

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
March 23, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Arts and Culture Specialist, Catherine Cathers
Police Chief, Ed Hudak
Fire Chief, Marcos De La Rosa**

Public Speaker(s)

Norman Lee

Agenda Item H-1 [12:10 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving the artist team of Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee to design public artwork for the plaza of the new Public Safety Building. (unanimously recommended by the Public Safety Building Public Art Selection Panel, including members of the Arts Advisory Panel, approval/denial vote: 12 to 0, and the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 6 to 0).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, next item is time certain, 12 o'clock, H-1.

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Agenda Item H-1 - Resolution of the City Commission approving the artist team of Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee to design public artwork for the plaza of the new Public Safety Building.

City Attorney Ramos: H-1 is a resolution of the City Commission approving the artist team of Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee to design public artwork for the plaza of the new Public Safety Building, be approved by the Public Safety Building Public Art Selection Panel.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners. My name is Catherine Cathers, Arts and Culture Specialist for the City of Coral Gables. If we can have the presentation pulled up, please. Next slide. So, as you know, the City allows for various methods of acquiring public art, and they are an open competition that allows for artists to meet eligibility requirements to apply for consideration, a limited competition where we contact a short list of qualified artists, direct selection of an artist and developing a pre-qualified roster of artists for a limited competition or direct selection. Next slide. For this particular opportunity, we did use an open competition, allowing artists who meet eligibility requirements to apply for consideration. Next slide. The location of the proposed public artwork and memorial is on the plaza of the new Public Safety Building on the corner of Salzedo Street and Minorca Avenue. Next. For our process, we put together a Public Safety Building Selection Panel that was comprised of members of the Arts Advisory Panel, Police Chief Hudak, Fire Chief De La Rosa, and an appointee of the Cultural Development Board. This process involved releasing a national request for qualifications, to which over 140 applications were received and reviewed. Twelve artists were then forwarded from this list, were then forwarded to the Police and Fire Chief, and four of the artists were requested to interview with panel members and staff, including the Fire and Police Chief. Two artists were then invited to develop and submit proposals, and that was the artist team of Jim Hirschfield and Norman Lee. The Selection Panel then, after reviewing those proposals, recommended the artist team of Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee to the Cultural Development Board. And the Cultural Development Board is recommending the artist team of Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee to the City Commission today as the artist to work with for the Public Safety Building. Next. So, a little -- just a little bit about the artist team. Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee explore notions of community, identity, and memory in the context of public space. Allbritton and Lee draw on a site's cultural landscape to generate strong narrative concepts

that resonate with local meaning, but also transcend the familiar. Most notably, Norman Lee was named a finalist in the World Trade Center site memorial competition, the largest design competition in history. His design was selected from an international field of over 5,000 submissions, so we feel confident that we've got a winner here. Next. We are here today to show the concept proposal by Shane Albritton and Norman Lee, and to recommend approving this artist and public artwork memorial concept for the new Public Safety Building. I would like to note that the recommendations from the Selection Panel and Cultural Development Board included removing a seating element, raising the height of the base, increasing the height of the sculpture, and including three flames with the artwork to symbolize police, fire, and communication operators. These revisions are not in the initial concept proposal included with this item. However, they're included here in our presentation, as the artist team was able to make revisions prior to this meeting. Next. So, now I'm going to turn it over. We should have on -- virtually, we should have Norman Lee representing the artist team, who will speak to you about the artwork, and then we will ask the Police and Fire Chief to chime in with their comments. Norman, are you with us?

Norman Lee: Yeah, I'm here. Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Great. Well, first of all, thank you for giving us an opportunity to speak about the project. We're very honored to be selected for this very important project for the City. Let's see, I can't see the slide -- oh, here we go. Okay.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: So, just -- Norman, just say next, when you want to go to the next slide. Our team will...

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Forward the slides.

