

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-3
March 11, 2025
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, 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, Alberto Parjus
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant Public Works Director, Deena Bell-Llewellyn

Public Speaker(s)

Mario Garcia-Serra
Maria de la Guardia
Maria Cruz
Robert Gutlohn
Luis Arevalo
Sheryl Gold
Irene Hegedus

Agenda Item E-3 [12:28 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving the Tree Relocation and Mitigation Plan for the townhouse development project referred to as “The George” on the property legally described as Lots 29 through 41, Block 10, Coral Gables Biltmore Section (717, 729, 737 and 741 Valencia Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida.

Mayor Lago: We’re moving onto item E-3, which is time certain for 12 o’clock.

City Attorney Suarez: E-3 is A Resolution of the City Commission approving the Tree Relocation and Mitigation Plan for the townhouse development project referred to as “The George” on the
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property legally described as Lots 29 through 41, Block 10, Coral Gables Biltmore Section (717, 729, 737 and 741 Valencia Avenue), Coral Gables, Florida.

Commissioner Castro: I want to put something on the record that I just sent an email last night. I received an update, pretty late last night I received an update of the new plan. I have received numerous, a lot, a lot of emails regarding this item, and in that email, I stated that there wasn't sufficient time for resident input. For that reason, I won't be able to support it right now until the residents know a little more about it, but I would love to hear, maybe let them hear what the proposal is.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Good afternoon, Mayor and Commissioners, Mario Garcia-Serra, with offices at 600 Brickell Avenue. I'm here this afternoon representing The George LLC, the owner and developer of The George townhome project in the 700 Block of Valencia Avenue. I'm joined today by Maria de la Guardia, our project architect, who will be joining me in the presentation, Jeff Schimanski, our project tree arborist, Alirio and Diego Torrealba with MG Developer, my clients, and also Ariel Gutierrez with MG Developer. The George is a 13-unit townhome project and the latest project of MG Developer. MG has a long track record of very high-quality projects which are very in keeping with the fabric of Coral Gables neighborhoods in which they build. The George was especially well received by its neighbors because it is a project which is restrained and does not maximize its zoning. Under its current existing zoning, where 13 stories are permitted today, The George has proposed three stories. Under its current zoning, where 50 units are allowed to be developed, 13 units are proposed, and where a 2.0 FAR is allowed, this project is at an FAR of 1.5. When you approved this project last year, you asked us to dedicate special attention to the issue of tree relocation and mitigation. We have worked tirelessly on that issue over the last five months. There have been a lot of challenges in this work which Maria will describe to you, and we literally have not stopped working on this initiative and working with your staff to come to a good solution. Consistent with your tree regulations, we have a plan that includes extensive relocation of trees; six trees in total will be relocated and over \$200,000 will be paid in mitigation so as to further enhance the city's overall tree canopy. Mayor and Commissioners, this strikes the right balance and allows this very important project to move forward. With that said, I'll ask Maria to come forward and make the presentation.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Good afternoon.

Ms. de la Guardia: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor and Commissioners. Before we get to the trees, I'm going to do a quick review of some of our other contributions to the City of Coral Gables streetscape. Almeria Row, ten townhouses, has received numerous awards from different organizations. It has received architectural awards, as well as urban design awards. For example, it has received the Palladio Awards, one of the top awards for classical and traditional architecture at the national and international level. Beatriz Row, also nine townhouses, has received multiple

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awards. Again, the Palladio Award, which is very coveted amongst my peers, and Biltmore Row will be receiving an award actually at the Biltmore Hotel at the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art next month, at their Meisner Award ceremony. In all of these projects, a lot of care has gone into aiding a very human pedestrian scale, and so, the experience that the person has as they walk through is highly considered. And so, part of this is always the streetscape, the trees and the texture and the fabric and the lighting. All this is woven together and not just woven together but crafted to create a very particular experience and it is one of – we have received a lot of positive feedback from neighbors regarding that. So next slide. These are just a few of the publications that have published on the townhouse project, and these are both academic journals, as well as trade journals, and so they have received recognition on many levels. Next. And so, you all remember Village of Coral Gables, which is well underway, it's under construction and it's coming together very nicely. We are super excited. And this was an example of where we could have built 57 units, yet in conversations with MG, it was decided that the right number for this site was not 57, but 48. So, we reduced density, because it was the right thing to do at this site, and I bring this up, because it's the same mindset that we have taken into The George, the same thinking. On multiple projects, MG has worked closely with the city to relocate large specimens. Here we were able to relocate an 80-foot Mahogany that was at the Althea Row site to the right-of-way in front of Biltmore Row, and so, here you have the 80-foot Mahogany. The photo on the right, it's actually doing a lot better than in that photo, it is now sort of settled into its new site and it's much fuller than the photo on the right, but we were able to do it because the tree was moved just within the site, we were trying to take it down the street. There were some powerlines that were minor, and the FPL was willing to drop the powerlines to get the trees across, and so, the conditions were such that we were able to move the trees, this tree, the Mahogany tree. The Strangler Fig at Biltmore Park, again, it was relocated from the site within the site, and it's recovering, its recovering from the move. Here we have the sausage tree, which was slated for removal and upon the Vice Mayor's request, MG voluntarily moved the tree. So, this tree was going to be removed, and it was relocated across LeJeune Road, a much smaller tree than the trees that we're dealing with at The George. The challenge is the trees at The George is the sheer size. They are so large that it reduces our options. So, this brings us to The George. So here we have The George in three stories and 42 feet, ready to complete the last puzzle of the Biltmore Park, I'm sorry, Biltmore Plaza. Next. I think we can go to the next one. Again, next slide. Again, The George plays a very special attention to the pedestrian realm and to the street and the relationship of the street trees to that first-floor base, the rusticated base with a lot of architecture. The arcade that marches down the street. These handcrafted light fixtures which have become sort of our trademark, the warm lighting. It's just a very pleasant experience that we hope to create, you know, it seems a little Parisian. So, I wanted to focus on this drawing. Let's look at the elevation first. So, you start with Beatriz Row on the left-hand side. There is a blue outline, if you can point it with the cursor; so that blue outline is the height and width of The George, of the entire project. We can see David Williams behind, and we can see 701 Valencia, it's a bit washed out to the right. And so, what we did to understand was we

