

1 LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY (LPA)/
2 PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MEETING
3 VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT
4 HYBRID FORMAT
5 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2025, COMMENCING AT 6:02 P.M.

6 Board Members Present:

7 Eibi Aizenstat, Chairman
8 Julio Grabiell
9 Wayne "Chip" Withers
10 Sue Kawalerski
11 Felix Pardo
12 Javier Salman
13 Robert Behar

14 City Staff and Consultants:

15 Jennifer Garcia, Planning and Zoning Director
16 Arceli Redila, Zoning Administrator
17 Cristina Suarez, City Attorney
18 Jill Menendez, Administrative Assistant, Board Secretary
19 Fenggian/Grace Chen, Principal Planner
20 Edward Hudak, Chief of Police

21 Excerpt of Item E-2

1 THEREUPON:

2 (The following proceedings were held.)

3 * * * * *

4 (Thereupon, the participants were sworn.)

5 * * * * *

6 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: All right. Could we
7 read the next item in, please, which would be
8 E-2, that we skipped?

9 MS. SUAREZ: Yes. E-2 is an Ordinance of
10 the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida
11 requesting amendments to the text and maps of
12 the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan,
13 pursuant to expedited state review procedures
14 (Section 163.3184, Florida Statutes) and Zoning
15 Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213,
16 "Comprehensive Plan Text and Map Amendments;"
17 to update as a result of the City's Evaluation
18 and Appraisal Report, the minimum planning
19 periods and sewer requirements, as well as
20 amendments to certain goals, objectives and
21 policies of the Comprehensive Plan; providing
22 for a repealer provision, providing for a
23 severability clause, and providing for an
24 effective date.

25 MS. GARCIA: Jennifer Garcia, Planning and

1 Zoning Director. I am sharing my screen.
2 Perfect.

3 So, really quick, you guys have had this
4 PowerPoint in your submittal, so I'm going to
5 go through this really quickly.

6 Our Comprehensive Plan, as you know, was
7 adopted back in the early '80s, 1980, actually,
8 was the first Comprehensive Plan. We've
9 amended it many times since then.
10 Particularly, there's been some EAR-based
11 amendments. EAR-based means Evaluation and
12 Appraisal Report, which is the process that's
13 required by the State to make sure that our
14 Comp Plan is basically consistent within State
15 Statutes.

16 So we have found two State Statutes that we
17 need to comply with. One is expanding the --
18 kind of the short-term, long-term planning
19 periods from five to ten years and ten to
20 twenty years, as well as some feasibility
21 requirements for sewer services, and you'll
22 find that in Attachment A of the Staff report.

23 I'm going to go through this really
24 quickly. Part of the process of an EAR-based
25 amendment is to show the State -- you guys know

1 this, of course, because you've been here for
2 many, many years, but to show the State, who is
3 not familiar with Coral Gables, how we've been,
4 you know, achieving our Comprehensive Plan.

5 So there's a mix of uses that we have here.
6 We did find some discrepancies with one of our
7 Comp Plan policies. We have a goal to be able
8 to be fix that. We're at 28 properties with
9 discrepancies, inconsistencies between the
10 existing and the future land use of the Comp
11 Plan and the existing land uses.

12 Affordable housing -- we were able to
13 update our affordable housing study in 2017.
14 So you will find that also as part of the
15 packet before you.

16 Schools, I don't think we have grown in any
17 public schools since the original adoption of
18 the Comp Plan.

19 Let's see, we've been able to expand our
20 trolley system. We've kind of updated those
21 policies in our Comp Plan, as well. Our
22 current trolley ridership averages around 4,000
23 passengers, so you also see that adjusted in
24 the Comp Plan policy, as well.