Mr. Lee: Next slide. So, before getting into the renderings, I wanted to talk a little bit about the inspiration behind the project. So, we're very much drawn to symbolism that had kind of an immediate feeling or immediate recognition interpretation, and we decided to focus on this motif of the eternal flame. It's something that we all recognize. It's something that, you know, talks about remembrance and importance and honor and sacrifice. But at the same time, we wanted the flame to interact and interface with a narrative related to the Police and Fire Department. And in a lot of our work, we deal with notions of connecting past and present. And we were really struck by this idea of the flame being related to the very beginnings of police and fire in American history. So, what you see here on the right, the right two images, are a police lantern and a fire lantern. These were used early on in the development of these departments in our country. And so, we have this idea of kind of eternal flame being a symbol of remembrance, but at the same time, the flames themselves being something related to the idea of doing the work of police, doing the work of firefighting, being able to kind of see danger, perceive danger, kind of -- meaning a path to be able to protect society. Next slide, please. So, this next slide talks about the creation of the form and the techniques and the materiality upon which we developed our idea. So, we wanted to -- instead of using the actual flame -- create something that was interpreting the flame. So, we're really drawn by this technique of stacked glass and how stacked glass can be something that was very powerful, very robust, but at the same time, provided translucency, the colors of that glass itself, recalling the beautiful kind of aqua colors of the ocean; us, as Coral Gables is very much a seaside community. And what you see here on the right are two sculptures where the void created within pieces of stacked glass, when stacked up, create a form. In this case, it's a classical sculpture of a goddess, but it shows you how just kind of taking pieces of glass and voiding out the shape, stacking, we can create very detailed, subtle articulations of form and allowing light to go through, and at the same time, allowing light to come up in the evening, light to fill that void and provide a very kind of flame-like expression. Next slide, please. So, here you see a rendering in context of the plaza. As Catherine mentioned, we made some modifications, so here you see the modifications. We took the symbolism of two flames and incorporated the third flame to include the operations of -- Communications and Operations Department, also intertwined with the two

flames related to the Fire and the Police Department. You see the stacked glass piece, which is 14 feet high total on top of a limestone and granite plinth. And on this plinth is a water feature, and etched names, and other meaningful symbolic elements. Next slide, please. And here you see an up-close of some of the more -- of the interpretive elements. So, the limestone panels move around. The majority of the portion of the plinth, names will be inscribed of fallen officers and fallen firefighters, in addition to their, you know, badge number, you know, something indicating whether they're Police or Fire. So, it's important to have some kind of a contour or kind of -- we felt it was important to have names interwoven together since it's about this community coming together of Fire, Police, and Communications. And where the water falls down or creates a kind of a weird edge of water that bubbles down, at this point, we've incorporated meaningful text, so we had the police motto, "Protecting our City Beautiful." And at this point, we're envisioning some kind of a quote or some kind of text that definitively articulates the mission, you know, saying Police, Fire and Operations there. We've explored different options using emblems, different imagery, and we look forward to developing those ideas further. At this point in time, as far as this proposal -- these renderings, we decided to kind of place this meaningful text there. The water falls down into this kind of circular pool around it and is recirculated back up onto the (INAUDIBLE) element. Next slide, please. And here you see a nighttime view. It's really important to have this piece be a kind of a beacon element. And at night, the water element that trickles down the granite creates a bubbling effect, which refracts the water coming up, so when the light illuminates this kind of void space of the flames in between the glass, it creates kind of a flickering effect too. So, something that is a lighting effect, but also recalls this idea of an eternal flame, something that is kind of eternally paying tribute and honoring those fallen protecting the City of Coral Gables. Next slide, please. Here we see the general dimensions articulated. So, you see the nearly 14-foot height, and this is modified from the original, which was, I think, 25 percent to 30 percent lower than what it is now. So, we'll be able to kind of expand the spacing and expand the thickness of the glass to incorporate -- to create a more monumental feel. You see a person as scale right next to the rendering to -- right next to the elevation to get a sense of how large. So, this is a very, very large sculpture, particularly given, you know, the size of this -- of the courtyard, which is not really that big. So, we felt that this scale was -- could provide the meaning, the

visibility from afar, that is important for this building. Next slide, please. And here you see the relationship between the seating elements and the plaza. You know, the plaza itself is not that big, so we wanted to ensure that it's enough circulation within the plaza space, so we wanted to ensure that wheelchairs and you have ADA access, and if there's events or press briefings, or that sort of a thing, that could occur, that there's plenty of space for those events, whether casual or informal, that could take place in the plaza. Next, please. Next slide, please. And here you see an up-close aerial view of the elements here, so you see the pool. You see the limestone panels that will have the names etched on them. You see the articulation of where the fountain, the water feature is. And then over on the upper left, you see the granite edge, where we'll have text or some other meaningful motif signifying the three departments. Next slide. And here is a bullet-pointed summary of the other ones that I just spoke of. I guess there's -- I'm not going to read over this, but essentially, it just reiterates some of the salient points that I just mentioned. Next slide, please. And here we have the breakdown, self-explanatory, of the revised budget on your left and some of the maintenance requirements on the right that are bullet pointed. I just wanted to reiterate that in any project that we do, maintenance is something that is first and foremost, something that we think about. It's a minimal maintenance. So, everything that you see here, the glass pieces, just require just kind of gentle cleaning. The way that the glass is kind of held above the water enables it to be able to not collect some of the -- the kind of mineral deposits that you would in a typical fountain where the water is running over the glass. The glass itself is very robust. It's being -- there are rods, tension rods inside that hold it, and we ensure that that withstands the hurricane force winds. I live in Texas, so we're very familiar with the type of forces, both wind and water, and the kind of the corrosive nature of saltwater, so we're very conscious of those types of sources that could come to play in a piece like this. The stone itself, granite, limestone, very robust. You know, stone is one of the most robust elements that you could have in a public art piece. There's no need to kind of repaint on something like this. All the materials that we have are very robust, which just a requirement of kind of gentle cleaning in annual maintenance, so something that's not onerous of -- particularly related to a fountain project. Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: So, before we bring up the Police and Fire Chief, I just wanted to add a couple of things. We anticipate that it will take about -- once we have the agreement in place, between about seven to nine months to complete. And the maintenance -- there will be a maintenance plan that will be required as part of that agreement, as well as educational opportunities, artist talk, et cetera. We will be continuing to work with the artist and the Police and Fire Chief on the design of the names and how those are presented on the base itself, and incorporating elements that distinguish between Fire, Police, et cetera. The base is also going to be designed to allow for additional names in the unfortunate event that that is necessary. And then lastly, I want to just say that it's been an absolute delight working with Police Chief Hudak and Fire Chief De La Rosa. And when the artists -- when we gave the proposal to the Cultural Development Board, they did such a beautiful, touching job speaking about the work and their thoughts about it, I just stepped back, and it was a delight to hear them speak about this work. So, please, Chiefs.

