

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-5
March 29, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item 2-5 [Start: 10:55 a.m.]

A Resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board requesting that the City Commission adopt the Transportation Advisory Board's suggestions regarding the City's planned Mobility Hub.

Mayor Lago: We have a 10:30 time certain, a Resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board requesting that the City Commission adopt the Transportation Advisory Board's suggestions regarding the City's planned Mobility Hub, item 2-5. Anyone from staff here to address item 2-5?

Public Works Director Diaz: Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director. So, 2-5 is a Resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board requesting that the City Commission adopt the Transportation Advisory Board's suggestions regarding the City's planned Mobility Hub. We have Roberta Neway here to speak on behalf of the board.

Ms. Neway: Yes. We would like to ask that you adopt our suggestions which are, we believe that the current configuration, which allows for only minimal substandard and inadequate parking for bicycles on the open ground floor level and parking of scooters with charging stations on the

City Commission Meeting

March 29, 2022

*Agenda Item 2-5 – Resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board
Requesting that the City Commission adopt the Board's suggestions*

[Date]

1

second floor is not well thought out for micro-mobility. We recommend safe, secure parking for bicycles on the ground floor with charging stations for peddle-assist bikes, and scooter parking and charging stations also on the ground floor. We suggest that the entire ground floor be dedicated to micro-mobility options and accommodations versus other retail space. We feel this will accommodate the foreseen increase in bicycle and scooter usage at the Mobility Hub which we are hoping will occur. This could include storage lockers for cyclists, bike storage, scooter storage, repair station, bike share, scooter sharing entities, that kind of thing for the ground floor. And we also recommend, our final recommendation to find an implementation of a true protected bike lane on the south side of Andalusia be considered by the city. That's it in a nutshell. Any questions?

Vice Mayor Mena: My recollection from one of the renderings I recall seeing was, there was a bicycle storage room on the first floor, right.

Ms. Neway: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: There is a bike repair facility.

Vice Mayor Mena: I understand you want more than that.

Ms. Neway: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: I heard you loud and clear. I believe that in the northeast corner on the bottom floor there was like a bicycle locker/storage.

City Manager Iglesias: That is correct Vice Mayor. There is also a bicycle repair facility that we are contemplating there. The bottom floor is completely adaptable so that as micro-mobility increases, we can increase that footprint. So, in the future it might be all micro-mobility and maybe a grab and go restaurant, a grab and go high-end facility that will go well with that facility, but we've looked at bikes, we looked at scooters, micro-mobility, EV, electric vehicles and so forth. So, what we are looking at is a completely adaptable first floor that has that ability to adapt as the needs change in micro-mobility.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm having to accept the resolution, as far as what we ultimately do, my opinion is, I think what you're suggesting I understand is, sort of the A-plus answer as it relates to mobility.

Ms. Neway: Right. To encourage...

Vice Mayor Mena: I appreciate that. But I think there has to be a balance because we have to balance also the cost of the project. Obviously, it's a significant factor and having some retail component on the bottom is an important factor in terms of generating revenues that will help subsidize the cost of the project, etc. So, my point is just, there are a lot of moving parts to this, and this is a fair recommendation by the Transportation Advisory Board, whose goal and whose priority should be transportation and mobility issues, and I respect that. We just have to as a body, I think balance the entire picture and do as best as we can by those mobility issues and have those

City Commission Meeting

options in the facility, but I think we are going to have to have a balance where we do have some retail on the bottom realistically, just because of the economic factors associated with this, which have already become more significant from a cost perspective. We have to be thoughtful about that. So that's my only comment. Again, the recommendation and the resolution from the board is well taken. I think it's a fair suggestion. We are just going to have to make some decisions on how we want to really plan this out.

Commissioner Fors: And the important thing, Commissioner Mena, that I really want to emphasize because I discussed this resolution with the City Manager is that one of the great things about this building is that it's very compatible and adaptable. This is not a situation where, if we decide to do X amount of bike service now that is forever going to be X amount of bike service. We can expand that and retract that and kind of change with the times and with the activity that we witness once it is online.

City Manager Iglesias: Those are very good comments by the Vice Mayor, but as mobility grows there may be retail portions that are micro-mobility.

Vice Mayor Mena: Sure.

