

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-2
February 25, 2020
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
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant Public Works Director, Al Zamora
Labor Relations and Risk Management Director, Raquel Elejabarrieta
Deputy Development Services Director, Devin Cejas

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item I-2 [10:53 a.m.]
Presentation regarding recycling.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll go on to the next item. Presentation regarding recycling.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, members of the Commission. Al Zamora, Assistant Public Works Director. Doing a little presentation on

City Commission Meeting
February 25, 2020
Agenda Item I-2 - Presentation regarding recycling.

recycling, obviously. The last Commission meeting we had, it was brought up. I wasn't really prepared, so I prepared something here that -- a small presentation on our efforts. And I'd like to go over a little bit of what can and can't be recycled also. There's been some questions. The market has changed. Obviously, everything is recyclable, if it's made out of plastic. It all determines on the program you have set up for your municipality or your county. One of the things I do want to point out is that our residents are doing a phenomenal job with what they are putting out as far as our contamination rate being 8 percent. That to me is key. We need to protect that. Every day you see new articles coming out. Broward County, no more mixed paper; other municipalities, no glass. We've been fortunate enough to be able to keep everything in line as far as what we will be talking today. The first thing I wanted to discuss and go over, obviously, last year at the February 26 meeting -- Commission meeting, you adopted an ordinance defining cardboard as a recyclable material, which is in line with state statute. At that time, the object was to get it out of the trash pits, get it folded and put by the bench so it could be collected at the side door. There was a six-month period where we did some education, followed by six months of continued education and warning. And we've come up to the year mark where there -- it's possible that you can receive a fine for still having the cardboard in your trash pits. One of the good things that I saw that came out of all this is that our recycling numbers, if you look at the chart, they're steadily climbing, which is a good thing. We picked up an additional 240 tons of recyclable materials from the year 2018 to 2019. That's significant. And as you can see, it's been climbing. I did want to...

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you drill down on that number in regard to what exactly -- which recycle...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: The commodity I cannot...

Vice Mayor Lago: Commodity which has gone up.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I cannot get it down to the exact science, but I mean cardboard is the obvious because of what's going on with Amazon and everything else. The paper in our stream, I mean, newspaper 20 years ago, that was the bulk of what you picked up. Today,

it's not and that's the heaviest commodity followed by glass. So, it is the newspaper. I mean, I'm sorry...

Vice Mayor Lago: Cardboard.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: The cardboard.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: One of the things I...

Commissioner Keon: That's also like 240 tons that we don't dump.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I did want to point out that we found out is -- and you know, in cases where residents move in -- and we're going to have those cases and you have excess cardboard. I wanted to give a comparison of what we would like and some of the things we've found. On the left, this person actually coordinated a special pickup, and we have that ability to do that. He flattened the boxes, and as you can see in the right-hand corner there, one of our pickup trucks came by and took care of it as a special pickup. That's efficient because can you imagine a route that's got 11 -- you know, a thousand homes on its route having to stop by and pick up the stuff. It just slows the process down because it's tedious to get from the backyard to the truck. And on the right, obviously, is just somebody that, you know, we came across. That's going to slow down -- not only is it going to slow down the process as you can see there's a lot of things that don't belong in that pile.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is that a dead cat there?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It might be. There're all sorts of things there. I don't -
- oh, on the box? Maybe. I also wanted to address special accommodations. We do have

something in place for residents that have difficulty breaking down boxes. We have a system in place where you call Sanitation. We'll have you fill out a form that will go to the ADA coordinator. She will approve it and then we will come back and mark your boxes just so our crews understand that the, you know, resident that resides in that home needs special accommodations. Year to date, we have nine applications that have been received by our ADA coordinator, and if anybody else, you know, needs that, they call -- we have something in place where they fill out a form. It'll be reviewed by ADA, and we'll approve it.

Vice Mayor Lago: How simple is that process?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I'm sorry?

Vice Mayor Lago: How convoluted -- is it very convoluted? Is it a...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: No, no.

Vice Mayor Lago: Simple process?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It's a simple form that you fill up online and send it in, and Raquel in ADA will look at it and approve it, disapprove it, whatever. And from there, we go ahead and mark the containers so our guys know, obviously, you know, the guys on the back of the truck take vacation and you know, so it will be clear for the staff to know that if it's unbroken, we break it down for them and take it away. I wanted to give you an overview of what we've done as far as education. We've done -- for a year now, we've done a series of PSAs. We've used social media. We've used print. And these are some of the public service announcements that we've put out. Basically, this is the latest and greatest, just informing people that you can -- you know, enforcement will start. There's a possibility that if you still have some cardboard in your trash piles, that you might get fined. On one of the -- again, these are just samples. This is some of the samples that we did on social media over the last year.

Commissioner Mena: It seems like a lot of media that we mailed stuff to the homes.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: We've mailed stuff to the homes in our billing. We've got hangers, door hangers that we've done. So, I think we've comprehensively covered all the medias that are out there, social...

