

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C
May 11, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Jackson "Rip" Holmes

Mark Trowbridge

Wendy Long

Joshua Goodman

Estelle Lockhart

Leon Kellner

Greg Hamra

Paola De Carolis

Caty Chung

Unidentified Speaker

Gordon Sokoloff

Alicia Roman

Julie Kanter

Agenda Item C [9:30 a.m.]
Public Comments

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comments?

City Clerk Urquia: We do, sir.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker is Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, good morning.

Maria Cruz: It's good to be here.

Mayor Lago: It's a pleasure to welcome you.

Ms. Cruz: Yeah, well...

Mayor Lago: We're back.

Ms. Cruz: Well, that sounds good. I don't know if you'll be a pleasure after I finish, but I understand that I can do this so you can hear me. First of all, I'd like to welcome this new Commission that is sitting here to serve our residents. And a gentle reminder that we elect you and we can also take you out, and that this city expects a lot from you all. And I know sometimes people say we expect too much. No, it's never too much. When you run for office, you know that you're going to be expected to come through with everything you promised, and that we remember. We have good memories. (INAUDIBLE) used to tell me, you know, "They think we forget, but

we have a little memory that keeps ringing. Don't forget to ask." Okay, so that's my first comment, very short. It's nice to see all of you here and it's nice to be able to participate the way it's meant to be. The second one is the one that's not very pleasant. Those of you that were here before, those of you that participated by Zoom, know that my constant pet peeve has been the Sanitation Department. It couldn't be any different today because things kept going south instead of better. You know that I've referred to Al Zamora as "Almighty Al Zamora" before, and I'm going to use that term again today because last time I was -- last time I spoke, I related to you all that were here that he was heard to say that changes were coming but he was holding 'til after the elections. Well, new changes are coming. I don't know if you all know, but instead of having trash pickup five days a week, now we're going down to four. The only problem is we haven't been able to complete the trash pickups using five days, so now we're going to cut it back to four. I wonder if it's going to become one every 15 days instead of one -- once every day. Of course, yesterday we had a bad weather event. It rained a lot. So, guess what? I was able to see what the problem is. We have bought new equipment to the tune of over \$145,000. We bought a -- I don't know how to describe it -- truck, a vehicle that the driver has to get off to use the claw, or whatever you call it, instead of the old vehicles that we have where he sits on the cab and he can do it without getting off. So, when it was raining very hard, guess what? The vehicle stopped. So, yesterday, yesterday, instead of eight hours, it took ten hours to complete the route, and you know what that means? That means two hours of overtime. Hello? Money from us. Okay, now five vehicles were bought: some two years ago, some half a year ago. Only two are being used, okay? It seems to me the planning was not very good. I -- we need a commitment from you all that this city is not going to become what all the other places around us are. We do not want to see the recyclable bins in front of the homes day after day after day, and it is happening. We do not want to see the garbage cans outside because we think it's better than people take out the garbage cans. We are here -- one of the fringes of living in Coral Gables is not having to take out the garbage, not having to take out the recyclable bins. Either we do it or something is wrong, okay? And I'm asking you all, a new year, new set up. Please, please make sure that our policies are followed, make sure that people get cited. And you know what? Better than citing, make sure that they don't get picked up if they're in the wrong place. I assure you that if I put my trashcan by the swale and it doesn't get picked up, message

will be delivered. It's in the wrong place. But if the employees pick them up, what are they saying? It's okay to put it there. So, please, please, please, please, we need it fixed. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: And give my best to Almighty Al.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: First off, thank you for being here. And number two...

Ms. Cruz: You're welcome.

Mayor Lago: Number two, I want to make it very, very clear. This is one of the many items that we're going to be discussing that are going to be part of what I'm going to be presenting to the Commission today in hopes that they give their input and provide further input and guidance in regards to the Mayor's strategic plan. I agree with you, 110 percent. I see it in my neighborhood. We need to address trash pits. We need to address significant shortfalls of money to the tune of millions and millions of dollars. We need to address recycling, and we need to do it in a way that is not full of rumors and lies and innuendos. We need to do it the right way, where we are trying to address significant holes in the system, and we address these, but we also have to give credit where credit is due. We have a great Sanitation Department. We have great employees. They're doing good things, but we need to tighten up and make it even better, and I think we can. I think we can and...

Ms. Cruz: And if...

Mayor Lago: Go ahead.

Ms. Cruz: And if you're going to be addressing this, please ask them not to change anything 'til it's addressed. Because changing from five to four seems to be the way it is is a disaster.

Mayor Lago: So, this is one of my priorities, and I know that the Commission also sees it as a priority because we value the service that Public Works gives to our community. So, I want you to know that your words today are important, and I promise you we'll address it, okay?

Ms. Cruz: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Cruz: It's nice to hear the first promise from the new mayor. Very good. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, is Jackson "Rip" Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes, good morning. The floor is yours.