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overlayed what we could build on this site, which is that massing in gray, which is basically a three-story platform with lobby and parking, and then ten stories of apartments. And so, this is what we could build as-of-right without requesting any variance. There is obviously no bonus allowed in this area, so this is no bonus, this is straight out of the code without asking for anything, and that's what we could build. And so, let's stay on the elevation a minute because I want you to see the height of Beatriz Row and then I want you to see the height of 701 Valencia, which was lowered, and so, I want you to look at The George and the relationship and how it transitioned from one to the other. And that's why we are so passionate about the project and think it's the right thing for the neighborhood, and then what could happen if we were not to build this project, we could have that big tower per zoning. So, if we go back to the chart. Mario mentioned this, but I just want to repeat it. So, there's the 50 units allowed and we're proposing 13; there is a 2 FAR, we're proposing 1.51; there is 150-foot maximum, we're proposing 42, so less than a third; 13 stories maximum, we're proposing three, less than a quarter. We require 26 parking spaces, and we are proposing 52. So, we're sort of absorbing all of our parking requirements within our project. And so, I think this is one of the reasons why the immediate neighbors are so excited about the project and are happy and what I've heard is, this is the best thing that could have happened to us. So, people that live in Beatriz Row, in Biltmore Park, Biltmore Row, even on Biltmore Way, they see that it could have been a building taller than the David Williams, yet its three stories. So that brings us to the trees. So next. I'm sorry that the image is so washed out. Basically, we have six oaks, and we tried very hard to relocate these oaks. Our initial thought was to do exactly what we had done over at Biltmore Row, which was to take the oak to the right-of-way and through the use of silver cells, create area for the root system, but as soon as we started to explore further, we discovered that we had a watermain running exactly where we wanted to place the oaks. So, we would have had to place – this watermain is so big and it serves so many residences that it was not possible to relocate. So, then we started to look for sites offsite, look for other sites and a route to it, because there are two challenges. One is to find a site that's large enough to accept that 60-foot canopy and the 30–40-foot root ball, but also, to find a clear route that could get us there. And so, we brought in an environmental designer, a tree remover from Texas. I consider them to be the top tree mover in the United States and they studied the possibility of getting to the golf course, and this is part of their report. And so, they explained what all the challenges were to get to the golf course. So, in some cases, it was lack of width. In some cases, it was powerlines that FPL would neither de-energize or drop to the ground, because they serve thousands of customers. And so, we really couldn't get a clear path to the golf course. So, we would have had to cut landscape to get the trees through. We couldn't get through the two peers on either side, I think it's South Greenway, and so, there were obstacles along the whole way. So, we knew we couldn't go to the golf course. In meeting with Commissioner Anderson, she came up with a very clever idea, which was to plant it in this triangular park that is down the street from The George. It's bounded by Biltmore Row, Cardena Street and Valencia Avenue. There are four existing oak trees, small oak trees of the size that we could easily move these to the golf course, and so, what we decided was

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that we were going to move tree number 41 to this park. So, tree number 41 is the tree on the left and it's an oak. It's one of the specimen oaks, and so, the idea – we've already started the root pruning process and so the idea is that that tree 41 would move to the park and then there's also another tree 45 which is a Gumbo-Limbo, which is smaller and can easily be transported to the golf course or anywhere the city chooses. And so, this is tree 41, now that we can see it, that all the vegetation around was removed and that would go in that park where you see 1, 2, 3, 4, so it would go sort of in the center of that triangular park, and those four trees would move to the golf course. That's sort of our relocation proposal. In terms of the rest of the trees of the property, there is an existing oak that we planted, actually when we built Beatriz Row, it's on the northeast – southwest corner of the property, and then we're proposing six new 20 to 22-foot oaks as the street trees, keeping eight parking spaces. The 22-foot oaks are larger than the requirement, the city requirement which is 16. And then, as well as this, we're proposing 50 trees on the property, and these are to happen throughout the property. As a balance to the mitigation, we would pay \$215,000 to the tree fund and we would like to earmark that money for Biltmore Way. We understand that the city is considering improvements on Biltmore Way, we would like that to go to Biltmore Way. So, The George would complete sort of the last piece of the puzzle of Biltmore Square and there you see all projects by MG and de la Guardia Victoria Architects. I believe that Mario has some closing remarks.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. de la Guardia: Thank you.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Thank you Maria. And to sort of summarize Maria's presentation as you saw. Some of the most beautiful tree lined streets in Coral Gables have been recently developed, and have been developed by MG. So, MG embraces the fabric of the City of Coral Gables and its neighborhoods, realizes how important it is to have considerable tree coverage and tree canopy and lush landscaping and that's what they are doing in The George, just like they've done in every other project. They've also walked the walk. You saw those pictures of them moving very large trees as part of their other projects and they do it because it's the right thing to do and they are also doing it as part of this project. After considerable back and forth, tremendous amount of effort, we've come to the conclusion that two of those trees can be moved, another four can be moved to accommodate one of those, so in total six trees ultimately that will be relocated somewhere. There will be some trees that still need to be removed on the site, but we are talking about a situation here where we've done everything, we can consider the limitations. You saw it – there's powerlines, there are other buildings and trees in the way of potentially relocating these trees. There are factors such as the fact that the David William Parking Garage goes under Biltmore Way for about half the width of the right-of-way, so that limits how much of that right-of-way we could use, but to potentially move a tree of this size. And lastly, you have to consider what's being done on site; the oaks that are being installed on site, the exceptional landscaping that's being put on