25 And then, also, for parks and recreation,

1 there have been new facilities and new parks
 2 that have been acquired by the City. So
 3 they're going to be captured in the Local
 4 Service Maps of the Comp Plan.
 5 Let's see. There's also been a Historic
 6 District along Coral Way that needs to be
 7 incorporated into that map.
 8 We have done a lot of green initiatives,
 9 and you can find more details about that in the
 10 actual inventory that's attached to your Staff
 11 report.
 12 Also, the findings that we got from the
 13 National Community Survey, incorporating that,
 14 as well, into that report. And this is
 15 actually a very interesting diagram we've done
 16 to show kind of the value per acre. You can
 17 see that as we've been focusing on
 18 redevelopment in Downtown and along US-1,
 19 specifically around the Metrorail Station at
 20 Douglas, we've been able to increase that value
 21 per acre.
 22 Let's see. So just as a quick recap,
 23 again, we're just updating the planning periods
 24 of our Comprehensive Plan to reflect the
 25 requirements by the State. We're also removing

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1 some of this outdated language by the 2007
 2 Zoning Code Re-Write, because it's kind of
 3 outdated language that we need to update that
 4 doesn't really apply anymore.
 5 Also updating some policies and
 6 corresponding target dates, because they, of
 7 course, were a little bit out of date, you
 8 know, prior to 2011, prior to 2016. So we've
 9 been able to update that, according to the
 10 ten-year, twenty-year planning horizons.
 11 And also updating some outdated references
 12 to, of course, the Florida State Statutes, and
 13 then, again, revising that parks and recreating
 14 goals, objectives and policies, based on the
 15 coordination with the Parks and Recreation
 16 Department, updating that map particularly, and
 17 also the Historic Resources District Maps that
 18 you can see here.
 19 So the Historic Landmark Districts Map, on
 20 the left side, you'll see the incorporation of
 21 that new district along Coral Way and also the
 22 five additional new parks and facilities on the
 23 right side, that measures the level of service
 24 for parks.
 25 So we have reviewed this, and we find that

6

1 it does comply with the Comprehensive Plan, as
 2 well as being satisfied for the amendments. In
 3 fact, that's why Staff has recommended to
 4 transmit this after First Reading, of course,
 5 to the Florida Commerce.
 6 Thanks.
 7 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Thank you.
 8 Yes.
 9 MS. KAWALERSKI: I've got a question.
 10 MR. WITHERS: I just have a question. When
 11 it says, "Ensure alignment with State
 12 priorities," what if we disagree with aligning
 13 with the State priority? What's our option?
 14 MR. PARDO: Live Local.
 15 MR. WITHERS: Coincidentally.
 16 MS. KAWALERSKI: Well, that was my
 17 question. There is no mention in here at all
 18 of Live Local under affordable housing, and,
 19 you know, I was expecting like a map, where, in
 20 Coral Gables, that could be applied, but
 21 there's no mention of this.
 22 MS. GARCIA: So we are doing the very bare
 23 minimum, as far as what the State is requiring
 24 us to put into our Comprehensive Plan. They're
 25 not requiring us to put in Live Local and

7

1 policies, objectives relating to that as of
 2 now. So we're not incorporating that. We're
 3 kind of just doing what is required of us, from
 4 the State's standpoint, into our Comp Plan.
 5 MS. KAWALERSKI: But I mean, it would be
 6 helpful. I mean, I'd like to see a map of
 7 where these projects could be built, for
 8 example. I mean, that is like a major hammer
 9 that has come down, that's going to affect
 10 numerous areas in Coral Gables. Why won't that
 11 be more detailed in here?
 12 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. So that map is included
 13 in the Live Local application you've seen in
 14 the past meetings. It's one of the display --
 15 it's one of the PowerPoint slides. It shows
 16 all of the mixed-use districts, and that's
 17 where Live Local would apply for.
 18 MS. KAWALERSKI: Right. And why isn't it
 19 in here?
 20 MS. GARCIA: Because we're not putting that
 21 policy into our Comprehensive Plan.
 22 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: You don't want to put
 23 that policy into the Comprehensive Plan.
 24 MS. KAWALERSKI: You don't?
 25 MS. GARCIA: It's ever changing.