Jackson "Rip" Holmes: So, we got two people that took off their masks. I hope you'll allow me. Kudos to our Governor for getting us back together in person. I -- probably -- three words to start off, I beg you. I'm afraid of going bankrupt. I'm not -- I think this is unintended consequences of the new ordinance on four-story Miracle Mile mandatory remote parking. Here's the problem, and I hope that you all will -- I beg you to take what I'm about to say to heart because I don't want to go bankrupt. In fact, I'm going to say this under penalties for perjury, the factual statements I'm making here are made under penalties for perjury to the best of my knowledge and belief. There are two problems; one is construction zone, exacerbated by the fact that when we did streetscape -- and it was proven that there was malpractice with the master drain that extended street closures for six months, but no lawsuit was filed. Ask yourself, if you're a merchant, would you move into

a construction zone, especially one where the contractors are allowed to commit malpractice? I think your answer will be no because it's not a good business decision. Number two -- and this is the far more important one -- if you were a merchant, would you move into a mandatory remote parking zone. Now, I realize that that's only applying to new buildings, but the thing is that parking is so essential to making money. And remember, this affects the City's tax base, because if Miracle Mile becomes Bankruptcy Mile -- which I'm asserting to you today that's what is going to happen unless protections are enacted. Miracle Mile will become Bankruptcy Mile, unless inactions are enacted, unless protections, excuse me, are enacted. So, think about this, if you're a merchant thinking of renewing a lease or leasing on Miracle Mile, and you know that there's mandatory remote parking with new four-story buildings, would you be so financially suicidal as to lease on Miracle Mile? Remote -- mandatory remote parking. That is the most bad news for any merchant to come to a location, and the smart ones will not come. And here comes now my greatest concern, and I appreciate the leeway, Mayor Lago, that you've allowed the first two speakers. That's really nice of you and it really helps me out. Thank you. Here is my greatest concern, and this is something that you all can definitely do something about. This isn't about changing an ordinance. This is about what happens in the future. My concern is that the buildings -- the four-story buildings coming in will try to take away -- will try to get you all and the staff to allow them to use the garage spaces as remote parking. And believe me when I tell you -- again, my statements are under penalties for perjury -- right now, we are barely at break even on having enough parking. Now, I realize COVID-19 changes this somewhat, but we're presumably recovering, returning to normal. So, if one of the four-story buildings convinces you all or convinces the staff to allow them to use garages as remote parking, every single space that they get will be space that the regular, normal people, the powerless people, me, my merchants, will not have for parking. And so, I ask you again, try to put yourself in the role of a merchant. Why would you renew a lease or why would you make a lease going into what is essentially a no parking zone? Because that's what I'm looking at, and that's why I'm afraid of going bankrupt. I'm saying these things under penalties for perjury. Let's not let -- please, I'm begging you on that last point. Don't let the developers, don't let the four-story buildings raid the garages for their remote parking. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here. I appreciate it.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have a number of speakers through Zoom.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: First is Mr. Mark Trowbridge.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Trowbridge, good morning.

Mark Trowbridge: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, and good morning, members of the Commission. Mark Trowbridge, from our Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, 201 Alhambra Circle. I just wanted to say a personal thank you to each of the members of the Commission for their support of National Small Business Week this past week. And while we celebrate small businesses 365 days a year in Coral Gables, this past week was very special. Mr. Mayor, I want to say a special thank you to Zooming in with us on Friday for our Small Business Summit and addressing our attendees. We had a hybrid format at the Coral Gables Art Cinema and via Zoom, and it was great to begin to be together doing the good work that we do as a Chamber, supporting our small businesses. I also want to say a special thank you to Commissioner Anderson as well. She joined me on Thursday for the opening of a new small business, Sapphira Prive, which is near Ponce Circle Park/Hartnett Park, and we look forward to continuing to welcome many new businesses. Essentially, I continue to ask for your support. So many of you get out and dine in our restaurants and walk our retail districts and support our small businesses every day, and it's going to be your visibility and leadership that will continue to allow us to recover. We are going into a challenging part of the year, as is always the case in the summer, but I have very good feelings and great

optimism working with our partners at the City and the BID, of course. We just had our retail consultants in to look at our study of five years ago and looking forward to their updates and their results as well and looking forward to welcoming our new Vice Mayor tomorrow to our Business and Government Affairs Committee meeting. On behalf of our Chamber, congratulations on your first official meeting together and thank you for all that you do to continue to support a strong business climate and a great business community right here in the City Beautiful.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mark. I appreciate your leadership. Thank you for joining us this morning.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Ms. Wendy Long.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. The floor is yours.

Wendy Long: Good morning. My name is Wendy Long, and I am a Coral Gables resident. Congratulations, Mayor Lago and Commissioners Anderson and Menendez on your recent victories. I am a Coral Gables resident, and I'm a parent of children at G.W. Carver Elementary School. And I am here today to respectfully ask this Commission to take action with regards to the Wawa, specifically in the wake of our municipal election. I think that the time is great for a reset, and that's why I am reaching out my hand again. As you know, the Gables Accountability Project has filed a lawsuit against the City, and we did not take that step lightly, but we believe that we will -- ultimately, our position will prevail. But our intention was never to get into a fight with the developer. It was to solve a problem that affects not just G.W. Carver, but the entire West Grove, which the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation considers one of the ten most endangered properties in the state. So, we're here today to ask this Commission to facilitate a dialogue with the developer to see if we can find a better solution, because I think we can all agree that a gas station in front of a school on what was public land earmarked for affordable housing -- something which the County desperately needs -- this is not the best outcome. It's not even an acceptable outcome and probably is the worst. And the idea that it's too late to stop this because of a legal

settlement -- a settlement that can ultimately be thrown out in court -- is not a good reason not to try. So, we respectfully ask you to help us facilitate a dialogue to find solutions. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Mr. Joshua Goodman.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Goodman, good morning.

