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City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-6
March 23, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

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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
Development Services Director, Suramy Cabrera
Deputy Development Services Director, Devin Cejas

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-6 [1:03 p.m.]
    Update of process improvements in the Development Services Department.
    (Sponsored by Commissioner Keon)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, Commissioner Keon.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, you know, and I had just asked Suramy on this -- the update on the improvements -- I know that there was a long discussion about it the other day. But all I was

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asking -- and I've gotten a number of questions from people about, you know, if you're doing that, why is it taking so long to get a permit. And I think, you know, a lot of the issue is the amount of work that needs to be done before you can move over to a new platform, a new, you know, technology platform is just a tremendous amount of work that I think people don't necessarily understand, and the fact that we cannot stop working to do it. You can't close down the department because it needs to continue to function, and process permits. So, I think it's more for, you know, public information that we just -- you know, you can tell them how it -- that's all.

Development Services Director Cabrera: That's correct. And I had a little chuckle here because as I was setting this up, I was thinking about something I saw on a show called The Office, where Dwight comes in and plans this extravagant crazy fire drill because he feels that the employees weren't listening when he gave a PowerPoint presentation on fire safety. And here I am at the end of the day starving getting ready to give you, I think, your fourth or fifth PowerPoint presentation of the day. So, I hope that we could keep your attention because I do want to take opportunity to let everybody know what it is that the department has been working on. How do I put this -- the HDMI in here? Okay, great. So, I started with the City at the end of 2017, just after Hurricane Irma. And a few months I had arrived here, City Manager -- then Assistant City Manager -- Peter Iglesias asked me to give him some points that I feel would improve the Development Services Department. So, at that time, I dove right into it, and we had about, I don't know, 35 points for improvement of the Building Department. And when I was asked, you know, "Why is this taking so long?" I went back to that list. I decided I'm not going to bring you all 35 points, but we picked some of the more important points and we have here -- we wanted to simplify and standardize our processes across all the divisions. We want to create a best practices manual, an employee manual for training. We want to transition the department to an electronic platform. We wanted to review and close out expired permits, review and simplify permit types and inspections, evaluate and update personnel and departmental hardware, and install GPS in all City vehicles. And that picture there on the right, I included it because it's just to get an idea of how much paper we process in the Development Services Department. That is one project, not even a big project: it's a midsized project. All those plans are for that one project. So, more of the highlights from our 2018

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recommendations were to perform a permit fee study and revise our fee structure, to reorganize our Code Enforcement Department, to implement electronic plan review, the signature and (INAUDIBLE) verification required as part of your electronic submittal. We wanted to create an in-house continuing education for Code Enforcement. The City has an extensive Zoning Code. It has very high standards, and sometimes they change often, and the Code Enforcement staff sometimes is the last one to find out. And we wanted to simplify and standardize our forms, create training manuals for our new employees and review and revise job descriptions and pay grades. So, what have we done from these things? Well, we did complete our permit fee study. We simplified 130 fees to about 10 fee types. This was a long process. This took us over a year to do. Revising our fee study required a lot of data manipulation, a lot of work with a consultant, a lot of going back and seeing if we do change our fees, what impact is it going to have in the department. We tested and selected new hardware for our Code officers and our inspectors, which we're implementing now. We installed GPS in all the Development Services vehicles, and we've reviewed and revised all our job description and pay rates. And that's just an example of some of the -- that picture I included it because in this fee study, we actually had to go back and re-fee about 50,000 permits. We had reports from Eden, our current system. We went back and re-feed them. Peter wanted to know when -- before we jump, you know, let's make sure that we can stand behind this simplified permit fee structure. We also closed and finalized over 6,000 permits. The City has a very old system called Wintergrade (phonetic), which it abandoned when it went to Eden. In that system, we had over 6,000 permits expired. This wasn't as easy as just going through and closing all the permits. We had to go through permits one by one and see which ones were easy, that we could close out right off the bat, no life safety issues, which ones needed the review of our chiefs, and they should decide -- looking at the permit history, the inspection history -- what could be closed and what could not be closed. We're down to about 300 permits still expired in that system. At this point, they go to Code Enforcement. Code Enforcement goes out and cites the properties for expired permits. That's in Wintergrade. We also have Eden, which we'll be leaving behind in the next few months, and in order to transfer all that data, we don't want all this data that has a lot of expired permits. So, even in Eden, we have about 3,000 permits and permit expire daily. So, we're cleaning up that system too. We've reduced the number of permit types

