

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-4
November 14, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Safety Director, Frank Fernandez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-4 [2:10:50 p.m.]

A discussion regarding the possible placement of cameras at the entrances of our waterways in South Gables. (Sponsored by Commissioner Mena).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Discussion regarding the possible placement of cameras at the entrances of our waterways in South Gables.

Commissioner Mena: My appointment to the Waterways Advisory Board, had reached out and he was interested in - he was asking whether or not this was something that had ever been discussed in the past, Frank's position as the Director of Public Safety is on this issue, part of it was because there was a story on national news outlets about boat engine theft being a problem, although we don't really have incidents or we haven't really had incidents of that here. We've had more kind of petty theft, people stealing people's fishing rods, things like that from the boat, but the question was sort of twofold for me; one was whether or not Director Fernandez thinks it would be advantageous and a deterrent and kind of an extension of our geo-fence and our camera

system, but then the second part of that, which I think is really important is the resident side, you know I don't just want to accept from the Waterway Advisory Board that the people in these communities want this. If we think it would be tactically advantageous to us from a public safety perspective then whether we should ask staff to maybe survey the different HOA's from each of these neighborhoods to see if it's something they would even be interested in, because if a given neighborhood is going to push back and say listen, from a privacy perspective we don't want this, I respect that, but if they are on board with it and they feel like it's a public safety enhancement for their neighborhood then I think it's something we should consider, so I don't know what your all thoughts are, but I just wanted to bring it up for discussion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm glad you are bringing it up and let's consider it and consult the neighborhood associations and put it out there and see what they think.

Commissioner Mena: Frank, I've spoken to you, but I know everybody else hasn't necessarily on this topic, but you think it would be beneficial at least at the entrance points to have just a snapshot of whose coming in, whose coming out.

Director Fernandez: We believe so and these waterways are porous and we don't have an observation at that point. The marine patrol officers are out there patrolling, but it's a hit and miss for them. To be able to have an observation point, watching what's coming in and what's going out would provide an advantageous and a tactical position for us that we can leverage. We are installing a camera at Cartagena Circle on the canal route, that's an easy installation so its low hanging fruit for us, so that will be installed. We have contacted other HOA's to see if they are interested in allowing it and some have had reservations about allowing us access to these cameras, we respect that.

Vice Mayor Keon: Doesn't Gables Estates have cameras?

Director Fernandez: It's my understanding that they do and the member that the Commissioner talked about on the Waterway Advisory Board is going to facilitate a communication with them, a meeting to see how we can leverage some of those views.

Vice Mayor Keon: I thought Gables Estates did; I know they have made them available to the police before when there were issues. I don't know about the other homeowner associations, like Old Cutler Bay and Snapper Creek and some of the other ones, Gables by the Sea all the way down, Sunrise Harbor, I don't know what they have, but I know that Gables Estates has.

Commissioner Quesada: Can we do something? The homeowner associations, I think every single one that's on the water, those homeowner associations are pretty strong, they meet

regularly. Actually, the Snapper Creek one, they meet tonight, I know they have a meeting tonight. Can you reach out to those associations, send them an e-mail say hey, we are considering this, can you please discuss with your board and get back to us what your thoughts are.

Director Fernandez: Will do. Will do.

Commissioner Mena: I think that's exactly right.

Commissioner Quesada: My thoughts on this is, I think it's good, but at the same time is it too "Big Brotherish"? - that comes to mind as well; and have we really had any issues recently, crime on the water at all? I know every now and again there is a group that will go out rob a few boats and then we catch them, that's historically what's happened, maybe once every three or four years, if not more than that.

Director Fernandez: The Commissioner mentioned there was an article that came out regarding boat thefts, engine theft, excuse me, outboard engines that emanated from Dallas, Texas, but for whatever reason the reporter came down here interviewed a Miami-Dade police officer at the entrance of Coral Gables and it looked as if it was Coral Gables, but we haven't had those problems. I have confirmed with the marine patrol sergeant and he doesn't recall any recent incidents regarding thefts, we pulled the data and we showed two jet skis in the last year and a couple of minor thefts. I call them minor thefts, but it may have been some, maybe some high priced fishing rods or technical equipment.

Commissioner Quesada: Can you e-mail us a summary of any type of incident that we may have had on the water, within the waterways in the last, I don't know, two years or three years or so, if we have that, just a summary report for us, so we have a better idea, kind of crime we are really looking at.

Director Fernandez: Absolutely. So, you want us to poll the HOA's and see if they are interested in allowing us access.

Commissioner Mena: Make it clear that we are not like 100 percent moving forward with this. We are surveying them to find out if it's something that would interest them. I don't want to like spook them; and if it is something that they are interested in, then we can talk about it.

Commissioner Lago: I know you are talking about what crime is being committed, but also don't forget this is preventative.

Director Fernandez: Yes, of course, I understand.

Commissioner Lago: Somebody sees a camera they think twice.

Commissioner Mena: A lot of stuff people don't report, especially the people in these areas. Somebody steals two or three fishing rods; they are probably not calling the police.

Director Fernandez: Just want to make sure there is no objection. We have buoys that are outside that are City maintained, they are solar powered. Our goal is to put cameras on those buoys because we have the power to be able to do that, the electricity via solar power, any objections to that?

Commissioner Lago: I don't have an issue.

Commissioner Mena: Not for me.

Commissioner Lago: That's fine.

Director Fernandez: OK – sounds good.

Commissioner Quesada: Here's the thing though, when those crimes occur it's at night, from what I recall, the old smash and grab on the water. They come in on like a canoe or like a small little boat with two horse power engine, its dark, whatever camera we put there are we going to be able to see at night?

Director Fernandez: Yes. They are forward looking infrared – called a FLIR.

Commissioner Quesada: And, you are going to be able to get a significant visual.

Director Fernandez: No, you are going to get a heat sensor that someone is coming in on a canoe or car.

Commissioner Quesada: Is that a waste of our money?

Director Fernandez: Not necessarily. It will give us time and place that it's occurring, so it will give us a preliminary description of how they came in.

Commissioner Quesada: Know the person's hot while they are doing it (laughter).

Director Fernandez: I'm sorry? It radiates a lot of heat; the higher the criminal activity, the hotter the person is. Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

[End: 2:17:51 p.m.]