Joshua Goodman: Good morning. Congratulations, Mayor Lago, Commissioners Andersen and Menendez on your respective victories. I would just like to reiterate some of the things that Wendy has just said and reiterate our interest in seeing the City facilitate a dialogue to explore land use alternatives that serve the best interests of the entire community. I know that disentangling the mess that arose from the 2017 legal settlement presents numerous challenges, but there's something also that you can -- important that you can do right now to make sure a situation like this never happens again. So, that's why I'm also here to express my support for Commissioner Anderson's memorandum seeking greater transparency and accountability in zoning changes and development projects. Her proposal was prompted in part by the frustrations generated from the Wawa, and we think it's a good first step in restoring the public's trust in our City officials. Her proposal, if approved, would shine more light and provide more space for public input on administrative changes to site plans, such as the recent decision to allow for the cutting down of two healthy decades-old oak trees. Critically, it would also include a development dashboard so that residents are never again blindsided by significant changes to commercial projects. So, I hope you take action, and again, I just want to reiterate our interest -- sincere interest in working with all of you on this Wawa issue going forward. Don't let the, I guess, the huge obstacles that exist be a disincentive for real engagement on this issue. I think we and lots of the community will really support you if you decide to get your hands -- roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty on this one. It's important. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Thank you for joining us. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I don't have a name on the next one, but it says George Washington Carver PTA.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Can you please introduce yourself? Good morning. I guess we'll come back.

Estelle Lockhart: Good morning, sorry. I needed to be unmuted by the host. Good morning. My name's Estelle Lockhart. I'm president of George Washington Carver Elementary School. And I just want to congratulate the Mayor and the two Commissioners for your victories and thank you for a fresh start with the Commission. So, I just -- I'm here today to remind you about the position statement that the PTA issued last October regarding our formal opposition as a parent group to the Wawa, the proposed Wawa that we heard of via a rumor. That's not how you want to hear about something significant going across the street from your children's school, especially that's going to be a major safety issue. The EPA guidelines say their recommendation is for gas tanks to be more than a thousand feet from schools, and this is 300 feet from schools. We also have sidewalks to nowhere. Our children who cross the street will have no choice but to then cross a driveway into a gas station. So, we have safety concerns, we have environmental concerns, but the biggest concern is transparency, that we shouldn't be hearing about things via a rumor so that's what the lawsuit is about that GAP is bringing. I would also like to encourage you all to reach across the aisle to the City of Miami, specifically Commissioner Ken Russell, who is heading up the revitalization project just on the other, specifically, the Armbrister Park Center is supposed to be a true after school (INAUDIBLE) community center for our children. What -- the community center that is currently in the Redevo building I think was maybe intended to be. There's a Bahamian Cultural Center that Congresswoman Wilson, he's asking for money, just several feet - - to be built several feet out of our City. So, I just really encourage you to be reaching across the aisle so that that entire Grand Avenue, West Grove, East Gables area can make sense, and specifically to make sense for the children at G.W. Carver. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, who is the next person?

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Mr. Leon Kellner.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Kellner, good morning. Would you please give us your full name and your address for the record? Thank you.

Leon Kellner: Leon Kellner, 1036 South Greenway Drive, Coral Gables. First, I would like to congratulate Mayor Lago and Commissioners Anderson and Menendez on their election to the Commission. And I know all of us are looking for great things to happen in the next years. Last Friday, the Herald printed my letter urging the Commission to join every other municipality in Miami-Dade in removing the name Dixie from US-1. The name Dixie is a shorthand (INAUDIBLE) for those states that enslaved African Americans and started a war to preserve those -- that odious institution. I believe it is a stain on our city to stand in the way of removing that name. I can't imagine what it must be like for African Americans to drive on a road honoring those entities that enslaved their ancestors. The three Commissioners who voted against the name change are still on the Commission, and I believe are simply wrong to claim that there is some equivalence between the renaming of Dixie Highway and the removal of George Merrick's statute. First, there is no slippery slope where one action will necessarily lead to the other. The name "Dixie" points to one thing, slavery, the effects of which we are still trying to eradicate. George Merrick, on the other hand, was a visionary who created our wonderful city, including the University of Miami. You have to look at the totality of a person's legacy before you would try to eradicate his presence. He may have said some things that by today's standards are hateful. As wrong as they may have been, you have to look at the other things Merrick accomplished. In my judgment, the University of Miami was wrong to remove his name from the parking structure. Following their logic, any structure or bridge named after slaveholders, such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson should be renamed. Nonsense. These were great men who, given the totality of their lives, should be honored. Even Abraham Lincoln poorly held views similar to George Merrick. Should we tear down the Lincoln Memorial? Again, nonsense.

Finally, there is no slippery slope. If the idea of removing the statue is ever raised before this Commission, you folks can stand firm and just say no. I ask you to do the right thing and remove the name Dixie from our main thoroughfare. Thank you listening -- for hearing me out.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Kellner.

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Mr. Greg Hamra.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Hamra, please give us your name and your address for the record. Thank you.

Greg Hamra: Thank you very much. My name's Greg Hamra, and I live at 2600 Cardena Street, in Coral Gables. And many of you know me as being a LEED educator. I've taught LEED to thousands of people in our community. LEED, of course, is the green building standard. So, thank you very much for having me. And first, a congratulations to Mayor Vince Lago and to our new City Commissioners, Anderson and Menendez. I look forward to meeting you, Kirk Menendez. Everybody else knows me and I know everybody else. And so, we have some catching up to do. Thanks again also to the City of Coral Gables for joining the 135 other local governments and over a thousand businesses for passing a resolution supporting the cashback climate plan that makes big polluters pay a fee and sends a monthly check to you and me and every American, the Energy Innovation Act. So, the City of Coral Gables was recently chosen to be part of a cohort along with 20 other cities to pursue LEED for Cities certification. I think that's great. I'm still learning what it means to the City of Coral Gables and how we're going to navigate that, but I look forward to helping as being part of the Sustainability Advisory Board for the City of Coral Gables. See, reusing buildings has a lot of benefits over and above LEED points, which is really a game of chasing points to get a plaque on the wall and worthy recognition, but what we do matters more than the plaque. Doing the right thing to chase LEED points is great because we should do it, but better to understand the reasons why, and I'd like to help inform everybody listening right now

