

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-3
December 5, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant Development Services Director, Charles Wu

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-3 [0:00:00 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida amending the City Code, Chapter 82, entitled “Vegetation”; to include additional measures to review and protect trees; to set procedures to evaluate tree protection and removal; to set an appeals process for a Tree Permit denial; to establish a Tree Trust Fund for the purposes of maintaining and increasing the City tree canopy from tree mitigation fund fees; and other measures as deemed as necessary for the preservation and enhancement of the City’s tree coverage; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: F-3, Vegetation.

City Attorney Ramos: An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida amending the City Code, Chapter 82, entitled “Vegetation”; to include additional measures to review and protect trees; to set procedures to evaluate tree protection and removal; to set an appeals process for a Tree Permit denial; to establish a Tree Trust Fund for the purposes of maintaining and increasing the City tree canopy from tree mitigation fund fees; and other measures as deemed as necessary for the preservation and enhancement of the City’s tree coverage; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. This is also a public hearing item.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anybody that wishes to speak from the public?

City Attorney Ramos: There have been some changes between first and second. Mr. Wu and the Deputy City Attorney are prepared to present.

Assistant Development Services Director Wu: For the record, Charles Wu, Assistant Development Services Director. We have four items we’d like to highlight, changes between first and second reading. One is based on a resident’s clarification that fruit trees do need to be pruning, and we do clarify that. That if you prune a fruit tree up to the height of 14, 15 feet, that does not constitute tree abuse, so they will not get a violation for that. We clarify certain species based on what Vice Mayor Keon brought up with us. It’s clarified on pages 8 and 9. And, based on Commissioner Lago’s question about removal of unauthorized specimen tree, we propose to have staff discretion to increase the tree height for mitigation and to even double the amount of tree mitigation. We maximized the fine based on state law. So, we have a three-prong approach for unauthorized removal of specimen tree on private property. And, based on the Historic Preservation Director, for a tree within a historic district, those variances will go before the

Historic Preservation Board, as we do for typical variances today. Again, variances on a historic property go before the Historic Preservation Board. A tree removal variance will now go before the Historic Preservation Board. That concludes staff's changes between first and second reading.

Commissioner Lago: Perfect. I mean, hopefully, these changes will make the process a little bit more streamlined and make the process a little...

Assistant Development Services Director Wu: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Simpler. While at the same time...

Assistant Development Services Director Wu: We already have a tree permit appeal that -- waiting in the wings to go before the Board of Assessment.

Commissioner Lago: That's good. Simplify the process, but also, obviously, continue our efforts to protect the canopy.

Assistant Development Services Director Wu: And more importantly, we include clearer guidelines for a tree permit appeal. Before, we didn't have any guidelines.

Commissioner Lago: Perfect. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Any members of the public that wish to speak? Alright, do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Lago: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Commissioner Mena: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Assistant Development Services Director Wu: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.