8

1 MS. KAWALERSKI: All right. Well, when it
2 says, "Revised references to State Statutes,"
3 isn't that like the biggest one?

4 MS. GARCIA: No. So there's been State
5 Statutes that have kind of moved around in the
6 past fifteen years --

7 MS. KAWALERSKI: The numbering?

8 MS. GARCIA: -- that we're basically just
9 specifying where exactly that State Statute is.
10 They're a little bit outdated. There's one
11 that's like a Rule 9-J, I think, and it moved
12 to Chapter 163. So we're just updating that
13 reference.

14 MS. KAWALERSKI: Okay.

15 MR. PARDO: Mr. Chairman?

16 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Yes, sir.

17 MR. PARDO: When I'm changing something, I
18 always like to see what I had before, before I
19 get what I want. So I found the document
20 overwhelming, because of the references that
21 are there. So, in other words, if you don't
22 have the reference, you don't understand.
23 That's one thing.

24 The second thing is that, when you say,
25 "Well, we're changing these updates," I don't

1 understand exactly what you changed. You know,
2 is it the year of the adopted Code? You know,
3 what -- it is very hard to follow, and I would
4 imagine -- how long did you work on this, a
5 week, a month, six months?

6 Because we get this document at the end of
7 Friday. I'm looking at it. I spent my time
8 looking at this over the weekend. I'm looking
9 at it, you know, a couple of more times, and I
10 have a very difficult time understanding it,
11 because I can't -- I have questions, and I
12 don't feel comfortable.

13 The first thing that Chip said, he said,
14 "Well, you know, how do we" -- he just took one
15 little sentence and he says, "We're complying
16 with everything that the State does?" And I
17 said, "Live Local." I disagree a hundred
18 percent with Live Local. I think that's the
19 worst thing that this Legislature has ever
20 done.

21 It doesn't promote affordable housing.
22 That's a lie. When you look at the rents, once
23 you apply it based on those things, that is
24 just nonsense. So that's not affordable
25 housing. What's affordable housing is what we

1 have north of us here, in the Apartment
2 District, the North Gables Apartment District.
3 That's affordable housing.

4 What I'm trying to say is that, how can we
5 adopt or vote or agree with something that,
6 unfortunately, has so many holes? I'm trying
7 to agree with it, but I can't even wrap my head
8 around it.

9 MS. GARCIA: So the first, I guess,
10 probably half of that data analysis report is
11 kind of for the State. Of course, the Board is
12 welcome to look into that, and that's fine, but
13 that's really just taking an analysis of things
14 that we kind of already know is happening in
15 our City, and giving it to them, so they
16 understand where we're coming from, right.

17 What we should be looking at are the
18 strike-through and underline at the end of that
19 report, the text and the map. That's the
20 changes that are proposed. And you'll see that
21 a lot of them are just updating the years,
22 updating the planning horizons, adding in a
23 sentence about coordinating with Miami-Dade
24 County as far as the sewer system goes.

25 MR. PARDO: So let me understand this.

1 MS. GARCIA: Uh-huh.

2 MR. PARDO: You're taking this document.
3 You're sending it as an update, so we comply
4 with the State requirement of updating our
5 Comprehensive Land Use Map?

6 MS. GARCIA: As required by the State, yes.

7 MR. PARDO: Required by the State.

8 MS. GARCIA: And, again, the State is not
9 requiring us to put any policy in our
10 Comprehensive Plan about Live Local.

11 MR. PARDO: That started back in the '80s
12 some time --

13 MR. WITHERS: And that's okay.

14 MR. PARDO: -- and that's okay, but the
15 problem that I have is, what if you -- you
16 know, you want to change something? Like our
17 mass transportation here stinks. We don't have
18 any. You know, are we addressing that? Are we
19 addressing all sorts of things that are part of
20 the factors that go into this?