about something that most people don't really pay attention to, and that is the embodied carbon of the built environment. There's embodied carbon in everything we buy. It's all of the carbon up to and including -- up to the point where you occupy a building or take possession of an item. And so, I'm here to provide some information that should help inform our collective decision-making related to our built environment, in particular, the Mediterranean ordinance. We should do whatever we can to preserve the quality of architecture, character, and livability of Coral Gables. Ladies and gentlemen, the greenest building of all is the building that already exists. The manufacture of steel and concrete are incredibly energy intensive. They're the most carbon-intensive materials in our world, together responsible for 16 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions, about evenly split. The carbon embodied in buildings -- the carbon embodied in the things that we build is simply referred to as embodied carbon. In many buildings, it exceeds the energy footprint of the building's operational carbon for the life of that building. In fact, the 30-year mark is generally speaking, the mark at which the operational carbon matches the embodied carbon. From that point forward, the operational carbon just continues to pile up. Think of the Empire State building. By now, it has exceed -- it has met parity with its embodied carbon, and it just has occupational or operational carbon. A hundred percent the building's embodied carbon is expended the day that we hand over the key. Embodied carbon is spent now, whereas operational carbon results from the energy that a building uses throughout its operation, so that's the difference. It adds up over time. If you want to address the carbon problem, which is global, in the built environment, we really have to tackle both of these sources. So, new construction -- when you take down an old building and put a new building in place, you're throwing away, wasting all of the carbon and every piece of rebar, and every piece of concrete, every yard of concrete. That's embodied carbon thrown out, at great cost, by the way. And I want to share with you a little bit of information about the cost, but I think I might have to wrap up soon. The fact is new buildings, 20, 30 percent of waste in all of the materials are added into estimations. And what we have to do is preserve what we can. If we can preserve existing buildings, we can save money, save carbon, and really reduce our operational and our embodied carbon and really do better by the environment and future generations. So, I think I had three minutes. Is that correct? If that's the case, give me a thumbs up, and Mr. Moderator, I'm looking at you on the screen. I'm see myself otherwise. And

that's it. So, we really need to take a look at embodied carbon and preserve what we can and only take on a building that really needs to be demolished. And when we do that, that's done at great cost. So, thank you very much, everybody, and let's think with the long view on what we do here. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Next is Lucia Pedraja.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Pedraja, will you please say your name and your address? Thank you.

Lucia Pedraja: Good morning. My name is Lucia Pedraja, and I live at 1412 Sorolla Avenue, in Coral Gables. I am a mom of three kids, two of them currently go to G.W. Carver Elementary School, and next year I will have my oldest at the middle school, so I will have three kids on both campuses. This has been an interesting year with my 11-year-old as he gets older and is more aware of his -- what's happening around him, especially with the elections, both on a national level and a local level. And after this election, he said to me, "Mama, will the new Mayor and the Commissioners be open to listening about the Wawa?" My answer really was, "I hope so." In the spirit of a new government for Coral Gables, I hope, and I wish that this new Commission will facilitate a dialogue with the developer to find a better solution for this area because I think we can all agree that the Wawa is not the best solution. Thank you so much for your time.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Menendez: Mr. Mayor. Mayor Lago, I'd like to make a comment...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Menendez: If you don't mind. Last Friday, I met with Mr. Joshua Goodman of the Gables Accountability Project to be brought up to speed with regards to the Wawa issue and the impact it's had on our residents. I know we're -- there's litigation. I applaud that group of residents asking for a civil dialogue, to have all the stakeholders be brought to the table. And you know, unless the City Attorney says there's a reason why not to do it from a legal standpoint, I offer my services to help bring the parties to the table in the hopes of having civil dialogue and perhaps taking a difficult situation and make it better, hopefully a win-win across the board. I'm willing to make that effort and offer my assistance if anyone else would like to join me in some form or some fashion, but I just want to put it on the record that I'm here to help.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, thank you. If I may -- go ahead, Commissioner Anderson.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm willing to help on that dialogue as well. I've certainly canvassed everybody in that neighborhood and know some of the issues that exist with those residents. If we're at that juncture, I'm willing to assist as well.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may, just briefly. First off, I want to hear from our City Attorney so she can give us a little bit of background of how we got here today, and what is the ability for this Commission and this City to actually effectuate any change. But before I do that, I had a conversation with both the Attorney that represents Redevo, along with -- because we have to remember, these are two different parties. You have Wawa and you have Redevo. And I had a conversation with also the developer of Redevo. After the first tree had been cut down, I called her and I requested, please, let's be prudent. Let's not, you know, throw any more gas on the fire. Let's wait until after the hearing that we've had in court. And I'm the only non-attorney on this Commission, so if I use the wrong word, you know, please excuse me. So, they were waiting for a hearing, and I said, "Why don't we wait before we cut anything else down? I know you have a County permit, but let's just wait." And she told us, "Listen, it's at our discretion to move forward." I had a conversation with our City Attorney. I confirmed and we were basic -- I asked -- I pleaded that let's take a step back. Let's not inflame the situation any further, and let's wait until we hear

from the courts. Obviously, they didn't heed my advice and they cut the second tree down. So, what I'd like to see -- and the reason why I mentioned that is because I've reached out and I've tried -- while we wait for the courts -- to see if there's a way that we can have some sort of dialogue. There was no interest in having a dialogue. I'd like to have our City Attorney discuss what she can discuss because I know that we're in the process of some litigation right now. I'd like to give us a little bit of background, because I think people need to understand -- because we keep hearing from residents and from non-residents that the City has some sort of control over this project.

