

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-11
January 26, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick**

City Staff

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Glenn Kephart
Public Service Director, Brook Dannemiller**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-11 [2:15:20 p.m.]

Progress update on the Citywide Tree Succession Project

Mayor Cason: Let's move onto H-11, which is City tree succession. Thank you.

Mr. Dannemiller: I'll give you the memo we give residents for growing...

Mayor Cason: OK.

Mr. Dannemiller: That way if anyone asks you have all the info. Tree Succession Project – Just as a reminder in case anyone doesn't remember, tree succession project is a citywide project. We are planting approximately 3,000 trees throughout the City in residential areas. The project began, we started planting in June of 2015, and we anticipate the planting to be completed late summer of 2016. We currently have 693 trees in the ground, we have another 480 locations

staked, so total between planted and stake locations we have about 1,200 sites identified. So if you go into the Coralgables.livetreekeeper.com you'll see about 1,200 locations already located and of those about 700 are planted.

Mayor Cason: In other words, the tree succession was 3,000 trees, so you are talking about 1,000 now. This is the first third of the total project.

Mr. Dannemiller: Yes, we are approximately 25 percent planted and about 35 percent staked. The Coconut streets, Coconut palm streets are variable, so that's why the numbers are approximate because we don't know exactly how many canopy trees we are going to end up with on the Coconut streets.

Mayor Cason: I'm hoping you can accelerate to the extent possible the Coconut trees around Alhambra Circle and the Greenway on the golf course, they've been there almost a year. They are all falling down and I know you spray painted the streets, but it would be nice if you have closure and just finish up the north and move on.

Mr. Dannemiller: So Zone 1 was substantial complete just after Thanksgiving, except for the coconuts and a few miscellaneous tree removals and some other trees that we added on after substantial completion. The majority of the coconuts have been relocated; they are coming from Zones 2 and 3, so as soon as we are the majority of the way through planting in Zone 2, and then the coconut palm relocations are going to be started after that.

Mayor Cason: So that's the source of the palms that are missing.

Mr. Dannemiller: That's the source of the palms going to Alhambra, North Greenway, South Greenway and Country Club Prado.

Mayor Cason: And these are good trees, they are not wimpy trees?

Mr. Dannemiller: Yes, these are the healthiest trees, so anything that's in poor condition gets cut down, anything that is in fair condition the resident has the option to either if they want to keep it, allow them to keep it, if they don't want to keep it, it will get cut down; and then the ones that are in good condition will either stay if the resident wants it, or get relocated to somewhere else in the City.

Mayor Cason: So you plan to finish all of the 3,000 trees by June?- or just...

Mr. Dannemiller: End of summer, August timeframe.

Mayor Cason: OK. And is the contractor – I mean once all the trees dies they go ahead and replace it and they are still watering them.

Mr. Dannemiller: SFM is the contractor, they have multiple crews, so they are – I can give you the breakdown if you want, but basically they have one crew planting, they have a six-man crew, a tree removal crew, which is two people, a stump grinding crew, which is two people, two water trucks, two maintenance trucks, and then they have another crew, the coconut palm relocation crew, they'll be starting here in the next three to four weeks probably, six people. So as the project progresses they'll adjust those numbers. If trees die, they will go back and replace them. We do allow them a month or so for the tree to bounce back; there's been a number of trees where they get planted, they drop all the leaves, the resident says, my tree is dead...

Mayor Cason: They come back. I've seen that in a couple of places.

Mr. Dannemiller: So we give them that opportunity because each one of those trees is quite expensive, so we have to let the contractor give them a month or two to see if the tree will bounce back, and then if it doesn't we'll come and replace it.

Mayor Cason: Something we haven't discussed for a long time, but the orchid, the quarter of a million dollars we put into our budget for five years, putting the orchids in the trees, whatever happened to that? These trees are going to get orchids as well?

Mr. Dannemiller: We've reached out to Fairchild a few times and told them we are ready whenever they are and I haven't heard back from them.

Mayor Cason: Because we did that symbolic thing a year and-a-half ago, and I haven't seen a single orchid since then.

Commissioner Lago: Well, I was at Fairchild this weekend and they had some of the public school students that are volunteers that are working on this project and they told me that they are expecting hopefully by mid-year to start planting in the Gables, that was my understanding, that's what one of the individuals told me.

Commissioner Slesnick: And the Coral Gables Garden Club is presenting a check for \$5,000 this Thursday morning.

Commissioner Lago: I wanted to mention two things; number one, you guys have done a great job in answering the call from several residents who have called me and have obviously called

the City with concerns over the banyan trees being cut, and you've gone there and you've taken the time to explain to them the reason why they are being cut, either diseased or they are just leaning to one side where if any wind or any storm came would knock them over, that's number one, so they are very happy. They are sad to see them go, but they understand, obviously that in some cases it's a necessary evil. Number two, I mentioned this before, it's probably the third time I mention this, my father-in-law whose been a Coral Gables resident for 30 years, every Wednesday at family dinner he doesn't stop asking me about when is he going to get his two trees replaced?- two coconut trees removed and he wants shade trees. He's going to ask me again tomorrow, the worst thing I've ever seen in my life, it's unbearable, it's unbearable. So I just kind of want to tell him. I know I sent you an e-mail about, and I'm happy the Mayor brought it up the block of Alhambra, right next to Bird Road; I think they are scheduled for March...