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site also and in the right-of-way, 50 trees being planted on the property itself too. As you can see, this has not been an easy process, but this final product is a good one. At the start of today's City Commission meeting, there was a lot of discussion regarding tree canopy and the city's recognition as a Tree City USA for the last 40 years. The secret to Coral Gables success on trees is that it has been able to strike a balance between development and trees. There has been plenty of development in Coral Gables over the years, but an effort has been made to make sure that development results in increased public tree canopy, that is what is happening here. A beautiful development is also bringing increased tree canopy in public areas. This plan balances my plans development rights while still ensuring the City of Coral Gables will remain a Tree City USA. I know there's been a lot of adjustments to the plan in the last few weeks and even dating up to yesterday, but all these plans are being done, all these revisions are being done in response to city staff comments, to comments from the public, to try to address objections and make this a better plan. This is an excellent project. This is a project that has been embraced by the neighborhood. It is far better than the alternative of a 13-story building at this location, and we need to move forward, we need to move forward with this project, and this is a key issue. So, I would ask, and I know there is some hesitation on your part, Commissioner Castro, but I would ask for the conversation to continue to be able to allow this great project to move forward. It really is going to be a quintessential Coral Gables project. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's been 13 months since I had my first meeting with the developer and the architecture was beautiful, its outstanding architecture. The step down to the residential area is exactly what we want to see, but it's been a long journey, and it speaks to the need to have this conversation before we approve a project. As of yesterday, roughly midday, the plan was much different and I was a no vote, but I think I should share with my colleagues the experience that we've had, not only going through the site in decisions that had to be made on trying to find appropriate locations for the trees. Of the oaks that are on the site, the healthiest one has been chosen, two others have conks on them or in decline, one is essentially a half tree, which I spoke to the individuals in the building across the street that have a Fichus that was moved, but because of the smaller size of the root ball size when it was moved, has been suffering and in decline for the past ten years. Which speaks to our need to a best practice manual for people moving trees. Many different practices are used; some people only dig by hand, some people like the Texas folks like to use a giant platform to move it. Some of the local movers are rigged up better and have more equipment to move these trees better, and our staff needs to have integral involvement in establishing what this minimum root ball size is, because if you cut this root ball too small, you're going to be doing the same thing that has been happening to that Fichus tree across the street. Its dying back a little more every year, it's not as robust, it doesn't have the descending roots like a

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Fichus tree should have, it's a native Fichus tree, so it's something you want to save, its special, it has a lot of character. Dan Brookmiller was on our staff at the time that this was originally moved and said it had to be saved, but if you try to put it in too small of a space and you don't take enough root ball with it, you're impacting the future of the tree, plus there is aftercare that has to be done. So, as part of this experience, this 13th month experience that I've had and been countless times out on this site walking and hoping that you'd be progressing more towards salvaging more of these trees and having appropriate plans. We have to do better. It shouldn't be twelve hours that we have a draft, and I still don't have them here in writing to be able to review. So, part of the things that we did, as we looked at Cardena, around the corner where we're lacking tree canopy on adding tree canopy there, there is not enough width on the street to be able to move them around a corner, on that corner. I spoke to the folks across the street that have the tree in decline, and they spoke to their board, and they didn't want to receive the one tree that would be appropriate for that spot to replace the trees. We spoke during our visits about Biltmore Way and the need for canopy there and not oaks, it's not appropriate for Biltmore Way. In fact, I've tried to discourage not only this architect, but other architects consistently putting oak after oak after oak, it's not the only tree in our canopy and it's not appropriate in every place that you are putting them. So, I've tried to encourage diversity in our canopy, in fact, I met with Deena Bell-Llewellyn, our Landscape Architect and she has reduced the number of oaks that are coming into our canopy down to four percent, as far as replacement is concerned. We need a more diverse canopy in our city. I 100 percent agree with that. In the future, these analyses need to be done together with the architecture. We shouldn't be waiting a year and then their area of concern is about delays on projects and interest costs. I'm concerned for the community that costs for developers and interest costs are being considered before you consider the amount of canopy we're losing with some of these projects. It's a lovely project, but we need to address this first. So yes, I want the mitigation fund to be applied to Biltmore Way. Deena Bell-Llewellyn's prepared to give us an update on the Biltmore Way landscaping plan, where we're at, when we plan to have the plan ready for presentation to the individuals that live on Biltmore Way, together with the proposal. My understanding was in about 30 to 60 days. So having this package ready to go to be able to pay for the trees and finish that project sooner rather than two more decades from now is a priority that I have. I'd like to hear any other comments that my colleagues have before we do anything more.

Commissioner Menendez: Architecturally the project, we've all agreed, I think it's tastefully done, it's very well done. The only comments that I've received were basically regarding the tree canopy. No comments to address the project itself, what is proposed, I think fits perfectly with the area, but I echo concerns of some of my colleagues is that I had an agenda review yesterday at 12 p.m. and during the agenda review they told me they'll be some changes. By the time I finished, I had not received the changes and the fact that we received so many communications from residents concerned about the plan, I think obviously this, what you presented today is a big step in the right direction, but since we represents the residents, especially the folks in that area, I too feel strongly

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that we need to give them an opportunity to process what you presented and I encourage you to be able to communicate with them. I think it's a step in the right direction, but I want to hear back from the residents, but the project in and of itself is, I think it's a beautiful project, but let's give the residents an opportunity.

Commissioner Castro: I think the architecture is great and I applaud and I'm thankful to the developer and the team for all the considerations they've had for the community, and you continue to have. However, the timeline does not allow sufficient time for resident input. I'm not going to opine whether it's a perfect plan, it's not a perfect plan. That right now is out of the question. I think you are headed in the right direction, but I need to give residents time to absorb this, time to say, we love it, and that's really what I want to hear, that they are happy with it, but giving it to me at 8 or 9 p.m. last night and not having anybody to be able to review this is not fair to the community whether it's a great plan or not. So, that being said, I would like to move to defer this item.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: If I may, just one second.

Commissioner Fernandez: I have some comments as well, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you. I've had concerns since the presentation was given to me on the initial plan about three and-a-half-four weeks ago, and the first thing I said was, I want you to coordinate with the leaders in the area who have had concerns about this project, and the fact is that was completely ignored until I brought it up when I saw this item was placed on the agenda, and I asked, have the residents been consulted, the answer was no. The presentation was 18 minutes long; 14 of those minutes was talking about the architecture of the project, which is completely irrelevant to what we're discussing here today, you know. The biggest concern that residents continue to have in this community is that there are backroom deals being worked with developers and developers are not going forward with what they are committing to doing, and this is just another example. We received a commitment that these trees were going to be moved. If that wasn't possible, then this should never have been offered, and I agree with the Vice Mayor. We need to have these things vetted way before we approve a site plan for a project that now has six trees that are supposed to be saved and four of them are basically going to be chopped down, according to this plan, and coming here and saying, well, you're going to be relocating six trees is really not what's happening. You are relocating two trees and then you move four trees in order to make room for one of them to a different location. You need to look at this holistically and figure out a solution that actually works. In my opinion, this isn't it. I agree with Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Menendez, there has to be more input from the community, and I was going to

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make a motion to defer, and I had told the developer that I was going to move in this direction, and I'd be happy to support that today. We were supposed to have gotten this plan when we originally got the agenda. I also had my agenda review meeting with staff yesterday. They weren't even aware that changes were coming when I met with them yesterday morning. Everything was done at the last minute. What is the rush to get this done now? There are other Commission meetings coming up, our next Commission meeting is May 20th, you have plenty of time to meet with the community, get their input, try to figure it out, but over the last 72 hours we have received tons of emails from residents who are concerned about this plan, and I agree with each one of those concerns. I cannot support this project the way it is.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Garcia-Serra, just a few questions. I'd like to understand a little bit more of the process. When the commitment was made in regard to the six trees, the relocation, did we already have an arborist report detailing the health of the trees, the ones that are being considered to be no longer relocatable.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: We had some initial.