City Attorney Ramos: Certainly, Mayor. So, just by way of background -- some of you have heard this before, but again, since it's a new Commission, I want to be sure that we all have all the facts going all the way back. All the way in January of 2003, the County Commission conveyed this property to what was then the LBW Homeowner's Foundation. At that time, it was supposed to be a mixed-use project with affordable housing; over time that changed. In January of 2005, this City Commission approved a change from residential to commercial and approved a site plan. That is super important because every time that this Commission or the County Commission took action to rezone that property, it was done with notice and a public hearing, as is required under the law. The property today is in fact zoned commercial. The only reason that there was a site plan that was approved by the City Commission and ultimately by way of the settlement agreement came to the Manager and I for a deviation from the original site plan was because the developer chose -- and that was their option -- to develop as a PAD. Had the developer not chosen to develop as a PAD, this Commission would have never approved the site plan, and the Manager and I would have never had to approve a change from that site plan because they were building as of right a commercial development. The history is very, very long, but as time goes by, the developer begins to take action to develop that property. There are efforts similar to the ones that are occurring today, people in the neighborhood that are upset about whatever that development was at that time leads to the development not going forward. Ultimately, that leads to the County filing suit and attempting to exercise a reverter to take the property back. Why? Because when the property was conveyed, it was conveyed with very specific deadlines of what had to occur on that property. Those deadlines were not met because -- in large part due to -- and this is all historical. I don't

have personal knowledge -- due to interference from different groups about different projects that people were unhappy about. They end up in litigation and this Commission feels that it's very important for that project to go forward, for these individuals to be able to develop their land. And by "these individuals," I do not mean Redevelco. I mean the members of the community, which this development is supposed to assist and enhance. This was a two-part project. There's a community center that's already been completed. A lot of the programming that's slated to go into that community center is supposed to be funded by the dollars that come from the development on this land. I, again, reiterate that in September of 2014, when that PAD was approved by this Commission, it was done with notice and a public hearing. As you know, ultimately the former City Attorney entered into a settlement agreement. This Commission is -- not this Commission, the Commission at the time is advised as the process goes along. And one of the things that the settlement agreement does is it says the City Attorney and City Manager will have the authority to approve any site plan changes, assuming of course that it complies with the Zoning Code, any development in the future. The development that is then proposed is a Wawa, which does comply with the Zoning Code. The Manager and I spent about a year reviewing the project and authoring the opinion that ultimately approved the changes to the site plan, and that opinion was mailed proactively to every resident within one thousand feet of the property. That's not the standard procedure. Opinions are typically just placed on the City's website. We did not feel that that was sufficient in a case like this, and that allowed people to receive that opinion, which explained that it would in fact be a Wawa and appeal it within 30 days, which is what the Zoning Code allows for. That did not occur. I did receive several calls from residents who had questions and concerns. I spoke to them at length. They walked away with a better understanding, but we did not receive a challenge until recently. As you know, the City has been sued. There was a status conference relating to this case the end of April. At that status conference, the judge ordered the attorney for plaintiffs to file an amended complaint adding two indispensable parties; those being Wawa and Bahamian Village, which had not initially been added. The City had already filed its motion to dismiss. Now, there's an amended complaint, so we are working on our amended motion to dismiss. The judge did express a willingness to resolve this case quickly or to move this case along quickly. He understands that there's a lot of interest at stake here. I suspect that the hearing will

be set probably sometime in June. Should the City prevail, or the parties prevail in that hearing, the case is over. Should they not, then the case will continue to be litigated and the developer needs to decide together with their tenant if they continue at their own risk with developing the property. I think it's always great to have dialogue with residents. That's always a good idea. My concern in this case, in particular, aside from the fact that we're in litigation and we need to make sure that those aren't represented parties, is that I think ultimately, and unfortunately, what the members of the PTA and what the parents at Carver want is not something the City's able to give. They want a different project there, and the problem is that these people have -- "these people," meaning the property owners -- have the right to develop a commercial project there. That is their right. It is zoned commercial. And if the City were to unravel the settlement agreement, we would be back in litigation. The deadlines that Redevco is beholden to the County on would likely not be met, and we would essentially be back when we were six or seven years ago when this whole thing started. So, I am happy to meet with anybody that wants to be with me. I actually welcome those calls. I've had lots of them. I think when people understand -- there's a lot of misinformation out there. I think when people understand what happened in this project, why we are where we are, they walk away maybe not happy, but at least with an understanding of what is going on. I'm happy to have those conversations. I just don't know that what they want is something we can give without unraveling everything that's been done thus far.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney, thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'd just -- the only thing I would add is, I would encourage everybody who's interested in a dialogue to also have the dialogue with the residents who live in the neighborhood. They have been very clear about what they want. This is a historically underserved community. As you just heard, the funds from this project will go to fund their brand-new community center, which is very important to their community. So, it's important when you engage in a dialogue to get everybody's perspective on the issue and get everybody's history as it relates to the issue. And so, I would encourage anybody engaging in a dialogue to do that. I just forwarded to all of my colleagues and copied the Manager and the City Attorney some letters we've received from the

neighbors in the past so that you all have the benefit of it since you weren't here at the time that it was sent to us, so that Commissioners Anderson and Menendez have it and have the benefit of that. But you know, the -- to echo the City Attorney's point, there has frankly been a lot of misinformation about this, and it's important -- we're all for engaging in dialogues, but dialogues have to be based on facts and have to be based on the truth of what has occurred, what can occur, and where things stand at the moment. And so, I just want to make sure that whatever dialogue occurs is based on the facts and bears in mind the rights of everybody involved, not only the kids who go to the school, which we all care about. We've all done a lot of great things for this school in the past. Mayor Lago and I have been there many times. We've donated computers to them. We've painted their library. We care a lot about the kids in this school. We also care about the residents who live nearby. We've done a lot for them in the past as well. And you also have to consider the private property owner's rights for this property, which is zoned commercial, which is located on US-1 and Grand Avenue, and the prior history and approvals and agreements which they made, following prior dialogues by prior City Commissions. And you know, let's just be careful that as dialogues ensue, that, you know, we're mindful of the entire history of what has occurred here and the interest of everybody involved as we proceed.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Vice Mayor.