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from about 200 in Eden to about 10 in Intergov. We tried to model it after the Building Code. And we reduced inspection types from 900 in Eden to 50 in Intergov. We're streamlining and simplifying. We created the inspection manual for the building inspectors, and I included a little shot there that's, I believe, for plumbing, and it says when you go out and do a rough, this is what you look at. This is what the Florida Building Code expects you to look at. And they have a checklist, and that checklist is going to be incorporated also in Intergov. We created Code Enforcement reference manuals specific to the City ordinances, which will be launching full force when we go to the 427 building. So, a lot of this is a lot of planning, a lot of planning, and we'll let it all go when we go to the 427 building and we move into Intergov. And we created a review manual for building plan reviewers. We flow charted all our processes. This was a big task. The Deputy Director, Devin, and I worked on this quite a bit. This is one of the flowcharts that we created. This one here, I believe, is just for how you intake a permit. We did -- these are some more examples and some more flowcharts that we did, which planning processes, permitting processes, inspection processes. We've tried to flowchart everything. And for Planning and Zoning, we finalized the Zoning Code updates and we restructured the BOA process. The BOA process is simpler now. It's in line with the Code. It meets the objectives of the City. We reorganized Code Enforcement. If you see in the chart there on the left, we have two field supervisors. They are working supervisors and eight Code officers. When I joined the City, we had a ratio of probably five supervisors, non-working supervisors to seven Code officers. And by the way, they're doing a great job. I'm really, really hard on them, and I know they want to hear this, but they're doing a great job. They're helping us with -- in addition to what they do every single day here, they are helping us close out old permits, close out, you know, expired permit applications, the whole thing. We assigned reactive and proactive officers, and this has worked out very well actually. And we implemented zone rotations. We found that some officers are better at proactive work and covering their zones, and we knew that through the GPS. That was why it was so important to install this GPS in the vehicles. And we could see that some of them sweep every single road, some of them don't. So, we use it as a training manual, but we're also rotating them so they each see what the previous officer was doing, what needs to be done. It's a learning tool for them. And we planned and permitted the remodeling of the 427 building next

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door, and this was a lot of work, a lot of space planning. As you know, we've already broken ground, and I just wanted to show this picture because this is how we've worked for a long time. We have buckets with water from the roof leaks. We don't have space for staff. We can't implement electronic plan review because we don't have the space for the monitors that we need. But on the left, there is what we're looking forward to. This is an actual rendering of the space that we're going to have in the 427 building. This was provided by the furniture consultant and the architect. So, we're really, really excited about that. I think it looks lovely. And then this, of course, I think you've all seen it before, it's a rendering of the building on the outside. We've added green space. There's a parking area there, which will become that little green patio area for, you know, the overflow when we have Board of Architects or things of that nature. We have more people we could keep in the lobby; this will be an overflow area. And of course, we continue -- we have still a lot of work to do. We have to train all our staff in Intergov. We have to train them in Bluebeam for the electronic plan review. We have to educate the public on Intergov and improve our communication with them. We plan on creating videos that we can show, that we could post online, that we can show in our lobbies on how the process works. And we're going to improve -- we want to simply our forms. A lot of our forms are very complicated. My goal is to get them down to one page, front and back. We continue to standardize training and provide staff with resources for career advancement. We're developing the comprehensive JS platform, which I Devin's going to show you real quickly. We're creating a Zoning Code Hub online, which he's also going to show you. And we're going to transition to a new phone system. This is probably what I get the most complaints about. And I just want everybody to know, this chart here was provided to me by IT. This is not prepared by me. And on average, in February of this year, under COVID, the City answered in the main line over 200 calls a day, one line, 200 calls answered a day. So, we hear when we don't answer the call, but I see when we do answer. It's a lot of work. And before I turn it over to Devin, I just want to give one real quick story. When I first started here, the City was knee deep in its cleanup, literal cleanup after Hurricane Irma. And there's a voluntary program called the CRS, which you might have heard of it, and we were due for our five-year certification. And if you ever see the CRS manual, it's this thick, and our five-year certification report is probably about that thick. Get to the City, everybody's on Irma. This is due.

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I go see Peter. He says, "It has to get done. We got to do it." And I got to say that it took Public Works, it took IT, it took Fire, and it took the Building Department to come together and do a lot of work together, despite we were doing all the cleanup and everything else that was going on to get the CRS five-year certification done. And we did it with all the departments, so Public Works -- heavy, heavy was Public Works and the Building Department -- and we got our best rating ever in that program.

Commissioner Keon: What does CRS mean?