Vice Mayor Lago: So you're -- as you're noticing or identifying homes or residences that are struggling with this situation, we're leaving a door hanger. We're obviously...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: We're leaving a door hanger. My...

Vice Mayor Lago: During that whole educational process, we were pushing...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Right. I have a right-of-way inspector now that's been with us for almost a year. He's even leaving a letter. He's knocking on the door. I mean, we're trying to do face to face.

Vice Mayor Lago: How about with people who move in? Like, for example, my backdoor neighbor who moved in yesterday, you know, he's not very familiar with Coral Gables standards.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Well, I mean, there's something that we've talked about adding to the package for new homeowners, where we can throw something in there that explains not only recycling, but I mean, I have...

Vice Mayor Lago: Because it's important.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I have some other services, also the trash service, the garbage service. They need to know the days. They need to know the do's and don'ts. Again,

newspaper, this is just to give you kind of an overview of all the things that we've done over the past year. There're the door hangers, the mailers that we fly -- the flyers that we mailed, I'm sorry. We did a public input campaign just recently. Recycle items -- and this is where I go back to where I started my presentation. Yes, everything is recyclable, but it all comes down to what your program is geared to pick up. And we're trying to keep it simple. I know when we first started 25 years ago to recycle, we had all these numbers, all these -- I think that created more of a confusion than anything else. We're keeping it simple here. Narrow neck plastic bottles and jugs. Anything that's got a narrow neck, we can take. We got an issue with tubs, butter tubs, yogurt tubs. Yes, they are recyclable. The problem is our program is not set up for that. Flattened cardboard and paper, glass, cans and aluminum, aluminum cans, metal cans. One of the big things that I've been fighting with is this notion that wet cardboard is no longer useful. That is not true. If it's soup, okay. But if it's wet, that's where it ends up anyway at the end of the process. It ends up in a vat. They put it in, they swirl it around, take the pulp, it comes up to the top, and that's where you get your pulp from. The thing I do ask that if it's contaminated with either paint -- I know a lot of people use their cardboard when they're painting as ground cover -- or when it's got food waste, that's when it should be thrown in the trash.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, no pizza boxes.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: No pizza boxes because that's going to be full of oil. That's going to be full of cheese.

Vice Mayor Lago: You heard that, Mayor? No pizza boxes.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: No pizza boxes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What about chicken?

Commissioner Keon: No chicken boxes.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: And the last thing that was -- that I wanted to bring to your attention, obviously, I bought something as a visual. As you can see, it's a laundry basket. It's not a recycling bin, but that is the proposed 22-gallon bin that we are proposing compared to what we have now. It's about an inch taller. The manufacturers, we're in the procurement process now. They couldn't get me the real deal here, so we kind of came up with...

Vice Mayor Lago: You improvised.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Something innovative that has a visual look to it. This one's multipurpose; you can recycle, or you can do laundry. I mean, whatever. But the interesting thing about it is that two of these will equal three 14-gallon cans. And that's what the normal home asks for is two bins. So, you're actually getting three bins out of it and a little bit taller. So, when you flatten your cardboard, you can fit it in there. And that's pretty much all I've got.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Is the expectations still that the flattened cardboard will be inside the container?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: If it doesn't fit inside the container, just lie it next to the container. That's what we're asking.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Obviously, you know, real big boxes are not going to fit in that.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: But your normal shoebox -- well, something's that's a little bit bigger than your shoebox. If you flatten it, it'll give you a little bit more room and it's a little bit higher. So, I mean, you can stack a little bit better. If not, just put it on top of there or next to it.

City Manager Iglesias: Or you could put it up against the wall under the overhang. If it gets slightly wet, it still can be recycled.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It's not a problem.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Good presentation.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you. Mr. Manager, you were also going to do a Coral Gables TV -- you're going to do a program on what's recyclable?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes. We'd like to do a program to -- so everything you see here is...

Commissioner Keon: How soon would you expect you'd have that done?

City Manager Iglesias: I will get back with you on that right away.

Commissioner Keon: Less than a year?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes. Yes ma'am.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: Less than a year.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you do me a favor? I think something as important as that is the issue of the new homeowners that come in, when we send them a letter, that at least we notify them of these standards and what we're doing.

City Manager Iglesias: We will, and we have a package for them that they can get here.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. I haven't seen it obviously, but I...

City Manager Iglesias: There's a package and it's been included so we can do that when we find out.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay, thank you.

Commissioner Mena: And I'm a little concerned that there's still a lot of people that just don't know.

Commissioner Keon: They don't know what's recyclable too.

Commissioner Mena: Well, and they don't know...

Commissioner Keon: I mean, they don't know about -- with the cardboard. They don't know they're supposed to cut it up. I mean...

Vice Mayor Lago: So, what do you want to do?

Commissioner Mena: No, no.

Commissioner Keon: Yes, we do -- well, I think once you find somebody and you make the explanation, hopefully that works.

City Manager Iglesias: It's not actually cut up, Commissioner. It's just the tape and fold it.

Commissioner Keon: No. Well, I mean flatten.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Well, one of the things we are working on is putting a sticker on these new bins that actually has it, the materials, in Spanish and in English...