Commissioner Anderson: A couple of comments. And I've always encouraged dialogue, and one of the points of dialogue that when the time is appropriate for us to have it, the Wawa's going to be there, we need to look at safety issues. And there's a number of things that we can do working with the County, working with the school to determine a safer pick-up route, for instance. Some of the complaints regarding traffic issues that folks are having difficulty getting into their neighborhoods, but I think if we do that type of dialogue when the time is appropriate again, because right now we're in litigation, we can make a -- from the point of view of some people-- a bad situation much better. So, we need to have that...

Vice Mayor Mena: That's an excellent point.

Commissioner Anderson: Dialogue. And I did literally knock on every single door around the Wawa and around both sides of the school. So, I have pretty good picture of what their...

Mayor Lago: You know, Commissioner...

Commissioner Anderson: Viewpoints are.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. And I also walked...

Vice Mayor Mena: Of course.

Mayor Lago: Thousands of homes in this neighborhood. This is my third campaign, and I know that I'm intimately aware of that neighborhood. I think I can say this with being as fair as possible. I think I know that neighborhood probably better than anyone in this room does. I fought diligently to ensure that they would have the community center when, for multiple occasions, the County and efforts of lobbyists and backdoor dealing tried their hardest to ensure that that property was taken away from the members of -- like the Vice Mayor mentioned -- LBW, the Lola B. Walker Homeowners' Association. So, in regards to the dialogue, I'm 110 percent, I'm in favor of that. We've done everything from parks to renovations, with private funds of the church, to delivering on the community center, which was almost taken away by the County on multiple occasions and we had to go with the previous City Attorney to advocate to ensure that that piece of property was not taken away from the residents in that neighborhood. So, I'm in favor. I'm in favor, but we have two groups of individuals. We have the residents, the Lola B. Walker residents who -- when you get a chance, read the letter that the Vice Mayor sent to all of us on the Commission, which clearly states that they're requesting that we complete the project. And then we have the concerned residents who do not live in the neighborhood, along with the parents, who, again, they have an interest. And I agree with you, I'm all in favor of dialogue, but we also have to be honest and

sincere with everyone who has an interest in this project. This is a County issue. This is a County issue. The land use change, Madam City Attorney, came in 2005, correct?

City Attorney Ramos: Yes. The County had initially -- and then we, the City, we changed the property to commercial.

Mayor Lago: So, not one person who's sitting in this Commission -- I don't think one person in this room was even involved with the City of Coral Gables.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: So, if we want to have a dialogue, I'm all in favor of it. I mean, listen, this is going to be a brand new -- I mean, I think everybody realizes it. We're having a different Commission here. We can talk as long as we want to talk here. If everybody wants to have a dialogue, if everybody wants a sunshine meeting, we can do sunshine meetings every week. I welcome them. I think that's the beauty of our democracy. But I also want to manage expectations.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: And that's the key because, again, like I said, I'm the only non-attorney here, so I lean on our team and I lean on my colleagues on this Commission to guide me when it comes to legal matters. I hope you will ask the same thing when it comes to design and construction and finance, and I will give you all the expertise and all the experience that I have. But I find ourselves kind of in a -- we're boxed in. And Miriam, I don't know, maybe I'm using the appropriate language, but I feel like we're boxed in in the sense of, "Do I want to see a gas station there? No." When I started on this Commission in 2013, I was told that we were going to do a multifamily deal, which is going to be incredibly beneficial for the community, along with the community center. But like the Vice Mayor stated very clearly, there are property rights. We're in the middle of a lawsuit, so I think we need to tread lightly. If you'd like to have a meeting, Commissioner

Menendez, Anderson, I'm more than willing. But I don't want to be in a position where we kind of maybe promise or act like we're promising that we can actually effectuate change and then we really can't. Because I tell you very candidly, I had a conversation with the developer. "Please don't knock the second tree down." And they went and they knocked the second tree down. So, I'm willing to listen. All ideas. If anybody wants to talk about it, I'm more than willing. I'm willing to schedule a sunshine meeting, but I want to manage expectations. That's my only -- my concern.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I think you hit the nail on the head, and it dovetails with what Commissioner Anderson was saying. Listen, if there's a dialogue on the issues that are tangential to the development of the Wawa, that's great, absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Crosswalks.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Crosswalks, all that stuff.

Vice Mayor Mena: Whatever we can do to facilitate that is great. My point is not to give people the false hope or expectation...