Development Services Director Cabrera: How does that trans -- the CRS. It's the Community Rating Systems. And that translates to savings for every single resident that has a flood insurance policy in the City. You get a 25 percent savings. No one knew that we did this, no one knows they do it. They get their 25 percent savings; they probably don't even know where it comes from. If we hadn't done it, if we hadn't done what we had to do, we would have heard from everybody. So, Devin.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Thank you, Suramy. Perfect. Thank you, Suramy. And I'll be brief, just wanted to showcase a couple platforms that we're -- in addition to all the comprehensive work that Suramy just explained that we've been doing on the backend. These are two additional platforms that we hope to integrate in the future with Intergov and all the other items that we are taking care of. This is first GIS platform and then our Code Hub for Planning and Zoning. The idea here is to take this information and provide some front-facing elements to Planning and Zoning to the public. As it is right now, as you all may know, it's very difficult to -- for anyone to go into our system and have an understanding of what their zoning is and where they're located, how to access it, how to pull the public information from the appraiser's website. And then also, our Zoning Code, it's a PDF document that's on our website, sometimes not even the latest document. We need to take time to then upload the newest versions and it can become -- it is sloppy. So, our vision, which I'll showcase here, is how to take that to the 21st century. It's not on. One second.

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Commissioner Keon: There you are.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: There you go.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: There we go. Thank you. So, as you could see here, this will be our GIS platform, and I'm going to briefly just type in the 405 City Hall building and scroll down to Biltmore Way. And forgive me, I don't have a mouse. And as you can see, you'll be able to automatically see the site that you're looking for, automatically pull out the property appraiser information on the right. Eventually, we're going to have also some quick links to Google Earth, so you could see three-dimensionally as well as platting information from the County. You're going to be able to go here and create layers and see what the City zoning is, historic districts are, and get a good sense of what can be done, right. This is your zoning atlas. You could see it more at a macro level, be able to also pull up our historic districts, site specifics, everything that's in the Zoning Code, land use, you'll be able to now see it layered. It's an amazing tool for staff, so they could become more effective and more efficient. They could understand what's happening, be better prepared from a planning perspective when they present to you and present their reports, have a really good contextual analysis. And also, for the public, anyone can be able to go out, access information and have a good understanding of what they have prior to contacting us. They could be better informed and give us the opportunity to have a better understanding of what their needs are to give better information. The next item is our Zoning Code. As you know, we just restructured the Zoning Code, and eventually you're going to have an online document, very similar to Municode, but with some additional features. This will also integrate to the GIS, and you could actually see buildings three-dimensionally, which will also assist planning staff with presenting reports. As you can see, all the articles will be separated here. You'll be able to go into separate articles, take you straight there versus going through a PDF document. You'll be able to see the subsections and go straight to the subsection. You'll also be able to bookmark specific items that are relevant to your needs, so when you do go to that site, it's personalized to whoever the user is, and whatever are your relevant sites that you need to see on a

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daily basis, and you can go straight there. You bookmarked those items. Let's see here on the map, just to give you a quick glimpse. This is the three-dimensional GIS component to it, and just (INAUDIBLE) that you could also here see the zoning to the City, two dimensionally or three dimensionally. But here, you'll be able to see more or less roughly -- you'll be able to extrude dimensionally what can be done in general areas. Eventually, the idea is to render all the historic buildings in the City, so you could actually see that three dimensionally, and again, it can assist staff with reporting. I could go on. I don't want to waste any more time, but this is the direction that we've been headed in addition to all the comprehensive backend efforts that we've been doing with heading towards a smart city.

Commissioner Keon: When do we have -- when do you anticipate this will be in effect?

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: As it relates to these two items, the Code Hub will be up and running now, I think, in the next couple of weeks. We're just finalizing the latest versions of the Code.

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: So, we'll be putting that up real soon. And shortly after, the GIS, ourselves and IT are still working on that, as well as with other departments, just to make sure it's all there. But these are beta versions. I'm hoping by the following month we could get the GIS up there.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, and the processes you're talking about with Egov, when do you expect that to be in place?

Development Services Director Cabrera: So, we're going to be implementing Intergov, I believe it's in August, but we won't be able to take full advantage of the software until we're in the 427

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building and we've had full training, we've tested the data. You know, there's some that goes into that, you know…

Commissioner Keon: So when…

Development Services Director Cabrera: And employee training's a big part of that.

Commissioner Keon: Do you think? So, when do you estimate? So, you…

Development Services Director Cabrera: I think in 2022…

Commissioner Keon: It's available in August? How long does that take them?

Development Services Director Cabrera: I believe that in 2022, we should be in very good shape and have implemented most of what we're working on and have been working on for the past couple of years.

Commissioner Keon: Is that 2022…

Development Services Director Cabrera: Mid-2022 probably.

Commissioner Keon: Is that the fiscal calendar or that's the regular calendar?

