

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-2
June 13, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

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, Ed Santamaria

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-2 [3:29:23 p.m.]

A discussion regarding the possible trimming by the Florida Department of Transportation of the specimen trees located in front of Coral Gables Senior High School (Sponsored by Commissioner Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The next item is a discussion regarding the possible trimming by the Florida Department of Transportation of the specimen trees located in front of Coral Gables Senior High – Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: Just a simple discussion. I don't know if anybody was aware of it, I had a resident call me to make me aware of it. On LeJeune there were some X's that were placed on those beautiful specimen trees, excuse me Bird Road – Bird Road adjacent to the 7/11, near Coral Gables Senior High, and I think that maybe our Public Works Director will give us a quick update. I wanted to make you aware because there might be some significant pruning and potentially removal of certain of those trees.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Good afternoon, Ed Santamaria, Director of Public Works. The Commissioner is correct; there were X's placed on some Fichus...trees along the median on Bird Road between LeJeune, I believe, and Red Road; and the Department which has deferred maintenance on these trees for a number of years have finally come around to doing something about them. They are basically doing this for the health of the trees and also for vehicle safety, and so, we do share the same concerns that the Commissioner has which is that we don't want FDOT to be overly aggressive in the trimming of these trees, and we wanted to have a voice in the process; and so, we recently had a meeting DOT and they have agreed to allow us to have this voice in terms of these trees being trimmed. I can tell you that most of the trees have already been assessed by DOT; we've already started to assess them ourselves. There will be some trimming that's going to start in July, but that trimming that starts in July is very minor trimming, it's to address the stuff that's visibly vehicle hazard, and the major trimming is expected to happen later this year. We are going to be working with DOT to make sure that this major trimming is as least impactful on the canopy as possible and I feel very comfortable that give that voice that we'll get to a place where these trees will continue to be an asset for the City in terms of canopy.

Commissioner Lago: I just wanted to mention. I know we all use this road, it's a main thoroughfare to get in and out of the City and drive throughout, especially during rush hour in the mornings and the afternoons and its gridlock. One of the few pleasant experiences you have is the cover that you receive from this canopy in the hot sun, so I would hate to see them chop up these trees and then take away some of the solar reflective opportunity that you have where its actually cover from all the heat and everything. So let's try to do our part; I know we are doing our part already and just try to protect the trees as much as possible.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Commissioner it's also a historic road, its where Frank Button was unfortunately struck and killed planting these trees and so once the Historical Resources Director raised that issue to FDOT, I think that was helpful to understand that this is a historic designated tree.

Commissioner Lago: And it's not only limbs, because the X's are on some of the limbs, but they are actually on some of the bases of the tree there were X's, which again, were they planning on removing those trees, because if that was the case you are talking – that would leave a giant hole in the canopy.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Due to the condition of some of the trees, three have been slated for removal. There is a new tree that is supposed to be planted; we will probably add some more trees as appropriate. I will say that this week we had either an entire tree or a substantial

portion of a tree be removed by the weather and that's one of the reasons why these trees were slated for removal.

Commissioner Lago: No matter what you replace those trees with, you are talking about a caliber by five or six feet in circumference, they are going to put a tiny little tree there.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Well, we'll be pushing for as larger tree as possible, but it's a choice between an unhealthy tree that would be subject to being felt by the weather or something that is...

Commissioner Lago: Thank you sir.

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

[End: 3:33:31 p.m.]