Mayor Lago: Just remind me because I don't have it in front of me.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: We had some initial findings, but not the level of thoroughness that has happened since then has been considerable. There's been several reports done by tree removers, arborists and so forth. I think it's important to point out exactly what the condition of approval said too. The applicant shall coordinate with Public Works and the feasibility of the relocation of the six mature oak trees and two additional mature trees. The applicant shall prepare a tree location plan in the event that one or more trees cannot be relocated, mitigation measures shall be proposed which improve tree canopy in the neighborhood surrounding the project site. The tree relocation and mitigation plan shall be reviewed and approved by the City Commission prior to permit issuance for vertical construction. The applicant shall also be responsible for canopy mitigation payments for any loss of tree canopy. All collected tree canopy mitigation funds shall be allocated towards providing new shade trees on Valencia, Biltmore Court, Cardena, and Biltmore Way. It's exactly what we have done and what we are proposing today.

Mayor Lago: So, you beat me to the punch. I reviewed that last night, and again, it leaves open-ended the six trees. I would like for you to relocate all six trees. I would love for those to be in areas in the city, as I have before that – for example, our golf course where there is currently a tree that is being called for, and Ms. Bell will tell you, it's being called to be cut down, because in the last storm one of the limbs fell and we found that there was an area of the tree that was rotted. I asked the Manager and the DCM and the Deena Bell to get a second arborist report, correct Mr. Manager, because I do not want that majestic, beautiful, massive tree to be cut down on the golf

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course. So right now, if you drive by on Greenway, you'll see that it has a perimeter around it, so no one can get near the tree, but if we get that second arborist report it's going to pain me to have to side with the Manager and staff and say, the tree needs to be cut down. I bring that up because we are moving in the direction of cutting it down, we've slowed it down for the last month to see if we get this additional arborist report to see if it's even salvageable. And I shared and the Manager will tell you, do not show the next arborist the previous arborist report. I want it to be a fresh review. Why am I bringing that up? – because after I read that, the fact that we as a Commission, as a city agreed to review the process with you and see which ones are salvageable. As a result of existing conditions, power lines, I saw ourselves in a position where we would have to negotiate one day no matter what before the final approval. So, my question is more towards Ms. Bell. When you look at the work that's been done over the last few months, with the applicant in reference to these trees, remember I want to save them all, just like I'm trying to save that tree on the golf course. After reviewing these documents, after reviewing the arborist reports, with your expertise, what trees are salvageable in regard to the condition of the trees and which trees are not. I want to understand from a professional what is your opinion on this matter, because the Commission as-a-whole wants to save all trees, that's 5-0, ready to go. If we can move them, we'll move them. What is your opinion in regard to these trees? What can be salvaged and what cannot be salvaged, as per your review?

Assistant Public Works Director: So, the team has been working closely with this for months. We've done four site inspections of the trees with the tree experts in the city. They themselves have obtained, I believe, three arborist reports from outside. I concur with the findings that the four that are not being relocated have issues, like the Vice Mayor mentioned. They are so large, how do you feasibly get them to another location in the city, especially through the thick tree canopy that we already have. That's the biggest challenge.

Mayor Lago: So let me just stop you there and I'm going to go back to the tree on the golf course, because I think it's important to put that on the record, because I just have a bad feeling that when the chainsaws come out they start cutting that tree down, we are going to have an uproar here in the community when they see this massive tree. What type of tree is it again?

Assistant Public Works Director: It's a Fichus...

Mayor Lago: But it's beautiful. Just a canopy, how lush it is, it's massive. When they cut that tree down, if the next report comes and it says that – how big is the limb would you say, I don't want it to be my hands, how big is it?

Assistant Public Works Director: I don't have the report with me, but this is an 80-foot-tall tree and 80-foot spread.

Mayor Lago: Probably the limb that fell it's got to be something like this. You can see it if you drive by the golf course on Granada. What I'm afraid is the uproar that comes when, obviously, we try to put it out there as much as possible, we find out what's going on. There are going to be conflicting reports, but I've got to go based off what you recommend, at the end of the day. I can't go off what the developer tells me. So, if you're telling me that four out of the six trees, when we started 13 months ago are salvageable and can be moved, and you believe that's appropriate. I want to save them all, so do my colleagues, but at the end of the day, what is realistic, what can we really do here? What are the options that you recommend?

Assistant Public Works Director: Well, it's a very tough situation.

Mayor Lago: In the same way you want to save every tree, you want to save every tree.

Assistant Public Works Director: I want to save every tree too, but I believe the developer presented a good option today for you to consider. It's a compromise. Logistically all the trees, I personally have not been able to find locations for them to move all the trees, because of physical defects with the trees. One is very co-dominant, meaning it branches very low to the ground. The minute it's going to be picked up it will probably split in half. Another of the trees is a half of a tree. It's not in the best condition. The other two would have to be pruned back so much that it's going to probably decrease their survivability, right. So, the team did pick the best tree that could be relocated to move to the triangle. Now, it's a tough decision. We are going to have to study the benefits of the project over saving all the trees. Can all the trees be saved in an ideal world. If you had a site close by that was easy to truck them to, yes, but the problem is there is not a site close by that they can truck them to. They have to move down the road standing up in a vertical position. They can't be laid down; they are that large. So, here we are.

Mayor Lago: I wanted to put on the record because I think it's important and we're talking about 13 months. I understand we had 13 months, you just saw the extent of the work that's been put forth, not only by the developer, but also by staff in an effort to find some sort of common ground. They need to move forward. They are ready to start construction on the project and we want to save the trees. So, I think that we need to negotiate and the further that we push it out to May, it only delays the project even further. We need to find an answer here in this Commission. So, I don't know if you want to take a break, you want to have conversations with staff to get an understanding, a little bit of an understanding of what the wriggle room is, what is the location, and when we can move forward as a city. My colleagues want to go that, I welcome it. It wouldn't be the first time that we've done that, we've done that before, so we can hopefully find some common ground and move forward.