Commissioner Mena: That's good.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, good.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Of what's acceptable.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, good.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I think that will help.

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely. Thank you.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I don't know how long it'll last or if maybe we can do it every year or every two -- I don't know. But we are planning on putting a sticker on these new ones...

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Identifying the materials that should go in there. And I think I'm going to add one or two materials that should be in there with an X, like plastic and Styrofoam.

Commissioner Mena: What do you -- what are you doing now when you're -- because I saw them this morning.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: When you see homes that are still putting boxes out unfolded, out on the curb, what do you -- what's the engagement there?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: The engagement is that my field inspector will either - he'll knock on the door and try to make contact. If not, right now we'll leave a warning. Hey, a letter stating, listen, March 1, this is unacceptable. Please, you know...

Commissioner Keon: Break down.

Commissioner Mena: If you say -- I guess my concern is you're saying we've been doing that for...

Vice Mayor Lago: A year.

Commissioner Mena: A year.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Almost a year.

Commissioner Mena: So, are you telling me that when I'm driving this morning here and I'm seeing boxes out on the curb, that those people -- I presume they're doing that every week. It's not -- I didn't randomly see when they put the boxes out this morning. I'm assuming the homes I saw this morning are doing that every week. Are you telling me that for the last year that those homes, every week when they put out those boxes, somebody's putting a door hanger or knocking or engaging with that?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I don't know if it's...

Commissioner Mena: Because I find that unlikely.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I don't know if it's every week. That's like the speeder. I mean, the guy that drives 40 miles a day every single day, today he gets caught.

City Manager Iglesias: We have 11,000 homes. You can't do that every week. But we try...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: To get as many as possible to warn them, but it's 11,000 homes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Right, but we're already touching those 11,000 homes when we're picking that stuff up, right? I mean...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I'm sorry?

Commissioner Mena: We're picking up those boxes now.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: We're going to pick them up.

Commissioner Mena: No, we have been for -- right.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: We have.

Vice Mayor Lago: But it comes to a point where we've got to make sure...

Commissioner Mena: I just find it hard to...

Vice Mayor Lago: That we're not just picking it up.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: And just picking it up, just picking it up.

Vice Mayor Lago: Because I've gotten -- we've gotten those emails. You've been copied on them where...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Of course, of course.

Vice Mayor Lago: Again...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I mean, I had one where it was a dishwasher box, huge, full of garbage and junk. I mean, what do you do with that?

Vice Mayor Lago: You have to pick it up.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: You got to pick it up.

Vice Mayor Lago: Obviously.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: There's nothing you could do with...

Vice Mayor Lago: But we've got to try to curb that behavior.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ms. Cruz, you wanted to speak? Be very brief, please.

City Manager Iglesias: And by the way, we have now, last year, a right-of-way inspector that's dealing with this all the time.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, ma'am.

Maria Cruz: Okay. Let me start with what I consider the worst part. When we tell the people in this City that they need to register in case they need help with hurricanes and things like that, we do not ask them to fill out a form that has to be an ADA accommodation that has to be approved by somebody because we trust that people will do the right thing. I object very strongly. I think

the fact that nine people have completed that form tells you that most of us, including myself, will not go the ADA route because you know what? Yes, I'm elderly. Yes, I have arthritic hands, but you know what? I'm not disabled, and that's what that means to most of us. I think that is an issue. Nine people have -- you know how many elderly people we have in this City that need help with that? Nine? That's absolutely a disgrace. Number two, I did not hear -- first time I hear that the cardboard can be wet. What about the newspapers? Because isn't newspapers supposed to go there too? Can they be wet? What happened to the containers that we were going -- getting with the cover? Did we hear about a cover today? The bids came in. The request for bids went out. The bids came in. I believe it closed last week. Why would it take a year to get this going? How long does it take to get this going? I think, once again -- and let me tell you the last thing that I heard from people. You all said fine was not the main thing, that you were trying to -- you would like the people to do it voluntarily and we would go the nice way. Well, I haven't seen it because they didn't send it to me. I would love to see the flyer that has been sent out because the argument that I got on the phone was, Maria, if fines are not the issue, why is \$500 the biggest sign on the flyer? Okay, I think you need to look at this issue. I don't think you're going to get what you want. I think some people -- let me tell you, I'll be the first one. I know people that put cardboard out every week. They've never gotten anything on their door. They never gotten a flyer. Okay, so it sounds very good. The process is very good. But you know what, process is very good. Once again, our employees are telling us what's going on, but it's not necessarily what's going on. A lot of smoke and mirrors.

Commissioner Mena: Are we going to hear from our consultant again, the one who we hired -- I forget the name of the company now. What was the name of the company?

Vice Mayor Lago: Kessler, I think it was.

City Manager Iglesias: Kessler.

Vice Mayor Lago: Kessler.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: We are working with him on the waste management contract, and after that...

Commissioner Mena: But weren't they working on this as well.

City Manager Iglesias: They are working on implementing -- after that, they're working on implementing certain improvements in waste. We've already accomplished that -- accomplished some of those issues such as the trucks...