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: That there's not going to be a Wawa. And I've been clear about that with the parents who have reached out to me from day one. A lot of them frankly didn't like my answer, and I'm sorry that they don't like my answer, but my answer was based on all of the facts that the City Attorney just laid out and decisions that were made prior to myself or anybody here even being here. And so, we have to deal in that, and so that's really my only point is I don't want to give false expectations about what is or isn't going to happen here. But yeah, can we talk about

crosswalks and ingress and egress and lighting and all of these things? Sure, of course. But to now, the dialogue that has been directed towards us from some of the parents has really been -- if we're being honest -- about not having the Wawa at all. And I appreciate that's what they would like, and if there was a manner where that would even be a possibility, we could discuss it. But the truth is -- if we're being sincere to them -- that there's not. That's not an option. If a court says otherwise, obviously, that changes things, but from what I have seen, I have no reason to believe that that's going to change, and so I just want to be honest towards the parents and the residents about what's happening, and then, yes, let's absolutely have a dialogue on all of those issues as we would with any project. So, that's what I just wanted to be clear about. And I mostly want to say it because obviously, you know, we have two new colleagues here, and I've heard many of your comments on this issue during your campaigns, and I know it's been a topic of discussion, and so it's the first time we talk about it. And so, you know, I wanted to make sure that we had that conversation as these comments are brought up.

Commissioner Anderson: No false expectations here (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Any further comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Mayor Lago: No, in regards to the Commission. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Paola De Carolis is next.

Mayor Lago: Madam, good morning. Please state your name for the record and your address. Thank you.

Paola De Carolis (phonetic): Sure. Good morning. My name is Paola De Carolis, at 2144 Southwest 12th Street. I am a parent at G.W. Carver Elementary School, and I want to congratulate

newly elected officials today. I would also like to echo the comments made by parents like Wendy Long, Estelle Lockhart, Joshua Goodman, and expressed support for Commissioner Anderson's memorandum seeking greater transparency and accountability in zoning changes. This proposal sprouts in part from the development process currently experienced in projects like Wawa, where administrative powers were granted and preempted public input. That would not really take place on projects that incur changes of this magnitude. The right was taken away. We appreciate the time and effort devoted to make changes that recognize the importance in due process and restoring the public's interest and input. I would like to clarify, based on the discussion made recently in City Commission, that to the best of our understanding, residents -- not every resident within a thousand feet of the property received notices. In fact, a school was not notified and it's across from the project. We got (INAUDIBLE) talking to them, and one of them is the plaintiff. We would like to set up a date and ask in this Commission for a meeting with the City and the developer, so that we can meet and have those conversations that have (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next is Ms. Caty Chung.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Please state your name and your address for the record.

Caty Chung: Thank you. I'm just unmuting. Caty Chung, 6850 Palazzo Street, and congratulations on the appointment, Mayor Lago, and the new Commission. We trust that you will continue to work with all your constituents and thank you for all the comments that have been given right now. I really like hearing that this like -- we are open to the dialogue and the management of expectations and the transparency into the information that we have and the misinformation that is being spread, and that we're all willing to work for a better Coral Gables. In that, I would like to understand if there's a -- when we can have the meeting with the developer and the City to have a better solution for the area that is being discussed. We also look forward to

the transparency and the accountability as expressed in Commissioner Anderson's memorandum. And again, thank you for all your time and dedication.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for joining us. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next is Ms. (INAUDIBLE).

Unidentified Speaker: Hello. I'm the mother of (INAUDIBLE). He is a student from G.W. Carver Elementary. And I'm here to oppose on the development of Wawa across the G.W. Carver Elementary School, urging the Commissioners to suspend the construction. The construction of another gas station is vastly unnecessary. Various reasons why is, one, it will bring a lot of violence; two, traffic will be caused by the gas station; three, there's various gas stations nearby already; four, the hazard of cars near children is not safe, obviously; five, how the neighbors were never considered in their decision. And sadly, the developers have also just tried to impose themselves in cutting the very old trees in a very possible way to simple show power. Please consider a way to keep our community safe and let's try to rethink and about our residents, the families, and most importantly, the future of our world, who are the children. Thank you and congratulations on the newly elected.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for joining us. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next is Dr. Gordon Sokoloff.

Mayor Lago: Dr. Sokoloff, good morning. Please state your name and your address for the record. Thank you.

Gordon Sokoloff: Okay, good morning. I'm Gordon Sokoloff; address is 225 Alesio Avenue, in Coral Gables. Again, congratulations to the newly elected Mayor and Commissioners. I'm just bringing to the attention something that I've already brought up several times, and it's a problem

that I foresee as a resident, a business -- or a previous businessowner in the area, and this on the Ponce de Leon corridor between Camillo and Bird Road. There is a severe parking issue. And the dental staff brought -- that works in my old office has brought this to the attention of Commissioner Fors, Mayor Lago, and many of the City staff, and so far, nothing's been done about this. And as the construction increases in that neck of the woods -- and I've been saying that the Plaza -- I wrote an editorial too to the Miami Herald saying that it was so out of scale. It's a beautiful building, it truly is, but it is so out of scale. The traffic and the parking issues that are coming from that construction project -- and if God forbid that Allen Morris gets his way, if that happens, Ponce de Leon is going to become another Le Jeune Road, if not a Dixie Highway. And the parking issues are already a problem because construction workers are parking there. And the City has used a flawed petition process and taken away parking that used to be utilized by people to park along Ponce de Leon. If you go down Ponce right now, you'll see three blocks of residential permitted or paid parking that is -- that remains vacant day after day after day, where people used to be able to park. They can't park there anymore. And those cars that used to park there are now parking on our swales. And you own the roads, and the City also owns the swales, and I think you would rather have these cars parking back on the street instead of the swales. So, this is a problem that I hope that the City will undertake in the future of this new Commission. And also, I am going to suggest that as the outgoing Transportation Board chairman, I had brought before the previous Commission the idea of a traffic study based on the Plaza, the potential Allen Morris project and the upzoning in the Crafts Section, all within a mile of each other, to do a comprehensive traffic study. And that was pretty much shunned by the previous Commission. It would behoove this Commission to pay attention to the effects, and I think devastating effects that all of this construction is going to have in the area. It's my mantra I have said forever that the streets and -- the buildings get taller, the parking garages may get bigger, but these streets aren't getting wider and there's going to be a lot of problems and parking is already a serious issue in this neck of the woods. I really hope this Commission takes this on and considers, you know, what's going on for the benefit of all of the businesses in that area. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Dr. Sokoloff, thank you...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Mayor Lago: First off for joining us today. Commissioner Fors and myself have been addressing this issue on separate, separate avenues to find a solution. I met with the City Attorney this morning and went over a few items. This is one of the items that I will be sitting down with the Manager and the City Attorney before the end of the week to continue to explore and find a solution to see how your business can be -- cannot be impacted as a result of the permits. So, rest assured that we're going to find a solution to this. I give you my word.