City Manager Iglesias: But they are not there right now, but they may be in the future, as Commissioner Fors mentioned, it is adaptable to make sure that we do take care of those future needs.

Mayor Lago: Listen, I echo the sentiments of the Vice Mayor and Commissioner Fors, they are very well stated. And I need to repeat myself here, I would love nothing more than to see the entire first floor just be a hub in itself, but due to the cost, I mean the costs are out of control in regard to construction right now. We need to find a way to fund the project while incurring as little to no debt as possible. So, moving forward does anybody want to make a motion here.

Vice Mayor Mena: To accept the resolution, yes.

Public Works Director Diaz: My apologies, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director. One of the requests also was for the bike lane on the corridor.

Mayor Lago: I'm all in for the bike lane. I've said it before. We've got to take advantage of the simple fact that we have Publix redevelopment coming now, so that entire Andalusia should have some sort of, I'm not sure if it's a dedicated bike lane, but we need to find an answer to provide safe passage across the downtown. I have been talking about this for some time. I know my colleagues support me on this, and I've actually requested for a design to take advantage of the ability, excuse me, of the situation that we currently have where all of Andalusia is going to be redeveloped through pretty significant projects.

Public Works Director Diaz: I just want to make sure that that is understood. Unfortunately, it's a 60-foot right-of-way, so the only way to really accomplish that would be to eliminate the on-street parking on one side of the street.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, this was one of the discussions that we had during the design stage of the parking garage itself, and it was my dream as well to have that entire first floor for micro-mobility. As the City Manager aptly pointed out, we can expand it. I noticed that quite a few people came to the Farmers Market that way. My hope is not only do we have a bike lane there on Andalusia, and I know that we'll most likely have to give you a string of parking, but people will park in the building and provide more micro-mobility on the ground floor, but we can continue that bike lane west. Try to get people to bike to the parking garage and be able to use the micro-mobility there, the trolley, to get to the rail, instead of jumping in our car. I think it's a fabulous point.

Mayor Lago: And I want to add something.

Commissioner Anderson: Do we need a motion?

Mayor Lago: I want to add something to that. You said that we would lose some sort of on-street parking.

Public Works Director Diaz: The on-street parking.

Mayor Lago: I'm not afraid to lose the on-street parking there. I'm not afraid to lose that. Why? – because we are going to potentially build a 700-plus parking garage structure. So, to me, if we are going to do something, if we are going to do something let's do it right. If we want to set an example and there's an opportunity to get things right for once, again, this is the place to do it. This is to set an example where we are building a massive structure that's going to be there for a long time, and like what Commissioner Fors mentioned, we can add and retract or contract whatever we need in that building, because its an adaptable building on multiple fronts. How many parking spaces are we talking about on Andalusia on one side? We wouldn't lose the parking spaces on the other side. There's not that many parking spaces next to the Cheesecake Factory and next to this parking garage. Its limited.

Public Works Director Diaz: It will be on the opposite side of the street.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Why would it be on the other side of the street?

Public Works Director Diaz: That area is scheduled as a drop-off for micro-mobility, but its something that can be worked out.

Mayor Lago: But why?

Commissioner Anderson: You're talking about the north side of the street.

City Commission Meeting

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes – correct.

Commissioner Anderson: Not the south side of the street. I did talk to some of the shop owners there and they had no resistance to having micro-mobility.

Vice Mayor Mena: Losing parking would be on the north side you're saying?

Commissioner Anderson: No. On the south side.

Mayor Lago: Well, why can't it be on the north side?

Commissioner Menendez: I prefer the north side.

Mayor Lago: Me too. There already is no parking basically in front of the Cheesecake Factory and adjacent to that. So, there is no parking there.

City Manager Iglesias: Its very difficult, Mayor, because we have a large drop-off there that goes with the micro-mobility, so we would have to look at that right-of-way, it's a 60-foot right-of-way. I think we have been looking at it. The only problem that I have right now is the cost issue, as you know, which is something that we have to deal with, but we feel that that would be a good area for that, assuming that we could kind of incorporate the entire right-of-way and look at that as a whole, which is a 60-foot right-of-way.