Development Services Director Cabrera: The regular calendar.

Commissioner Keon: Regular calendar, okay. Alright.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Yeah.

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City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, we…

Commissioner Keon: So not so far away.

City Manager Iglesias: We're looking at finishing the project by the end of the year. It's a big move. We have over 10,000 square feet in that building that we've not used for 15, 16 years.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: So, by creating the Development Services Center, a one-stop shop, you'll have Planning, Zoning, Building, Code Enforcement, and the Board of Architects. We won't be carrying plans back and forth anymore. In addition to that, our electronic plan review process will be able to have the plans directly to Public Works, not carrying plans to 72nd Avenue…

Commissioner Keon: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: Directly to our Fire Department, directly to Historical. We are currently working with Commissioner Regalado on doing that also with DERM and WASA. So, we're looking forward to -- by the end of the year -- having that one-stop shop done and having the third floor now be across the parking lot. We are currently taking plans across the parking lot. We're taking plans to 72nd Avenue, plans to the Police and Fire station. It's very, very inefficient right now. This is -- I think people think that this is like getting Microsoft Office and just putting it into your computer. This is a lot of work. It's a lot of transitionary work…

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: -- a lot of input work.

Development Services Director Cabrera: There's a lot of…

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City Manager Iglesias: Just getting rid of thousands of permits. It's just a tremendous amount of work. One of the things that we've done in moving to the Public Safety Building is Police, Fire, HR, and IT have -- did not take any files with them, everything is electronic now. We're moving to the electronic -- this is the big push. The 427 building, we need software, we need hardware, and we need space planning. And this is the big push, by the end of '22, we'll be a paperless city.

Commissioner Keon: I think that -- and I think what I would like for people to understand and know is that there just has been a tremendous leap in technology in the City over the last three or four years. And…

Development Services Director Cabrera: Absolutely, and everything that I've presented here.

Commissioner Keon: Just a tremendous leap and a real change in the administrative processes that now can be implemented because of the investment in technology in the City and I think maybe a recognition as to how far behind we were previously…

City Manager Iglesias: But Commissioner, we're leaping…

Commissioner Keon: In how we operated and how we did things. And it's, you know, a really -- you know, it's…

City Manager Iglesias: This is not a step forward, Commissioner.

Commissioner Keon: To your credit…

City Manager Iglesias: This is a leap forward, yes.

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Commissioner Keon: And to your Administration's credit, what you have been able to accomplish in the last three to four years.

Development Services Director Cabrera: And this is in addition to their day-to-day work.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Development Services Director Cabrera: We cannot shut down.

Commissioner Keon: You still have to do all this work every single day on an old system while you're preparing to move into a new system, but it's really, you know, to applaud the -- your foresight and the things that you have done and implemented here in the City to make it so much better.

City Manager Iglesias: We are -- as I said, we're not moving forward, we're leaping forward now.

Commissioner Keon: You are, yes.

City Manager Iglesias: And so, by '22, we should have our paperless operational -- operating the -- all operations paperless, and then we would look at -- in '23, we look at the parking, smart parking plan and look at potentially our Coral Gables Parking Authority with the construction of our mobility hub, which will be coming in '23, which we are currently working to finalize our contract with our designer.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

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Commissioner Keon: But I think it's what we hear so often is about the permitting process. I mean, one, I think people have to understand that we have a higher level of review and permitting than a lot of other places have, but then just the process of issuing a permit -- because so much of it is done by hand and can't be done concurrently -- it does take longer. But hopefully within a year, you're going to see those things move forward much more quickly.

City Manager Iglesias: One of our items, I-4, is our Infor program software, which will be for Finance and for HR, and that is the -- and that will be the end of Eden at that point. The implementation as we get to -- yes, I'm bringing I-4 now because it's really part of our overall push.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: And we will have Eden -- we'll no -- we'll be out of Eden by the third quarter of '22.

Commissioner Keon: And we recognize that Eden, at the time that it was implemented, was, you know, at that time, a leap in technology too, but it's taken a very long time to make that next leap, so you know, this is it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very, very much.

City Manager Iglesias: Every department now, all the software…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Charlie.

City Manager Iglesias: Has been upgraded. The last step is Infor, and we are looking for our GIS platform. We are looking for really a leap forward by the end of '22, and then smart parking in '23. So, right now, we're the top smart city under 75,000. Hopefully, we'll be the top smart city period without the 75,000 caveat.

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Commissioner Keon: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: So that's what we…

Commissioner Keon: So, in the near…

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very, very much, a fantastic presentation.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And you're doing a great, great job.

Commissioner Keon: Very good.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A really great job.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you for putting this on the agenda.

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