal funding.

Mayor Cason: I can't imagine that this Commission wouldn't be more than supportive, so...

Commissioner Slesnick: I move.

Mayor Cason: Let's ask for a motion.

City Attorney Leen: You know, the...

Commissioner Slesnick: Yeah.

City Attorney Leen: Commission can direct where it's sent. Is there somewhere specifically...

Commissioner Keon: And what can we do?

City Attorney Leen: Are there -- where should it be sent?

Commissioner Slesnick: Where would you like us to...

Mayor Cason: How about to the other...

City Attorney Leen: The resolution.

Mayor Cason: And how about to the other City Commissions?

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Ms. DeCramer: So, the project is managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, the South Florida Water Management District, and the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection. So, it would be directed to those entities.

City Attorney Leen: So, we could send it to...

Commissioner Slesnick: And to the other cities.

Mayor Cason: Other cities, right.

City Attorney Leen: Other cities.

Commissioner Slesnick: And to other cities as well.

Mayor Cason: Alright, so...

City Attorney Leen: Okay.

Mayor Cason: Who would like to make the motion?

Commissioner Slesnick: So moved.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Slesnick...

City Attorney Leen: And the Department of the Interior, you said.

Ms. DeCramer: And Department of Interior.

City Attorney Leen: Okay.

Mayor Cason: Alright. Commissioner Slesnick made the motion.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Second.

Commissioner Keon: Second.

Mayor Cason: Seconded by the Vice Mayor. City Clerk.

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Cason: Thank you for...

City Attorney Leen: You know...

Mayor Cason: Staying so long.

Ms. DeCramer: Thank you so much.

City Attorney Leen: Mr. Mayor...

Ms. DeCramer: And thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Slesnick: Thank you.

City Attorney Leen: We can send it to the Legislative Delegation, to the US Attorney, all the different people that we always send these things to.

Commissioner Keon: Right. Can we also put it in our legislative agenda for the year?

Mayor Cason: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Alright, let's take...

Commissioner Keon: Environmental.

Mayor Cason: Is a half an hour okay for lunch?

Commissioner Keon: It's good.

Mayor Cason: Let's have a half an hour, and then we'll come back again and finish up the last business that we have.