Mr. Dannemiller: South of Bird Road?

Commissioner Lago: North.

Mr. Dannemiller: North of Bird Road.

Commissioner Lago: South, I apologize, south.

Mr. Dannemiller: So that's three, so they are going to start, it's not even staked, although it's a coconut, if it's a coconut street or is it predominantly coconuts on the street?

Commissioner Lago: No, they are literally two blocks, right before you hit Bird Road, it's three blocks, two or three blocks of coconuts and then the rest of them are Mahogany trees all the way to St. Augustine Church.

Mr. Dannemiller: OK. So, if...

Commissioner Lago: Mahogany or Black Olive.

Mr. Dannemiller: So if it's not a street where it's converting from coconut to canopy, they'll start in March, if its coconut it will follow a month or two behind that.

Mayor Cason: And pulled up elsewhere...

Commissioner Lago: The reason why I ask you, because I know that they don't want coconuts; they want to change those to shade trees.

Mr. Dannemiller: The coconuts are already gone?

Commissioner Lago: No, they are not.

Mr. Dannemiller: They are still there?

Commissioner Lago: They are still there.

Mr. Dannemiller: So again, there is a separate crew that's doing the coconut removals and relocations, and those streets take a little bit longer because it involves every resident on the street. So they are following, they are lagging behind the initial plantings where we can just go in and put in new canopy trees. So basically each zone is sort of like Zone 3-A, 3-B; 3-A is all the canopy trees that they can just go plant without any issues, and 3-B is the coconuts, because each street – we are going to try to concentrate block by block, because we can't handle doing all the coconut streets at one time.

Mayor Cason: Are the coconut trees, are they going to go around the golf course a separate funding source from the tree succession?

Mr. Dannemiller: No, there is no tree succession.

Mayor Cason: So it's not linked to the golf course renovations?

Mr. Dannemiller: No.

Mr. Kephart: And just a note on the community interaction, because I think working on projected that we are getting about one interaction with a resident per tree. Now it's not every resident, sometimes it's the same resident five or six times, but that's about 3,000 community interactions, and I think the work team and the contractor has been very cooperative with us to manage that as its going fairly well as a project like this could.

Mayor Cason: Alright, thank you. Thanks.

Mr. Dannemiller: Thanks.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you very, very much.

Commissioner Slesnick: On Algardi, is that where your father-in-law is, on Algardi?

Commissioner Lago: He lives on Alhambra, 4200 Alhambra.

Commissioner Slesnick: But the people on Algardi all want shade trees and they...

Mr. Dannemiller: That's two blocks south of Bird.

Commissioner Lago: They don't or they do?

Commissioner Slesnick: They do. They all want – there are coconuts and they all want shade trees, and they said all the neighbors had signed a petition.

Mr. Dannemiller: Yes. The streets that are coconut streets that weren't initially scheduled to be converted to canopy streets, we sent them all, the ones that aren't historic, a few of them like Alhambra and around the golf course are historic, or have historic significance; we sent them ballot survey, basically to see to get input. And a lot of them didn't quite meet – they are definitely changing, we have like two or three streets that definitely the whole street wanted to change, so when we get to those streets we are going to give the consultant those ballots, so they already know what streets residents want canopy trees, so they are just going to stake it that way. If we receive nothing from a resident it will just remain as coconut, and then they'll have several weeks to respond saying, Oh I do or don't want coconuts.

Commissioner Slesnick: Maybe you can stake sooner rather than later, so we can slow down all the calls.

Mr. Dannemiller: Well part of the reason we haven't staked the streets is to, because once they see the stake then that's when the calls start even more, which we've learned on Giralda, so we use that as a test case. So we want to be ready to handle all that resident interaction, so that's why we haven't staked the coconut streets, but we have staked the canopy streets so the contractor can keep moving.

Mayor Cason: You are not going to be able to please everybody...themes, trees. We went through this before and we had what, was it seven neighborhoods that got their views in and we decided yes or no what kind of trees. One of the problems, if you do everywhere oak and you get some kind of oak disease there go all your trees, so it's important to have a variety of trees, not just one.

Mr. Dannemiller: There was, I don't know if I should mention this here, but we did get one, I wouldn't say a petition, but several residents on Anastasia along the Biltmore, that area there that's currently coconuts, requesting to convert all the coconuts to Royal Palms and that's one of

those things that we would need to discuss and currently we are just going to do it as coconuts. We are going to address it when we get to that, but I just wanted to – we are getting a lot of different requests like that, so most of them we try to stick to the theme, but that was the only odd ball one that...

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Great work.

Commissioner Slesnick: Very good. Thank you.

[End: 2:25:56 p.m.]