Commissioner Fors: And Dr. Sokoloff, if I may...

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Also, just so you know what we've been doing. As the Mayor said, him and I went to a meeting with all the businessowners in the area the day after his election. It was just a couple of weeks ago. You were there as well. I checked up with staff on progress in terms of any proposal that we're able to develop just last Friday. And this morning before you appeared, I was in communication with the dentist from the dental office planning to speak to them again tomorrow to see where we're at. So, you have two folks on the Commission here that have been actively working on it. And I assure you, we're going to try to find a solution that works for everybody.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next is Ms. Alicia Roman.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Roman, good morning. Please give us your full name and your address for the record. Thank you.

Alicia Roman: Good morning. My name is Alicia Roman. I am a resident of Little Gables, but a parent of two children at G.W. Carver Elementary School. I just wanted to echo the other parents' comments with regards to the Wawa project. And I appreciate the Commission's comments with regards to setting expectations and whether or not the Wawa eventually will be built. What I simply propose to you is that there has to be alternate designs at least to whatever is built there. If any of you have ever had children that go to Coral Gables -- I'm sorry, G.W. Carver Elementary or if they ever went to the middle school, you would know that it is impossible to have any reasonable amount of safety if you're adding traffic and a gas station to that location. If there's any sort of entrance to the gas station from Grand Avenue, it poses a risk to the children because of the proximity and location with regards to the entrance to the school. If you're having gas tankers and hundreds of people coming through Grand Avenue every day for gas, it's going to put an undue burden and risk to the children at the school, and these are hundreds of residents that you need to account for, not just the people who live in the houses, but the people who go to that school. Those are people that you also need to concern yourself with. And so, while I appreciate the expectations setting with regards to whether or not there will eventually be something built there, I simply ask you to consider alternate designs and alternate -- just an alternative to what is presently proposed because it's for the safety of the children and everyone there. It's not just there. It's also the children that go to Armbrister Park and the children who go to YMCA, and the children who frequent there on weekends because that's the only place that they have to play safely. And my main concern as a parent is simply the entrance that's on Grand Avenue because there's already congestion in the mornings and in the afternoons. There's police there all the time directing traffic, and that's just with the school, not with the gas station. So, if you look at feasibility studies or if there are any -- and if there aren't, there should be a feasibility and traffic study as to the impact that building a gas station will have on that location. It's already very dangerous. It's impossible to cross US-1 safely. It's impossible to manage. What will happen to that site and that area if we add a gas station to it?

So, thank you for your time. Thank you for allowing me to voice my concerns and this dialogue that you'll eventually have, please take these things into consideration.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for joining us. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Our last speaker we have registered, Mr. Mayor, is Ms. Julie Kanter.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Kanter, the floor is yours. Please give us your full name and your address for the record. Thank you.

Julie Kanter: Thank you. My name is Dr. Julie Kanter, and I live at 6505 Caballero Boulevard. I have two children that attend G.W. Carver Elementary. I'm zoned for Carver as my community school, so I am a member of the community. I am also an officer on the Gables Accountability Project. And I'm working today, and I'm very happy I'm available to Zoom in and hear the new Commission and the new Mayor talking about GAP and our lawsuit and bringing people to the table. And I just want to say how much I personally would really appreciate that. What I was hearing is overall that you feel like your hands are tied with bringing the parties to the table to stop the development, but I want to encourage you to think about the multi-layers. Yes, we have a lawsuit to stop the development, but there are also other layers such as the way the development has been designed. I am interested in injuries and injury prevention, and I've scrutinized the design and the crosswalk for the students will be next to the turning lane for the gas tankers. The students will cross the crosswalk and have to cross the turning lane for the gas tankers and the delivery trucks, and then cross a second driveway into the Wawa. I don't understand how this could be designed like this across from a school. I've reached out to the County, as you know, Mayor Lago. I've told you that before, and I've reached out to you and I've reached out to the School Board, and nobody seems to know how to address these safety issues. And maybe we could bring people to the table and address the design. Both entrances to the proposed Wawa are in front of the school. There are no entrances on US-1. The only entrances that can be used by the gas tankers is on Grand Avenue in front of the school, right next to the crosswalk. I just see children hit by gas

tankers with that design. There is currently another crosswalk one block up in front of Armbrister Park that could be moved, that we could use as our main school crosswalk, but the Wawa design is to remove that crosswalk. And it doesn't seem like anybody has granted them permission or discussed that or done any type of study to determine whether that's appropriate or not. So, these are some of the safety issues that I see as an injury prevention specialist and also as a parent, and also as a member of the community and a physician in the community that I'm wondering if we can come to the table and talk about, even if the overall project cannot be, you know, addressed with you all. And I just really want to thank you all very much for talking about this and for letting us call in today to continue to discuss this and many congratulations to the new Commission. And we look forward to continuing to work with you. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate it.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.