21 How can we just push the paper over there
22 and not change it in such a way where it means
23 something, instead of just complying with
24 whatever the requirement is?

25 I'm not trying to put you on the spot. I'm

1 just trying to say, are we missing an
2 opportunity to do something with this document,
3 when we send it to the State, and also make
4 darn sure that we put things in there that we
5 won't agree with State policies.

6 MS. GARCIA: Right. Again, the only two
7 State policies are the planning periods, which
8 I guess we could disagree with, but, you know,
9 they seemed pretty fine, the ten-year and
10 twenty-year planning horizons, and the sewer
11 feasibility, which is really not on the City to
12 do, right.

13 We know that we are managed by the County.
14 So it's kind of coordinated with the County.
15 It's coordinated with the County, as far as
16 what's feasible for the sewer conversion.
17 Those are the only two real requirements.

18 At the same time, we're going to be going
19 through our analysis of the Comp Plan, what
20 needs to be updated. Many of the years are
21 updated. Many of the information, as far as
22 the, you know, affordable housing study, was
23 updated. It needs to be in the Comp Plan.
24 There are also new facilities, as far as new
25 parks. Those are also being updated, as well

13

1 as the historic preservation.

2 Now, we're not putting any new policies as
3 it relates to transit. Those policies still
4 remain in the Comp Plan, as far as we want to
5 have greater ridership on the trolley, as much
6 as we can, right, and there's also policies as
7 far as to locate your intensity and density
8 next to transit stations, as well. So those
9 still remain in the Comp Plan.

10 I'm not sure how else you think we would
11 need to have a policy to improve our transit
12 system. We're really relying on Miami-Dade
13 County.

14 MR. PARDO: For example, you talk about
15 parks. So when we put housing projects up and
16 we've taken all of the setbacks basically away,
17 we're pushing the buildings to the edge of the
18 sidewalk and we have very little, if any, green
19 space, ten percent maybe every once in a blue
20 moon, so when you do that, when those people
21 are living in those areas, where do they go as
22 far as a park, because part of our
23 calculations, which is crazy, is, you know,
24 Matheson Hammock and things like that, which
25 are, you know, completely out of the scope of

14

1 the usability of the people that are in this
2 area?

3 So my question is, you know, I can't
4 understand what we're evaluating, you know, or
5 are we just kicking the ball down the -- you
6 know, down the line here. I don't understand
7 it.

8 MS. GARCIA: So, again, as far as the parks
9 and recreation goes, we have acquired, I
10 believe, five new facilities, new parks, one
11 right up the street right here, in the core of
12 our, you know, North Ponce, Downtown area. So
13 those policies in the map as being updated
14 accordingly.

15 As far as policy goes, the policy in our --
16 the policy in our recreation element, is to be
17 a five-minute walk from any park, whether it be
18 a large, Matheson Hammock Park, or a small
19 urban space. That's still a Comp Plan policy
20 that we have. We want to make sure we have
21 those areas of relief and the areas of park
22 that people can get to.

23 So that policy still remains. So we want
24 to have, you know, easy access to parks.

25 MR. PARDO: I don't know. Maybe I'm just

15

1 tired, but I really don't -- I can't grasp,
2 besides we have to have it within "X" amount of
3 years, you know, the update, at the State
4 level, I don't understand why we haven't been
5 discussing this for a matter of time, over a
6 certain amount of meetings, instead of us
7 getting a package, you know, on Friday, which
8 the ramifications could be huge, because you
9 could put something in or take something out,
10 and we don't understand -- or at least I don't
11 understand what it is.

12 So maybe I'm -- you know, like I said,
13 maybe I'm just tired.

14 MS. GARCIA: I mean, if the Board wants, we
15 can go through the changes. I think there's
16 about six pages, but most of them are just
17 bullet points that we're not touching.