Commissioner Mena: But when we had...

City Manager Iglesias: And so forth.

Commissioner Mena: When we had our Sunshine meeting on these containers a year ago or whenever it was, a year and a half -- I don't remember now -- wasn't it with Kessler or am I...

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, it was with the Kessler...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: Group, correct. And we have been implementing a change in our equipment. I think that the Assistant City Manager can better answer that.

Commissioner Mena: Sorry, and maybe I'm being unclear. Did we hire Kessler Consultants in part to advise us on this?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Yes, we did.

Commissioner Mena: Are we going to hear from Kessler Consultants as we make a final decision on this?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We will. We have a draft of a comprehensive study that was concluded by Kessler. It is in the process of being finalized at this time.

Commissioner Mena: Will we have an opportunity to speak to the consultant from Kessler again about this?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Absolutely, yes. Absolutely. We fully...

Commissioner Mena: When is the appropriate time to do that, next meeting, not yet, what...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Well, that would be up to the Commission, but I'd like to finalize the comprehensive study and it would be appropriate at that point to have the meeting.

Commissioner Keon: When is that?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I would say it's a matter of a couple of weeks, three or four weeks. Right now, Kessler's engaged in negotiations, as Peter mentioned. And so, I don't know whether Mr. Kessler has the time to conclude the study, but we can obviously do our review and ask him to conclude it.

City Manager Iglesias: We are currently working on our waste management contract, and we are looking at really comprehensively looking at the trash issue because we haven't dealt with this in some time. We are getting new equipment, which is more effective. And we're looking at really more of a comprehensive look at our entire trash collection system considering that it's backyard.

It's very -- it's not an easy thing to deal with because it is backyard collection and it's very intensive. And we did -- we are looking at not only that, but we're looking at our trash collection system, which new equipment and new technology has come into play that we are already adapting to. And then, of course, the recycling. So, it deals with trash, recycling and garbage.

Commissioner Mena: I just -- look, I -- we're about to have, I suspect, significant reaction from our residents. When you start handing out fines on the cardboard, I suspect my email box is going to explode and we're going to hear from people. We just are, if we're being honest about it. I suspect some of those people are going to say, well, where's the recycling bins that we've been talking about for...

Vice Mayor Lago: X amount.

Commissioner Mena: A long time? And I'm just a little concerned that I had a Sunshine meeting with the consultant on this specific issue. I'm not talking about everything else and all that is also important. But specifically, on this issue, you know, again, we had different option bins there. We had a whole full-fledged discussion. They were going to sort of vet it, and I haven't heard from them again. I mean, you all have and, you know, and that's fine, but we need to make a decision on this. And I'd like to have their input directly because I have questions about -- I came into this thinking we were going to get a covered bin, and I understand the explanations for why we're not and -- but I need more input from them. Otherwise, what was -- you know, I -- if I'm going to have an initial meeting with a consultant and I'm told I'm going to have a process with that consultant, I think it's important to conclude the process with that consultant and get their conclusions as an independent consultant. So, I really would like to hear from them sooner than later. And I think we need to move pretty quickly because I think this issue is going to come to a head really fast when you start handing out fines on the cardboard issue. So, you know, we've been, I think, pretty patient in letting this process play out, but we're at a point where this March 1st date's now here, and we still haven't...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, Commissioner...

City Manager Iglesias: Well, let me just say that recycling has changed in the last year. Recycling is no longer -- we're not no longer paid for recycling. You now have to pay for recycling. So, the issues have completely changed. We cannot -- we are no longer -- China's no longer buying recycling. And so, now many cities have stopped recycling because of the additional cost of that. What we talked about initially was covered bins and so forth. Well, covered binds generate 40, 50 percent contamination. If we have 40, 50 percent contamination, we are basically going -- that stuff is going to the landfill and we're not recycling. So, we've had quite a bit of change and we're trying to adapt to that change. And the fact that we're dealing with 8 percent contamination rate means that we're not paying. We're still recycling and we're still recycling effectively. Is it better to recycle a hundred tons effectively, or is it better to have 500 tons in the landfill? So, these questions are not that easy.

Commissioner Mena: No, I know.

City Manager Iglesias: And so, we have -- we're dealing with the most effective way of doing this. In addition to that, we're also -- we also have an expiration in our waste management contract. But things have changed in recycling and we're trying to deal with it as best as possible. We're trying to -- also have a collection system that hasn't changed in 50 years. And so, we -- and so that can't change in a year because we're looking at different equipment, different ways of collecting. Cardboard, that is -- that can be a serious problem because if we get 5,000 people who can't cut it up, our guys are running 10 to 12 miles a day. Now, how are we going to do that? Not certainly with the current staffing. It's not going to happen because they can't do anymore. They run -- they actually run 10 to 12 miles a day. So, we're dealing -- we're trying to deal with all these issues at this time, so it's not -- so if we go to a covered bin and we get 40 percent, 50 percent contamination as they're doing in the City of Miami and Dade County, then why even bother?

