

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-4
March 8, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Chisena

Agenda Item D-4 [Start: 4:14 p.m.]

Update by Staff on the possible development of 719 and 730 Coral Way, based on current development standards.

Mayor Lago: Moving onto D-4, supposedly we did not answer that. The Clerk said we are going to answer it. What can be possibly developed on 719 and 730 Coral Way within the zoning code?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Mayor, the answer to that question is zoning verification letters, which were provided. They explained the zoning code and they have the attachment of the actual text from the zoning code. So that's the answer.

Mayor Lago: Thank you sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor we do have a member of the public requesting to speak on that item. Its Maria Chisena, she was here earlier, and she had to leave.

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Mayor Lago: Perfect. The floor is yours. Would you make sure before she speaks that you give her a copy of this memo.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes sir.

Mayor Lago: Put this memo into the record so everyone who is watching can get a copy of that memo.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It's a pdf that has been circulated, so it's easy.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Maria the floor is yours.

Ms. Chisena: Good afternoon again. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am, we can hear you.

Ms. Chisena: Okay, great. Thank you. Some neighbors have been asking staff for clarification on what can be built on 719 Biltmore Way for the whole year.

Mayor Lago: Do you have a copy of the memo that's been circulated?

Ms. Chisena: I'm not sure which one.

Mayor Lago: It's a city memo that deals with 719, 730, it's a letter.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: It's a letter with attachments.

Mayor Lago: Its two letters with attachments. I will make sure that you have it for your record, and it clearly delineates what can be built per the zoning code for 719, 730.

Ms. Chisena: Okay. I appreciate that, because we did receive several replies from Mr. Trias and Ms. Cabrera and the City Attorney, and unfortunately, they were not all in accordance one with the other. At some point, we received the reply in August saying that we could go up to 190.5 feet...and then it was mentioned that probably because of FAR it was limited to 2.5, so its quite confusing. And I think also, what I would really like to point out is, Mr. Mayor, I'm not here to point fingers, but I ask that you don't blame the neighbors, if we are mislead in opinions, because we receive conflicting information provided by staff. So, it's very difficult for us who don't understand necessarily zoning codes and all of that, if on top it we also receive conflicting information from staff, as per the e-mails provided you.

Mayor Lago: I'm willing to give you a document on the record, two documents that address your question. Are you willing to accept those documents, so we can finally answer your question, are you willing to accept those documents?

Ms. Chisena: Yes.
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Mayor Lago: Okay. I will hand deliver them to you in your house. I'm going to get a copy of those documents right now from Mr. Trias and I'm going to hand deliver them to you in your house, is that okay?

Ms. Chisena: That's great. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: I just want to make sure that we are dealing with factual information on a memo, you have two memos here. I will take them to you today.

Commissioner Fors: Mayor, it pains me to say it, but I don't think those memos are going to put the issue to bed. I think those memos state with 100 percent certainty what parts of the plan, code, site specifics apply to those areas, but I think what those particular residents are looking for is an actual opinion as to what actually can be built on that lot. Its just going to come back again.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: If I could make just one comment. What this gives you is all the information that you need to design a project in those sites. However, its not a design of the project. It will be unethical for me to speculate on something that has not been designed, all I can give you is the rules. Staff doesn't argue, doesn't claim anything. Staff in a bureaucracy provides information, that's what we can do.

Commissioner Fors: And I figured it was a borderline inappropriate exercise for staff to engage in, to talk about a theoretical project on a specific site and that's probably why it was what it was, and I'm sure that's what all zoning determination letters look like those two memos, right.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner Fors, we can't speculate what project is going to be there, we really can't.

Commissioner Fors: I get it.

City Manager Iglesias: That is a legal document. It tells you what you can do from a zoning perspective there, and you have to understand the zoning code, plus there is an attachment of what that means from the zoning code.

Mayor Lago: If you wanted you could buy that property and you could build a one-story building. If you wanted to build a building that conformed and did the maximum of the zoning, this document will tell you what is the maximum permissible height, FAR, density, intensity by the zoning, in regard to that building, in regard to that lot, excuse me, that location. But now we are going to get into hypotheticals whether something can be built there or not, and what potentially will be built there. We've had people who had proposed buildings that are three times the allowable height as per the zoning code, and its up to the Commission, like I said before, to make the decision to either allow that or not allow that.

City Manager Iglesias: Different heights, different articulation, different setback, there are so many variables there. That is a legal document indicating what zoning applies to that particular site.

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Mayor Lago: We have a lot of things on the agenda. Thank you very much.