Commissioner Castro: As for me, my consideration is not the plan they presented, it's the amount of time we are giving residents to review this. So, I'm not saying the plan is bad at all. I'm just saying this is not sufficient time for resident review. That's all.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. I'm just going to make one suggestion, because I do want to save as many trees as possible.

Mayor Lago: That's not in doubt. I know that. Trust me. Everybody is the same way.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Listen, I would chain myself.

Mayor Lago: I know you would. But the point is this, it's the tree or the golf course that's why I used that as an example. Deena told you you've got to cut that tree down; we've got to cut the tree down. I don't want to.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No. No. It pains me to take any tree out even invasive trees it's sad to see them go, because we lose the canopy, but we need to replant. But there is something that we can allow to happen in the interim and that is, we know that tree number 41 is a good viable tree. We know that the four trees that are in the triangle need to be relocated. The best option for these trees for relocation is to start the root pruning early, have the irrigation on them early, have the biggest root ball possible taken with them, and that work can begin now. The same thing for the Gumbo-Limbo. Whether the remaining trees and I did go by and I saw the conks on some of the trees and one was growing into a fence, etc., and it has a declining canopy etc. It's sad. It's incredibly sad. I would suggest that my colleagues have an opportunity to sit down with Ms. Bell-Llewellyn and go over those reports. I've spent a lot of time on this. You need to have an opportunity during a break at least and then we can make a decision after that, but I do think the root pruning needs to start on the ones for certain that we can save and for those that are in decline, we replant on Biltmore Way, and we get that project moving forward sooner rather than later. Okay. So, regarding the half tree, we try to find a location for it. I went from one side of the golf course; I went on the other side of the golf course. If after further evaluation you think that there's a feasible location for it, please provide it to us.

Commissioner Fernandez: If I may. I think there should be a community meeting for all those who have concerns about this project to chime in. There may be other ideas that come from that meeting. Most of the people who have been giving us opinion are people who are maybe not arborists but have experience in this area. We have folks from the Garden Club who have been reaching out. Ms. Sheryl Gold who has been involved in this area for many years. So, I am not prepared to support anything today. This was done at the last minute, 5:30 yesterday, I think that is when the City Attorney's office received the final version of the plan, and I definitely would welcome the opportunity to meet with Ms. Bell-Llewellyn to discuss it. That probably should have been done before when this plan was being executed, we should have been included throughout the process, but we were not. So, my motion would be to defer, and I think there is a motion right now to defer this item. I would make a friendly amendment to defer, and have the developer hold a community to discuss this plan with the residents and then come back to us.

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Commissioner Castro: I'll accept that amendment.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Mr. Mayor, if I may. In the interest of finding some sort of common ground, perhaps here, we can find a way to make sure this project keeps on moving forward because my client is under tremendous pressure from his partners as far as trying to figure something out, especially considering the additional development rights that his property has. I would ask maybe, we do have one resident here, I think who wants to speak, maybe we listen to that person and then perhaps give us some time so we can discuss internally and with staff to see if we can come up with a solution that works for everyone.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I only have one speaker card, Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Sir, would you like to speak. Please come to the Clerk and sign a speaker card. Thank you.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Is this recording.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Mrs. Cruz: Okay. I took the time as I always do to look for the minutes of the Commission meeting July 9th this past year, 2024. That meeting, during that meeting Ms. Castro asked about the six live oaks and Official Garcia said they are in good condition. Then we talked about 91 trees, then we went back and forth; the specimen trees, the six oaks that are spectacular. Before I keep going with the minutes, the developers bought the property with the trees there. The trees did not grow up since they bought the property. They knew the trees were there. The building plans were done knowing that the trees were there. They were here and they offered to transport the obstacles that we talked about today were there. Florida Power and Light have been here longer than 13 months certainly. At that time, page 11, the Mayor asked for a timeline, when are we going to have the plan, and let me collect my because I'm very angry, and Mr. Garcia offered to do it the next meeting and Mr. Mayor very nicely said, no, take your time, let's wait till September – September was when they were supposed to come back. The delay has not been the city, the delay has not been the neighbors, they have been the delay. September we are in March – October, November, December, January, February, March, six months ago they should have come back with the plan. So, what do we do now. We came up with a plan, not sent to the residents, nothing was attached to the agenda, but something at the last minute and now we have this enormous pressure. The partners want to know what's going on. Hello. You had six months to bring it in. Where were you? I have a serious problem with the way this has been done. According to the Vice Mayor, as of midday yesterday we did not know the new plan. According to Fernandez, at five something was when the city got the plans and we want you, five Commissioners, to approve this plan that nobody else has seen, because guess what, once again the developers have an urgent need to take care of this. Forget about the residents, they don't need to know. Who cares. That is what's wrong with

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this. You know what, maybe the plan is wonderful, maybe it's the best that we can do, even though we were promised that they were going to look at other options, but you cannot just bring it in at the last minute and expect you all to agree to it, drink the coolaid, go ahead and believe that they are going to do what they are promising to do, because they told you six months ago, they didn't come through, and as a matter of fact, I also found here the Vice Mayor saying that the problem before has been, they promised, they sell the property, then they don't do what they promised. No, no, no, no, no. This needs to be deferred, either that or if they really want to press the issue, deny it and let's see what happens next. Those are the two choices. You either deny it, which I don't think is a good thing to do because I like the buildings, but the trees are important, and the neighbors need to know what's going on and bringing in the plan last night is absolutely insulting to the residents.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Robert Gutlohn

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, sir.

Mr. Gutlohn: Hopefully you can hear me.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mr. Gutlohn: I don't necessarily have a speech planned for today, but I am a resident, I live at Beatriz Row, been there since the beginning when Beatriz was built. I happen to be the President of the HOA, I'm familiar with the project and full disclosure, I am the current mortgage holder of the property. Been living in Coral Gables pretty much my entire life. I'm intimately familiar with the projects that have been built from LeJeune all the way to Anderson. I was personally involved at 444 Valencia. I was the construction lender on Villa Valencia. I was involved at Biltmore Row, Biltmore Park, Beatriz Row, and now The George. I know that there are certain trees that need to be relocated, like yourselves I'm obviously very interested in seeing all trees preserved. I walk the neighborhood every single night. If anyone drives around from 5:30 to 7 o'clock, you may have seen me outside with a pair of picker-uppers and a garbage bag cleaning the entire block almost every evening, which is one of my biggest pet peeves and as a result of that we obviously care very deeply as to what's going to be built on this site. As Maria de la Guardia pointed out, the high density that this project is allowed to be built is of concern to us as residents. As it is right now, the parking is certainly an issue. We were very happy to see the down zoning and the lower amounts of units that would be built on this particular site. I know that the plan for the new construction included a series of bump-outs that were going to be on the Valencia side that would include new, I believe oak trees, in order to help the canopy in that particular area as mitigation against removing certain trees that are currently on the site. We would certainly like to see that happen; see it move forward. Again, as it is, parking is a big issue. I just recently had a truck stolen

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because it was parked out on the Biltmore Row side in between the alleyway and the lobby of the Biltmore Hotel and again, to ultimately see the risk of something much larger being built here would certainly be a concern to us. Anyway, appreciate it. We support the project, and I certainly support the plan that I've seen for the additional oaks that would be put into the bump-outs.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Luis Arevalo.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, sir.