Commissioner Mena: I just -- look, I think...

City Manager Iglesias: So, we're dealing...

Commissioner Mena: I hear you.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to close...

City Manager Iglesias: With all these issues.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just want to close the loop on this issue.

Commissioner Mena: But it's not just that. Look, I think sometimes, you know, even on that point, I think it's a fair point and I have some concerns about that too. This whole process that they submit a form if they can't cut the boxes, I mean, how are we really going to evaluate that?

Commissioner Keon: Well, I think...

Commissioner Mena: Are we going to have a staff person...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: Making judgment calls on who can fold -- cut up a box and who can't? It's...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Well...

Commissioner Mena: That's -- I'm just worried about the process. I -- my concern is sometimes we try to do things that are noble efforts and we want to do the best by everybody. And I think that's a good thing, that comes from a good place, right? We want to recycle as efficiently as

possible. We want to accommodate those people that can't do X, Y, and Z. You know, we want to -- but sometimes we can't do it all in one. Sometimes there isn't one answer to all those problems and I'm just -- I don't know. I'm concerned about where this is heading because, guys, when I hear that 40 to 50 percent when you have closed bins -- so, the County, that's their rate of contamination, basically. All the closed bins I see throughout the County, that's -- they have...

City Manager Iglesias: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Do they -- is this based on some like study we got from somebody or is it -
- do we know their numbers on that? Is that something that they track?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Commissioner Mena: Okay. And what's our -- what are our numbers?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: We're at 8 percent. That's one of the first things that I did when I started with the City is, I wanted a composite study of what we were picking up so we could see where it was that we needed to go. Now, a year and a half ago, and I'm -- I know you want to hear it from the consultant, but what was presented at that meeting you're talking about was all carts. What's happened in the industry with China shutting down their doors, I don't think carts, and I'm pretty sure the consultant is going to agree with me that if you're at 8 percent and you've got a certain cost to get rid of your recyclables and you're controlling those costs -- and a lot of cities are looking at going back to the open bin because of that, because of the contamination problem. The problem is when you have something that big with a cover, I like to call it wishful recycling, either that or some extra room to put your garbage in. That's just human nature. And that's where the County and a lot of municipalities have run into trouble with these carts. They're not seeing what's in there, they're collecting them, and then at the end of the day, you're ending up with a truck that's 40, 50 percent contamination and you're being charged \$100 a ton...

Commissioner Mena: And I...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: To process this and...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me...

Commissioner Mena: And I appreciate that. There's a -- look, there's a lot of competing factors here. The -- you know, if I'm playing devil's advocate, sure, some of those cities, they have a higher contamination rate and they may be considering an open bin, but they also don't deal with a lot of the issues we deal with where, you know, you walk out and there's, you know, recycled materials on your swale because if fell out of the open bin, you know.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Right.

Commissioner Mena: That happened to me this week. I got home and one of the little orange juice cartons or whatever it was fell out. You know, it happens.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It happens.

Commissioner Mena: It's inherent in our system, right? And there's -- so there's different -- there's pros and cons. My question on the consultant is -- and it's because I appreciate -- I'm not -- I don't that the consultant may just corroborate everything you're saying 100 percent. But when I sat at that meeting with the consultant, he didn't say, as far as I recall, closed containers are a nonstarter because your contamination rate is too high. To the contrary, that was an option -- a real option on the table at the time with the consultant. So, I'm just...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: And like I started my conversation...

Commissioner Mena: I would think he would have said that. The consultant that we hired would have said, well, you're going to have a 45 contamination...

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, but, Commissioner, one thing is that recycling -- those issues are different now.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: Those issues are different. Our guys actually pick out the things that cannot be recycled off that open container. Things have -- when China stopped buying, it changed the whole -- it changed everything, which is what our director -- our Assistant Director is saying.

Commissioner Mena: I assume it changed the cost, but does it change the contamination?

City Manager Iglesias: It changed -- well, it -- what it does is the reason we have such a low contamination rate is because our guys can see it. They can pick out things that are -- that cannot be recycled, and that's how we're keeping it below 10 percent. Now, if you put a large container in where everybody throws everything -- and Miami Beach is over 40 percent, if I'm not mistaken.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It's 42 percent.

City Manager Iglesias: 42 percent.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: When I left. I don't know what it is now.

City Manager Iglesias: So, it's not just Dade County. So, from that meeting to now, things have completely changed because the economics have changed. And so, we need to deal with true recycling. I'd rather do a third of true recycling than 100 percent of nothing. And so, when we're getting closed bins -- so our guys go 10 to 12 miles a day. They're picking out things that cannot