18 MS. SUAREZ: Right. And it starts on Page
19 26. So the changes that you would be making a
20 recommendation on, just so we're all clear,
21 begin on Page 26 of your packet. And so those
22 are the amendments, and there's strikethroughs
23 and underlines with the changes.

24 MR. BEHAR: Does this item have to be
25 approved tonight?

16

1 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. So we did submit an
2 EAR-based letter, back in, I think, February of
3 last year. We have one year to comply with
4 that. So we've been gathering data and we wait
5 until the end of the year, to make sure we have
6 all of the complete data for the entire year.
7 Some of the information, we had to wait to
8 basically close out that year, just so we can
9 give it to you.

10 MR. PARDO: It's only Page 26, Cristina?

11 MS. SUAREZ: That is the change to the text
12 that is being -- right, Jennifer? Is that
13 correct?

14 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

15 MS. SUAREZ: It's the strikethroughs and
16 underlines.

17 MR. PARDO: Okay. Mr. Chairman, I'm
18 sorry --

19 MS. SUAREZ: Beginning at Page 26.

20 MR. PARDO: -- you know, I didn't get it
21 until -- you know, we're looking at Page 26,
22 period, end of story.

23 MS. SUAREZ: No. No. Beginning at Page
24 26.

25 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: 26 to 36.

17

1 MR. PARDO: Okay. Are there any
2 strike-outs that affect the Comprehensive Land
3 Use Plan or the Zoning Code or concurrency?

4 MS. GARCIA: No.

5 MR. PARDO: In any way, shape or form?

6 MS. GARCIA: No, because if you go on to
7 Page 27, the next page, Information, that's
8 we're just striking through outdated 2010
9 information, corresponding with the Public
10 School system.

11 Probably the only, maybe, substantial
12 change is related to parking, as far as private
13 facilities. Let me see if I can find that one.

14 MR. PARDO: And how would you address
15 Chip's comment?

16 MS. GARCIA: Remind me again what Chip's
17 comment was.

18 MR. PARDO: The comment about the State,
19 you know, about the State policies.

20 MS. GARCIA: The Live Local?

21 MR. WITHERS: That we're sure that -- that
22 we can ensure we're in alignment with their
23 policies, if we disagree with them.

24 MS. GARCIA: Well, again, there are only
25 two. We don't disagree, unless the Board

19

1 MR. PARDO: Okay. So on the FLU 1.19, from
2 2004, 2007, that strike-out, when was the last
3 Code re-write that we had?

4 MS. GARCIA: I mean, we had a Zoning Code
5 update, but didn't really change much of the
6 content of the Zoning Code. So we're still
7 erasing that, because it's not really relevant
8 anymore.

9 MR. PARDO: Okay. So you wouldn't annually
10 change it, so, therefore, that's why you're
11 taking that sentence out?

12 MS. GARCIA: Well, yes, we are still going
13 to annually look at our Zoning Code, but we're
14 not going to refer to a 2004, 2007 --

15 MR. PARDO: There's no Comprehensive
16 re-write, okay.

17 MS. GARCIA: Right.

18 MR. PARDO: And on the FLU 1.444, the City
19 completed a review of the existing land
20 development regulation, that is stricken out,
21 because they haven't done another one since
22 then?

23 MS. GARCIA: Correct. So we're still going
24 to annually review any land use development
25 regulations. The rest of that policy applies.

18

1 disagrees with the short-term, long-term
2 ten-year and twenty-year planning periods,
3 that's being updated from the five and
4 ten-year.

5 As a built-out city, it seems to make
6 sense, from a planning perspective. We're not
7 a City that's kind of growing, you know,
8 horizontally and spreading out.

9 MR. PARDO: I mean, look, since the State
10 of Florida has basically declared war on home
11 rule -- is that a fair statement?

12 MR. WITHERS: Yeah.

13 MR. PARDO: That's a problem for me,
14 because home rule is what makes us do what we
15 do, and when they initiate, you know, things
16 like Live Local, then that's not in alignment
17 with what I think.