Police Chief Hudak: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, as instructed, we've been involved in the process throughout. I can tell you from the Police side, this piece moves me, and I'm not an artist connoisseur by any stretch of the imagination. I do believe that it has just enough honor in it to memorialize the officers that have been killed in here -- in the City, excuse me. But it also incorporates everything that this building is about, and the uniqueness of the glass -- and again, the 13-foot structure was something that myself and the Fire Chief recommended, so it could be seen not just from the street, but from the glass incorporated into the building, the CMR, and I think the artist really kind of captured what we wanted without making it a memorial. We were trying to find -- and we heard what you all said about, you know, this should be an artist piece. We don't want it to look like a tombstone. And I don't think it does, and he incorporated everything that we really wanted. And we are -- or the Police side, we're very excited about it. And we have some other incorporations that we did, new and old. The Fire Chief and I are looking -- we actually took the bronze letters from the old building and we have those. And we're looking for a place to put those at a lower level to kind of memorialize those. There are certain pieces we incorporated

into the building. You all remember the EOC, the etched glass in the Communications Center between the seal. We've kept those, and we've incorporated that into the hallways outside the Emergency Operations. So, we don't want to lose our history, and I don't this piece does that at all. It really does incorporate everything for many years to come.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So, good afternoon, everyone. I'd like just to add that the challenge that we posed to all of the artists was that the piece had to have an equal importance to our residents, and also, the folks that reside inside that building. And as the Chief just said, that it had to have an equal balance of our past and those that have sacrificed that came before us, and also not be just simply a memorial. I think this artist captured that. He really listened to everything that we had to say and came back with a -- the closest rendition of our wishes and what we would like to see. So, I respect him and applaud him for that and his team. I think that having the benefit of adding this piece now to the plaza and physically seeing where the plaza is and how it fits, I think it's a very good art piece and very balanced with the space that's there. As the Chief mentioned, we continue to work with him on some of the minor adjustments that we asked for, but I believe that it is a great addition to our beautiful building. And thank you for that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Do I hear questions, comments?

Commissioner Keon: No, it's beautiful.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautiful.

Commissioner Keon: It really is beautiful. I noticed in the notes it said that there wasn't going to be a base. What was that?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: The original concept had the base that was also a seating. It functioned as both a seating element and the base. So, basically, they just removed the seating aspect of it and raised it up. So, it is -- the base is where the names of the fallen will be on...

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: As well as an inscription about the department itself.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, so...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And we will work with Raquel and her team to make sure that we're meeting ADA requirements for readability and height. We definitely want to make sure that everyone has access to this piece.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, so there won't be any base for seating around it?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Correct. There was a lengthy discussion about that and about the -- not only from the sculptural side and feeling that people would be sitting away from the work, but also, that there was plenty of seating already on the plaza.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And -- yeah.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: I was just going to mention, as we stated earlier, the benefits of having the plaza built when we were looking at this piece was that there are benches incorporated into the plaza today. So, our suggestion -- myself and the Police Chief -- was that if we raised that base, we still have the benefit of creating a seating area, but no one is that close or sitting on the art piece itself, especially if they're going to be anywhere near where the names are going to be engraved. So, we asked them to please, to raise it, that increased the height for the benefits of those that are inside the building and as well as being able to incorporate the seating that is there now.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very good. Do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Vice Mayor Lago: Second.

Commissioner Fors: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 4-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good presentation.