be recycled and throwing it in. They use carts to take it from the backyard to the truck. That's not normal. A lot of these large bins, a truck comes by, they connect it, it dumps right in. So, you know, when you're going -- when you're doing 11,000 homes a day, you know, that's a lot -- a lot of things -- 11,000 homes, we do trash, recycling and garbage on 11,000 homes. It is a lot of touches, and you can't have a hundred percent perfection, right? If you do 11,000 things and you're off by 1 percent, you're doing a thousand things wrong. So, we're trying to work the best method that we can because we would like to continue recycling in an effective way and not just -- and not -- and certainly not have to pay \$100 a ton because it's going into the landfill. So, I would much rather recycle one-third that's truly being recycled than recycling three times more that's going into a landfill and we have to pay for it. And those are the issues that we're dealing since that meeting. The economy has changed. Things have changed and that's why I think the first thing that the Assistant Director said is China's not buying this anymore, and that's a key issue. A lot of cities have stopped recycling because the cost has been so high, and we see that.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Right. And you've got to keep in mind that this industry right now is fluid. There's a lot of changes going on. I was at a seminar up in Orlando three weeks ago. Some interesting stuff is coming down the pike, AI, different, you know, technologies. One thing -- one interesting thing is all the infrastructure in this country kind of shut down the paper mills because it was cheaper to ship it to China because we were importing stuff from China and these ships were going back empty. So, what we did was we gave them not only our recyclables, but also all our garbage. Now, what's interesting is the Chinese still need the pulp, they still need the pulp. They're starting to reinvest and retrofit the infrastructure that was once owned by people in this country and they should be up online in two years. So, the industry might change again in two years. There's technology for recovered glass, you know, making building material out of it. So, this is something I think that people are realizing at the beginning. We try to make it easy and anything goes. Now we're trying -- you know, now we're seeing, whoa, we've got a problem here. You know, is automation on the front end, you know, saving you money, but what good is it if you're paying it on the backend?

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: You know, so the industry is being reevaluated almost on a yearly basis, if not six months.

Commissioner Mena: I hear you. Look, the last thing I'll say is -- really quick is just -- I just -- as we balance all those factors, the economics, the actual sort of efficiency of the recycling, if you will, environmental aspect, I just want to make sure we also balance the impact on the residents. Like, you know, the...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: And I understand that. I mean...

Commissioner Mena: Convenience factor, the challenges that our residents face as you weigh all of those things.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I could...

Commissioner Mena: That it's not just an economic decision.

City Manager Iglesias: And if we to -- if we have 5,000 homes that decide they want to go on this program, we don't -- our folks cannot break down 5,000 homes.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: We'd have to add...

City Manager Iglesias: And collect -- it can't happen.

Commissioner Keon: Well, I...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I think we'd have to add more people.

Commissioner Keon: You know, I think you can wait and see what the reaction to that is. I know the few people that called about or sent emails or I think maybe called, I forwarded the information to the trash -- to Mr. Zamora, and they took care of it. I mean, the people called back and said thank you. We don't have to -- I mean, they were elderly or whatever and they didn't have to do them. I mean, I don't know what the process is. I don't think that the elderly use Amazon to the extent that 30- and 40-year-olds use Amazon. I don't -- I mean I think there's -- different people get different kinds of boxes. I mean, people get the newspapers no matter what, but you know, the use of boxes or whatever -- and I think that I would, you know, if somebody calls and they say they can't do it, I -- for the most part, I would take their word for it. You know, if it gets to be where it's 5,000 people, you know, then maybe you're going to have to look at it a little more carefully. But in the beginning, I think if somebody says to you...

Vice Mayor Lago: I mean, we...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: With the permission of the Chair.

Commissioner Keon: No, I can't do it, then you do that.

City Manager Iglesias: Yeah, but...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: We have looked...

Commissioner Keon: And that's okay.

City Manager Iglesias: At this and we've discussed it and we realized that this could be a real -- something that could be extremely difficult internally because if we get a few hundred people, we can deal with it. If we get a few thousand people, then we can't deal with it.

Commissioner Keon: But it...

City Manager Iglesias: And that's...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And with the permission of the...

City Manager Iglesias: And that's a fact. So, this is something...

Commissioner Keon: But I think you...

City Manager Iglesias: That we are...

Commissioner Keon: Okay, but you know that.

City Manager Iglesias: Internally looking at and...

Commissioner Keon: Okay, but...

City Manager Iglesias: And we're saying, okay, let's see what happens. Let's see the best we can do because we'd like to do the best, we can for all our residents. But the fact is that we can handle a few hundred, but we can't handle a few thousand.

Commissioner Keon: But you don't know that you're going to get...

City Manager Iglesias: That's what...

Commissioner Keon: A few thousand. I mean, I think...

City Manager Iglesias: Well, I'm hoping that that's...

Commissioner Keon: You should go...

City Manager Iglesias: Not the case.

Commissioner Keon: You should go a little slowly with that.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: If I may, Mr. Chair, please. Raquel Elejabarrieta is here, and she can describe the process as it stands right now.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It -- yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you (INAUDIBLE)...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It's not a matter of trust. It's not --it's a matter of having a process in place.

Vice Mayor Lago: Right.

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I mean, it's not that I don't trust. I mean, that's not the issue.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you before -- Mr. Zamora, before you leave, just address the issue, you know, if a resident comes and asks me about wet newspapers, and you made the statement about wet cardboard, are you going to...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Wet newspapers is the same thing. It all goes in...