18 MS. GARCIA: I understand.

19 MR. PARDO: I would like to see that
20 portion of it rewritten or stricken.

21 MS. GARCIA: So, again, we don't really
22 mention Live Local anywhere in here. It's not
23 proposed.

24 MR. PARDO: No. No. I'm not saying -- I'm
25 talking about the section specifically about us

20

1 being aligned. I don't want to be blindly
2 aligned with anything. I don't want anyone to
3 come back, you know, from the State and say,
4 "Well, you agreed to this thing."

5 MS. SUAREZ: And so if I can clarify.
6 Jennifer, jump in if I'm not getting this
7 right.

8 I don't think we're saying that. I think
9 that was Jennifer's summary, in your bullet
10 points, when you were summarizing or focusing
11 on the key areas of what these changes were.
12 You have a line that says, "Update specific
13 policies and corresponding target dates to
14 ensure alignment with State and Local
15 priorities."

16 Now, does that mean -- that is not in the
17 actual text.

18 MS. GARCIA: Correct. Yes.

19 MS. SUAREZ: That language is not in the
20 text that you are making -- that's in the
21 summary of the key areas that are being
22 addressed, and that's just -- there were two
23 policies, and that's what Jennifer is saying,
24 that were updated to make sure alignment with
25 the State policies.

21

1 MS. GARCIA: Right.

2 MS. SUAREZ: So maybe you can show us where
3 those two are in the text amendment. Maybe
4 that will help, Jennifer.

5 MS. GARCIA: Yes. So the first one was the
6 first page. Let me go back to that one.

7 MR. PARDO: I'm sorry, could you speak up?

8 MS. GARCIA: The first one was in the first
9 page, I believe, Page 26, goal FLU 2. So you
10 can see that the planning period is just
11 updated from 2007 to 2014, to now be 2025 to
12 2035, and, then, again, for 2025 to 2045, the
13 ten and twenty-year planning periods.

14 Again, for a built-out city at our scale,
15 it's not really a big deal.

16 MS. SUAREZ: So that was one of the changes
17 that is incorporated, in order to align with
18 State policies.

19 MS. GARCIA: Right.

20 And, then, on the other one, if you're
21 curious, is later on, underneath Capital
22 Improvements.

23 MR. WITHERS: I got it.

24 MS. GARCIA: Okay.

25 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Do we have anybody for

22

1 this subject?

2 THE SECRETARY: No speakers.

3 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: No speakers
4 whatsoever? So closing the floor.

5 Any other comments or anybody that would
6 like to make a motion on this?

7 MR. BEHAR: I'll make a motion to approve
8 it.

9 MR. WITHERS: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: We have a motion. We
11 have a second.

12 Any discussion? No?

13 Call the roll, please.

14 THE SECRETARY: Javier Salman?

15 MR. SALMAN: Yes.

16 THE SECRETARY: Robert Behar?

17 MR. BEHAR: Yes.

18 THE SECRETARY: Julio Grabiell?

19 MR. GRABIEL: Yes.

20 THE SECRETARY: Sue Kawalerski?

21 MS. KAWALERSKI: Yes.

22 THE SECRETARY: Felix Pardo?

23 MR. PARDO: Yes.

24 THE SECRETARY: Javier Salman?

25 MR. SALMAN: Yes, again.

23

1 THE SECRETARY: I'm sorry.

2 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: She thought it may
3 change your mind.

4 THE SECRETARY: Eibi Aizenstat?

5 CHAIRMAN AIZENSTAT: Yes.

6 * * * * *

7 (Thereupon, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55

8 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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STATE OF FLORIDA:
SS.
COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE:

I, NIEVES SANCHEZ, Court Reporter, and a Notary Public for the State of Florida at Large, do hereby certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

DATED this 20th day of January, 2025.


-----NIEVES SANCHEZ-----