Mayor Lago: Again, I want to look at the north and I want to look at the south. I want to see options. If we're going to do this, let's do it the right way, and let's address the issue of the bike lane, either be a dedicated or not dedicated, there are different options, but I want something done the right way. And if we are going to make a significant investment in the community, if we are going to have a mobility hub, we've got to have a way for people who are using bicycles to get there in a safe way. So, I think we discussed this enough. Commissioner Menendez you have any other comments or Commissioner Anderson?

Commissioner Anderson: The only other comment I'm going to add is, with the bike lane on the south side you can have a row of appropriately sized trees to shade the bike lane, to shade the store owners in the summertime. I think it's a win-win.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm very sensitive to the shop owners and the folks that have their offices on the south side, so before I support anything on the south side, I need to be certain that they are good with it.

Mayor Lago: I agree with you and that's why I say the north, the north.

City Commission Meeting

Commissioner Anderson: That's why I spoke to them.

Commissioner Menendez: When the rubber hits the road, the expression, I want to make sure we are doing it the right way and with regards to the mobility hub, bike lanes, if we can start from scratch on Andalusia and make it bike-friendly, I think that's phenomenal, its long overdue. And then with regards to the mobility hub, my thoughts on the mobility hub, one of the key issues, the reason for the mobility hub is to help sustain Miracle Mile area economically. It's the structure that brings people in. It's the structure that keeps people there shopping, buying, spending money in our downtown area. So, I want to make sure we maintain, if we can, some element of retail because we need to maintain it, we need to activate that building.

Mayor Lago: So, moving forward. We don't need a motion, or we do?

City Attorney Ramos: Mr. Mayor, if I might. There were three specific asks in the Transportation Advisory Board resolution that I think the Commission should consider if we are going to vote. Number one was – well to redesign the ground floor of the mobility hub to do the following three things: safe and secure parking for bicycles on the ground floor with charging stations for peddle-assist bicycles, scooter parking and charging stations; two, the entire ground floor of the mobility hub should be dedicated to micro-mobility options and accommodations versus retail space. This could include storage lockers for cyclists a bicycle scooter store, repair shop on the ground floor, other ground floor bike share and scooter share businesses; and three, access to the mobility hub should be part of the entire project. Transportation Advisory Board strongly recommends design and implementation of the true protected bike lane on the south side of Andalusia leading to the mobility hub.

Vice Mayor Mena: But we are not taking action on this. We are just accepting the resolution, right.

Commissioner Fors: I think this resolution, the way I read it is a request by the Transportation Advisory Board is well taken.

Mayor Lago: For consideration.

Commissioner Fors: Its well taken. I don't think we are going to take any vote to alter the design of the mobility hub today.

City Attorney Ramos: Then you have to take no action. But if you're going to take action, you should just know what they are asking you to do.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm accepting the minutes of the meeting.

Mayor Lago: And I agree. And the issue with regards to the south or north, that's something that we're going to discuss, and you know that you have support, you've been very vocal on that. I put my opinion on the record and I'm moving forward. I'm going to ask the Manager to please show me multiple designs on the south and the north side, taking into consideration Commissioner

City Commission Meeting

Menendez comments about the shop owners, and that I will not accept a project on Andalusia that does not have some sort of bike lane on it, either on the north or the south side. We need to find common ground on that issue. In regard to the first floor, I can't vote in favor of something that takes a big part of the financing structure away from the proforma, especially with the cost of construction right now. Maybe if the project was a \$25 million-dollar project we could consider that, but at the present moment, we need that first-floor square footage to bring in the value to offset the cost. And the first portion, I think we are all in favor of the first item on the resolution.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, if I may add, that first floor and that drop-off area is looked at, quite a bit as far as the mobility is concerned, future mobility is concerned, is adaptable to the bike lane in that particular area and it's a one-way street so we could use the entire cross-section. So that's already been looked at from that perspective. The question is, do we have sufficient funds to do the entire project.

Mayor Lago: We can always chase state dollars next year. We can chase federal dollars, which again, if everything goes as planned, which I'll be discussing that later in the Commission meeting, we are making some inroads with our state legislature and the federal department. I want to thank the Transportation Advisory Board for their commitment and for their guidance on this issue.

Ms. Neway: You're welcome.

Vice Mayor Mena: I make a motion to accept the minutes of the Advisory Board.

Mayor Lago: Can I get a second?

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

City Clerk Urquia: All in favor.

All: Aye.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Ms. Neway: Thank you. Have a good day.