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to make sure that's clear on the record.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Pulp is...

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: You know, the whole mystery was, as our material recovery facility, I buy by weight, okay. When I go across our scale, it's by weight. I'm buying by weight, when they used to pay money for stuff.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yup.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: And I wanted it dry because I don't want to pay you for water. That's the -- it's the business.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, we understand.

City Manager Iglesias: They didn't want to pay for water.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: Listen, we understand very clearly.

City Manager Iglesias: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Keon: Okay, we understand that.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I worked in (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Lago: The County is going to send us an addition -- an added tipping fee. It's going to come.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: It's going to continue to happen, not every year. It's going to happen every two years. And this Commission's going to have to make a decision, either we pass it on to the residents or do we try to find ways to save money.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: And you know, you have an opportunity here. Let's see how it goes. We're rolling this out. I think people in this community are going to be receptive to the issue.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Just to give...

Vice Mayor Lago: I see it as -- in my opinion, I've said this before. I think we need to be, again, like Commissioner Mena stated, as receptive and as easygoing for people who meet the criteria to not have to cut down the boxes, make it easy, like we do with the in-home permitting, where we provide that service for people who meet the requirement. But I also -- I'm a big believer that it's a lot easier to put the boxes next to your recycling bin, at least for me it is because it's -- open the

garage door and it's right there, instead of having to walk down 40, 50, 60, 70 feet to the curb to dump it into swale.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It's state statute that cardboard must be recycled. I mean, how can we supersede state statute?

Unidentified Speaker: Yep.

Vice Mayor Lago: It's the right thing to do. And again, it could save the City some money. So, in turn, we'll say the resident's money. So -- and I think that's important.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Raquel.

Vice Mayor Lago: Sorry, Raquel, go ahead.

Labor Relations and Risk Management Director Elejabarrieta: No, not at all. So, the process is fairly simple. We have what's called a reasonable accommodation request form. It's a two-page document. The first page just requests information on the resident; name, where they live. And then it asks three simple questions: Describe the accommodation you are requesting, the cardboards, and how will you -- and if you have spoken with City employees about this request in the past, provide any other information relevant to your requests and what are your functional limitations? We either email that to the resident. Some of the elderly do not have email, so we'll mail them to them, to their address. We've only received nine of these forms completed, but I don't think too many more have requested it. So, I think out of maybe a couple more...

Vice Mayor Lago: How extensive...

Labor Relations and Risk Management Director Elejabarrieta: Have requested...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm sorry to interrupt you, but how extensive are these forms? I haven't seen them.

Labor Relations and Risk Management Director Elejabarrieta: It's a two-page...

Vice Mayor Lago: And I want you to send this -- can you send us a copy of...

Labor Relations and Risk Management Director Elejabarrieta: I'll send it to you.

Vice Mayor Lago: That, if you'd be so kind, please.

Labor Relations and Risk Management Director Elejabarrieta: It's a two-page form. Like I said, the first page just requests information on the resident; name of the person, point of contact, date -- the accommodation that's needed, the date it's needed for, the name of the City service, program or activity that is the subject of your accommodation. That's just the first page. And then the second page has four more questions. Describe the accommodation you are requesting. You would answer the cardboard boxes. How will this enable you to participate in the City services? If you have spoken with any City employees in the past and provide any other information. We are not requiring information from the residents' doctors or any type of diagnosis. That's all.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That part was too complicated.

Vice Mayor Lago: It seems pretty simple to me. I mean you're not talking about the person...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: For an elderly person who can't fold a cardboard box, that's too complicated.

Vice Mayor Lago: How could we make it less complicated, less invasive than that? What would you recommend?

Labor Relations and Risk Management Director Elejabarrieta: We do have it in Spanish as well for those that don't speak English. I mean, they don't have to -- some of these questions are not applicable to what they're requesting so they don't have to provide an answer to them.

Vice Mayor Lago: NA.

Labor Relations and Risk Management Director Elejabarrieta: Some of them are left blank or they just put NA. We can simplify a form and just have a specific form, not call it an accommodation form and just have an accommodation -- a form saying two questions. We can certainly do something different, if that's the will of this Commission. This was just a way -- it was a form that we already had in place. It was also a way of gauging how many residents needed this accommodation and it was a form of just tracking.

Vice Mayor Lago: Mr. Manager, will you do me a favor? Will you see if we can work on this form a little bit?

City Manager Iglesias: We can but...

Vice Mayor Lago: Just sim -- I'm just...

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, remember that engagement is critical...

Vice Mayor Lago: I understand.

City Manager Iglesias: As to how we can function.

Vice Mayor Lago: I understand, and I got it. And I know the whole point is that we want to limit the thousands of people that are going to ask to not put their...

City Manager Iglesias: If not, it's not going to work.