Mr. Arevalo: Luis Arevalo, I am here representing the owner of the property that is next door to this site, 701 Valencia, that is the new building. So, as a neighbor, next to the property, we really are in favor of this solution proposed by the developer. We have been consulted in detail of this process. We have followed the Vice Mayor's approach to the project, and we really are surprised and pleased to see how a member of the city of the staff, especially the Vice Mayor got very much involved and has been following the project and proposing different solutions and we were consulted because part of the solution which is the last solution that was to bring the only tree that could be removed to be placed in front of our property. We were very, very concerned and we told her that we would prefer not to do that because we have a new building that is about to go onto the market for lease and to have this construction is going to be concerning. However, after reviewing all the alternatives that they have, I believe that the proposal by Ms. Anderson was probably the best compromise. At the end, we said that we will welcome that solution, always keeping in mind that if the project is not going to be moving forward, we all have the risk of the possibility of having another type of project on the site which is the one that the architect proposed at the beginning which is 180 feet tall building next to our property. So, we prefer not to even have that possibility. So, we are in favor of the solution that was proposed by the developer, and it was suggested by the Vice Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Mr. Arevalo: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, on Zoom we have Sheryl Gold.

Ms. Gold: Good afternoon, Mayor and Commissioners. I prepared remarks before I heard, of course the presentation today by the lobbyist. So, I will send you my prepared remarks so that you can consider them when you deliberate after you defer the item. I'm definitely in favor of deferring the item. I'm opposed to the revised mitigation plan, but what I'd like to point out, first of all, I'd like to address Mayor Lago. I know you say you want to save all trees, but I want to remind you that about four years ago, I led a walk-through through the neighborhood during the upzoning controversy and I pointed out to you, Commissioner Anderson, and Fors what would happen to

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the tree canopy if that property had gotten developed and you turned to me and said, well, okay, then you give me the solution and I said, it ought to be a park. We don't have a park in our neighborhood and the condo dwellers deserve a park every bit as much as the single-family homeowners do who have their own yards. Well that never happened. You promised you were going to talk to the developer at the time that owned it prior to MG, but nothing was ever said after that about a park. So now we have a situation that's really untenable. I agree that the four trees are not relocatable for all different kinds of reasons. They would be fine if they were staying where they were, but you have to move them, it's not doable. I want you to think about the fact that they now have eliminated 89 of 91 trees. It's clear-cutting the property of a long tree canopy, okay, and the loss of six or seven parking spaces to do the bump-outs, because unlike all the other projects that were shown to you, this project doesn't have a swale in front of it. So, you don't have large trees that are already existing in a swale, and you don't have a swale to just move the trees out to, okay. So, it's not like Beatriz Row and all these other projects. This project has a different challenge. It's a very narrow street and it has no swale. Okay. Now, the code actually requires 24 large shade trees on this property and zero are being provided. Okay. Now, what I'd like you to think about and consider as you are going to be deliberating; one, there was no transparency whatsoever. We have the Vice Mayor negotiating all the terms of what the developer would proffer all through this process and making her demands on what she would like to see without consulting with anybody else. So, no transparency, everything at the last moment. Now, I don't know if you noticed but the original plan said there were \$356,000 worth of mitigation fees that will go into the tree trust fund. That was set seven months ago, that was the figure. Then as late as Friday, when they submitted the new, the old plan, it was still about \$356,000. All of a sudden today, it's down to \$215,000. Well, how did that happen? One, they miscalculated what the mitigation fees and Deena and her staff never caught it, okay. So, they actually approved a resolution, it was submitted last Friday that had all wrong numbers. So, it went from 356 to 235. Now all of a sudden, it's down to 215, because they are going to save one tree and that reduces it by another \$20,000. Here's my point. To me, this is like trying to put lipstick on a pig. We've got an issue where they decimated the tree canopy, okay. Very little is going to be done and now they are saying, well, we're going to ask the city to put that money towards the Biltmore Way Streetscape. By law legally they have to pay mitigation fees. It's really up to the city to decide where the money will go. I agree it should go to Biltmore Way, but that's not a public benefit that they're providing. I want to know where's the public benefit that they're providing. I have a recommendation which I discussed with them on Friday when they urgently requested a meeting with me after not meeting with me for a year and-a-half, so I'll be happy to share that with you in writing so you can see what I'm talking about, but I believe according to the records that we have a half a million dollars sitting in the tree succession fund that hasn't been spent, right. So, if you take that, you take mitigation fees, maybe some impact fees that can come back from the county that can go towards this and then the developer actually contributing more because of this public benefit and because they renamed our neighborhood without anybody asking if we wanted to be renamed. I think there

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are some negotiations and some compromises that can be made. We can't get the trees back unless the city wants to buy the property from them for a park, but that's not happening. So, it's not a good situation and I pleaded with you not to approve this project for this reason, but everybody went ahead and said, oh, it's okay and the loss of the parking is okay, and the loss of the trees are okay, because the architecture is beautiful. No one debates the fact that the design is exceptional. The architect is exceptional, but that does not that doesn't make up for the fact that the end result is by the loss of the canopy and the parking spaces are not good for the neighborhood and its not good for the environment. So, I'm pleading with you not to approve this today and to defer it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Just in reference to Ms. Gold made a comment about a meeting that we had. She is correct. When I had the conversation when I said what do you recommend that we do. I said buy it and make it a park. I had a conversation with the then owner of the property and then owner told me that the price was probably north of \$10 million dollars to buy the park. We don't have that amount of money in our park fund, so at the end of the day it was not an option. I would have loved to have purchased this piece of property. If you see there are two, there is one property that we'll be discussing today that we are asking the Commission to consider buying it and there is another one that I put one on the agenda, I don't know if they put my name on it and the Commissioner to my left also has a conversation piece on a property. The issue is you need the money to buy these properties, so the fund is again, a few million dollars, it's not \$10 million dollars to buy these properties. You've got to find the money to buy it. Another piece of property that we discussed that I presented it to the Manager and to the DCM. They've been having conversations, it's a beautiful piece of property in the Gables in a residential neighborhood adjacent to an existing park that the Manager is having conversations to see if that's within our, if we have enough funds to buy the property, but at the end of the day it comes down to the amount of money that we have and we are able to put together to buy these properties. You just can't buy properties for \$10 million dollars if you don't have the funds in place, you've got to get the money from somewhere. I would have loved to have had this property in our parks master plan. Yes ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, with that, I need to put some stuff on the record. I'd like other folks that have gone through painful experiences before this Commission. I hope you've learned some lessons here. This was not a negotiation. This was an effort to save as many trees as possible. Before Christmas, what was available as far as healthy trees to be moved was the tree that was kind of like a half-moon. You have the tree up front, number 41, and you have the Gumbo-Limbo. There is another large tree there, but it's got a ten-inch branch that would have to be cut, which is roughly 50 percent of the tree. There is not a tenable location to move it, and there certainly is an advocacy to approve this plan right now, but I think you need to understand the history of what's gone on. I was out visiting my grandchildren between December 17th and January 3rd. Back on January 3rd, I remember the team wanted to meet with me with a plan. That plan required removal of every single tree so that they could put in little oaks and various plants. My answer was no. I

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was approached again between January 3rd and now, trying to press me to support a complete removal of trees, except for the Gumbo-Limbo on that site. My answer consistently was no. And these were not gentle conversations, they actually got heated. As of last Friday, when we had, I had a one-hour meeting and I walked out at 4 o'clock, because I wasn't making any successful impression upon anybody that you had to in this community if you wanted to develop in our community preserve as much tree canopy as humanely possible or humanly possible. I left and I left it in the hands of our team to continue to have the discussion. My participation in that meeting certainly wasn't moving the ball forward. Our team felt that they had reached a resolution and then I received additional emails from the owner of the firm indicating that whatever progress that was perceived to have been made by our team was not. They wanted to move forward again with the removal of the trees. Yes, it was yesterday around midday that it became clear to the developer that this community will not support this type of approach. If we go back to Gables Village, I had a walk around there that there were promises to save three trees, when the first one went down, I called them up and said, you said you were going to save this. So yes, two trees were finally saved, but this type of intervention should not have to occur. In my work, in my world, my word is my word and I'm not going to go back on my word on something. You need to follow through. This is why now going forward, if you bring a project to our city, you must have your tree mitigation plan ready with the architecture, have your examination done beforehand, no excuses. We cannot have another 12-13-month process where we go back and forth and arm-wrestle and have these difficult situations. It's difficult on the community, it's difficult on you. Like I said on Friday, as much as this is delaying your project, I do not have any empathy, it's your choice, you made the choice, but I do think we need to start with the trees that we unquestionably can move, where there is no debate. Let's get them root pruned, let's get them root pruned properly, let's get them root pruned with the guidance of our staff with the proper root ball size, with the proper irrigation, with the proper mitigation upkeep measures afterwards to make sure that they have the highest probability of survival, rather than allow it without following best practices on how to move these trees. That's my suggestion here.

Mayor Lago: So, Madam Vice Mayor, we have a motion and a second. Do we have any other public comment, we're done.

City Clerk Urquia: No sir.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Mr. Mayor, if I may.

Mayor Lago: Yes. We have a motion for deferral and a second with an amendment, correct.

Commissioner Castro: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir, please.

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Mr. Garcia-Serra: This is too good of a project to make any rash decisions, so I would ask if we can be given some time on our side to discuss internally, discuss with staff and see if we can come up with a solution. It gives you guys the time you need and at the same time addresses keeping this project alive moving forward.

Mayor Lago: I don't have a problem giving them after we come back from lunch, but we have a 2 p.m. time certain for the Waterway Advisory Board that's a pretty significant item. We have people from the county here.

Commissioner Menendez: If I may, just to add something. I know we're going to move forward one way or the other. What was being proposed about a community meeting, I ask that if that's part of the agreement or the arrangement going forward, that it be Sunshined in case elected officials that are available can go. I think there'll be a lot more progress if maybe not all of us, but a good number of the Commission are there so they can hear directly from the residents. Also, all the emails that we received, those individuals should be directly invited to the community meeting, because obviously they reached out with a strong interest in being part of the process. So those are my suggestions if we do a community meeting.

Commissioner Castro: And I accept them as part of my motion.

Commissioner Fernandez: I have a question, Mr. Mayor though. What is it exactly we are waiting on until after lunch to discuss? There is not going to be a community meeting between now and taking a vote. So, I don't think we are in a position right now to vote on this plan as is or on any plan that comes before us. I think this needs to go back to the community and I don't think today I am definitely not ready to take a vote to move forward with any proposal that comes before us, because we've done this before. We had a vote, we were expecting for the six trees to be saved and here we are, nothing's happened. So, I think we are just beating a dead horse at this time.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, the intent is very simple. We can offer this gentleman 30 minutes to get, he requested a simple, for us to give him some time, he wants to discuss something with his client. I don't have an issue deferring it. I'm more than willing. Let's not have short memories here. Just look up Lee Lincoln, look up the project in North Gables where we bought a park, there was a massive oak tree that we saved, a Sherman's oak. Those were initiatives that I brought here. I'm all in favor of saving all six trees. I would love nothing more, but if the gentleman is asking me for a few minutes to sit down with his client and come back, I don't have an issue with it, but if you want to move forward with the deferral, I'll vote in favor of the deferral.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm fine with perhaps if your plan is to take a break regardless, and come back at 2, I'm fine with allowing them to speak, but on the record, I will be voting for deferral.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, will I. I just want them to continue with the proper root pruning method and at least get the plan moving but not approve the plan itself.

Mayor Lago: So, we will be back at 2:15 and we'll take this up first. Two minutes – two minutes and then we immediately go onto item 2-1. Thank you.

[Note for the Record: The Commission took a break at this point and then resumed the item]

[Start: 2:23 p.m.]