Vice Mayor Lago: Cardboard next to their re -- I mean, let's just give it a shot. We're now embarking on this fine and I want to make it so that it's as simple as possible for the residents.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, getting back to that, there's some concern that was raised from the dais about the fine. We have been educating the residents for a year now. The fines will come unless you are directing us to toll the fines for an extended period of time. That's completely up to you. But yes, you're right, there will be complaints that are coming, but we are compliant with the Code.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, let me ask you a quick question in regard to that. Starting on March 2nd - - we start March 1st -- if a person has a pile of cardboard in their swale, in their trash pit, will we give them a warning at that point, or we go directly into fining? What is the process, so we make it very clear, crystal clear?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Al, do you want to --

Vice Mayor Lago: Devin. You and I have already had this discussion, but let's put it on the record.

Unidentified Speaker: Sure.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: From a Code Enforcement perspective, the general procedures apply. So, a warning would be issued first.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: And then a subsequent fine would be issued if the homeowner does the same act.

Commissioner Mena: The warning -- will the warning be issued -- sounds like that's a typical Code Enforcement warrant.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Typical process.

Commissioner Mena: Can we issue that warning with educational material?

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: We've already been doing that, and we'll continue to do that.

Commissioner Mena: So that they know what...

Vice Mayor Lago: Can I...

Commissioner Mena: They're supposed to do.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: I want to add one last point to that, please. And I keep -- this is the third time that I say this, and I want to put it on the record. Please make sure that we're educating the residents, please. Because...

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Lago: I know it's virtually impossible because what I'm hearing from several residents who have told me that staff just picks up the garbage because I know it takes time to call the person who's dealing with the swales and go and leave the door hanger. Instead, they'd rather just pick it up and go on and move on because they're trying to do as many homes as possible, obviously. I understand, it's a very tedious job, 10 miles a day and they want to get done with it as quickly as possible and they do a great job. But I want to -- I want staff or someone to be designated to educate. It's not just pick up the garbage, because then people are not -- they're not changing their habits. And then we're going to be left with a decision here, which has already come six months ago and it's going to say the County has raised tipping fees. What do we do? I told you, I'm not going to vote this time around to pass it on to the residents. I'm going to make the City eat it.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, we have...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm giving you that promise. The residents will not pay for it.

City Manager Iglesias: We have a right-of-way code enforcement...

Vice Mayor Lago: That's what I'm saying.

City Manager Iglesias: Inspector.

Vice Mayor Lago: I need to know that that person...

City Manager Iglesias: And we have that person -- all the person does is right-of-way code enforcement. That's all the person does. Now, can that person get through 11,000 homes a day? Of course not. But we tried -- but that person is dedicated just to that.

Vice Mayor Lago: You know this...

City Manager Iglesias: And works under Al Zamora.

Vice Mayor Lago: You know this very well and so does Mr. Zamora, and we've spoken to people at the County, just like you talk about China, the garbage fees are going up, and going up drastically in the next two to three years.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Tipping fees are...

Vice Mayor Lago: They're closing landfills because they're reaching capacity. They're having issues with recycling. When people stop recycling, guess what happens? More garbage is diverted...

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: Into the landfills. Landfills are getting more and more expensive, if not closing. I'm just telling you, this is a perfect opportunity for us to lower our overhead, to lower the fees. So, I want to make sure we try everything we possibly can.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Okay, great. And to your (INAUDIBLE), our drivers do leave red tags...

Vice Mayor Lago: I know they do.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: When they come across something. So, they are -- we're getting them involved in the process also. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Mean, anything more on recycling?

Commissioner Mena: Not for now.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I'd like to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Fors?

Commissioner Fors: Nope.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: If I may, Mr. Mayor.

Commissioner Keon: No. I think we need to move ahead with it. They said we've grown by recycling by 240 tons this year or in the last year, that's 240 tons that we're not tipping. So, it's...

Vice Mayor Lago: No, that is just to give you an idea...

Commissioner Keon: We are reducing by recycling and actively recycling and enforcing recycling. We will decrease the amount of garbage we put in the landfills, which will in turn reduce our cost to dispose of it. So, it is to our benefit to do that if we don't want to have to pass on the cost of the increased tipping fees. We can do it by reducing what we tip.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Santamaria.

Commissioner Keon: So, thank you.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Yes. The other concern raised by Commissioner Mena was regarding a meeting with the -- with our consultant. And I'll be happy to coordinate a workshop or Sunshine meeting of some form to discuss the recommendations that had been raised by our consultant. And so, I'll do that as soon as possible.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Vice Mayor...

Commissioner Keon: When are the new bins going to be...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Any other comments?

Commissioner Keon: When did the new bins, are they going to be available? Do you know, Al? Mr. Zamora, when are the new bins going to be available? When will the new bins be available?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Well, right now we're in the procurement process.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Hopefully, within a couple more weeks, three, four, four weeks.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It depends. Again, we're very early in the stages of the procurement process. It depends on the manufacturer and how quick they can get them...

Commissioner Keon: Okay, but soon.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: And then how quick we can get them delivered.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, thank you.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Okay, thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Vice Mayor...

Commissioner Keon: That's all.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anything else on recycling?

Vice Mayor Lago: No, no.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Sure?

Vice Mayor Lago: Just telling...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just telling Commissioner...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll go on to the next one.