Mayor Lago: I apologize; we are eight minutes late. We will go back to the item that was time certain, as I said, item E-3. Let's see if we can do this in two minutes.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: We were able to talk with staff in the meantime during the break and wanting to find a way to keep this project on track, especially considering the low scale that it is, how well its received by the community, trying to avoid everything to go in the other direction of a bigger project, and one thing that did come up was the possibility of foundation permit being issued which would at least allow us to make some sort of progress, and so, with that sort of discussion in place, we understand that you'll move forward with a deferral till May and in the meantime allow us sufficient time to hopefully make progress and get that foundation permit issued, make progress on the master permit, reach out to the neighborhood and ultimately come back here in May for approval of the plan.

Mayor Lago: I don't want to speak for the whole Commission, but haven't been here for twelve years, we've done that before, we allowed somebody to move forward, obviously with some caveats in place. Again, at the end of the day you are not going to be able to get a TCO unless you address the issue with the trees, number one. As long as you spoke with the Manager and the DCM and they are okay, moving forward, I don't have an issue as long as my Commission is fine moving forward. Obviously, we will defer, we will have a community meeting again, along with all the additional points that the Commission put forward. My only request is, do you have an idea of when you are going to start finalizing the root pruning to meet the Vice Mayor's request, which is the Commission's request.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: That's already started, we've already.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Perfect. If there is an expedited, not expedited, but if you are allowed to start a foundation permit which is perfectly normal, it's nothing out of the norm, when would you expect to start that?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: The work or the issuance of the permit?

Mayor Lago: Work – work. When would you expect to start?

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Mr. Garacia-Serra: Its going to be limited what work we can do considering that the trees are still staying in their place, but we would figure two-month process maybe, April perhaps.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Alright. Do you have anything else you'd like to add.

Vice Mayor Andeson: The root pruning hasn't started yet on the four oaks in the triangle and again, I want staff to be approving a plan ahead of time on the root pruning to make sure that we're getting the maximum root ball size needed to ensure that these trees survive, that the best practices on keeping them wet, wetting them beforehand, during and afterwards and the treatment of the trees is done, all that will need to be done while you are waiting for the next steps. That's how you are going to be able to avoid additional delays.

Ms. de la Guardia: The root pruning for all the trees that are standing, the root pruning has started, half the tree has been done and the four in the triangle also got half of the root pruning. We are due to start the second half of the root pruning right now, because it's been two months since we did the first half. We did the first half of the first week of January.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I didn't see any root pruning done on the trees in the triangle. What I saw in mid-January, because the gentleman wasn't available in the beginning of January when I had my first meeting with a member of the team. That had only started then, and it was at that time I had called our staff concerned that the root ball size chosen was less than optimum, so that's why I voice these concerns. When did you start the root pruning.

Ms. de la Guardia: January 6th of the four oaks in the triangle.

Vice Mayor Anderson: In the triangle. I'll go by and look as I didn't see it.

Mayor Lago: I had a conversation with Irene Hegedus, who is here with us. She is going to be dealing with the next issue. I'd like to see if you can come up for one second just to put it out there. She was very generous as she always is, imparting her wisdom and her skill and she talked a little bit about the Underline and the possibility of maybe, maybe if it makes sense, no commitment, she can talk a little bit about the trees and what she is looking for and how she can collaborate with us.

Ms. Hegedus: Oh, the trees. So, building the Underline which we are increasing the tree canopy significantly. I don't know if you remember when we were doing Phase 2, there was a big issue because we removed a lot of the trees and the trees needed to be removed because they were structurally damaged, they were sick and they were becoming a safety hazard. However, we started to import the City of Miami actually gave us some dollars to bring mature trees and we went four hours away and all of these trees were hand selected, hand picked and moved to the site. The trees are doing great. We also have relocated a lot of trees, so it can be done.

Mayor Lago: So, if you could, I just want to put it out there, will you have a conversation with Mario. We have three miles of the Underline here in the city, if you could find a way to collaborate, it could be an opportunity, who knows, maybe it's a shot in the dark, but at the end of the day we could maybe collaborate together with the county, because we have committed over \$7 million dollars in impact fees to build the Underline and I'm very proud of that legislation. So, I think it would be great if we could salvage some of these trees and we can put them in the Underline, at the end of the day it could be a win-win, just putting it out there.

Ms. Hegedus: Let's talk.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Sure.

Commissioner Menendez: Through the Mayor. Commissioner Castro wasn't in here – Mario could you, first off, if you could repeat what you said and then I want to ask Deena to explain to folks that aren't familiar with root pruning as to what that's about. Could you repeat what your team is proposing.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Sure. We are proposing, it looks like the consensus here is to defer the discussion to May and we'd be okay with that. We spoke with staff about what progress could be made on the project in the meantime, in particular the application for the issuance of a foundation permit, which is okay and allowed by the resolution, so that's a big consideration for us on our part; and then the other discussion was what prep work is happening for the trees and what root pruning has taken place already and all trees that will ultimately be relocated under the plan that we have proposed here right now. Root pruning has commenced to some extent.

Commissioner Menendez: And the root pruning doesn't limit the discussion with the residents. It's just a part of the process.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Its part of what you do to get the tree ready.

Commissioner Menendez: Deena, could you go into detail a little bit, because there are folks who won't know what root pruning is.

Assistant Public Works Director: Sure. Root pruning is when you are going to move a large, large tree, you've got to come in stages, maybe quadrants, and get a chainsaw and go down in the ground and actually trim the tree just like you would prune branches, you have to do the root system, and you don't do it all at once, you don't want to shock the tree. So, you do it in phases, over a period of months. A tree this big might need to sit root pruned in its location four to six months before you pick it up and move it.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you. I appreciate the explanation.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Thank you. So, we have a motion and a second, along with a few additional points that have been added.

Commissioner Fernandez: And just for clarification, the permit that we are letting them go forward with, that work will not affect any of these trees, correct.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: We can't do any work that will affect the trees, as far as where they are right now until you approve a plan.

Commissioner Fernandez: And as far as the root pruning goes, are you going to be root pruning all six of the trees or just the two that you intend right now to move.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: The idea right now is to continue with the root pruning of the two on site that are proposed for relocation and the four that are within the traffic triangular median that are also proposed for relocation.

Commissioner Fernandez: But with the possibility of finding this new location with the Underline, it would delay your process if we were able to find a solution with the Underline, so wouldn't it make sense for you to start the root pruning process on those trees as well.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Potentially, but I think we first have the discussion with the Underline.

Mayor Lago: Alright, Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.