

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
October 8, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

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
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

Public Speaker(s)

Lisbeth Bustin
Laura Russo

Agenda Item F-1 [9:50 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida, amending Section 2 of Ordinance No. 2011-06, to increase the maximum student enrollment from 1,162 to 1,240 students for Gulliver Academy located at 12595 Red Road, Coral Gables, Florida; all other conditions of approval contained in Ordinance No. 2011-06 shall remain in effect; and providing an effective date. (LEGAL DESCRIPTION ON FILE) (07 10 18 PZB recommended approval with conditions, Vote 4-2) (Increase existing Gulliver Academy student enrollment)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Now, we have ordinance on second reading, F-1.

City Attorney Ramos: F-1 is an ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida, amending Section 2 of Ordinance No. 2011-06, to increase the maximum student enrollment from 1,162 to 1,240 students for Gulliver Academy located at 12595 Red Road, Coral Gables, Florida; all other conditions of approval contained in Ordinance No. 2011-06 shall remain in effect; and providing an effective date. Mr. Clerk, if you could please swear everyone in. This is a quasi-judicial item, and it is a public hearing.

City Clerk Urquia: Those expected to testify today, please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you'll provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Mayor, nothing has changed in terms of substance. However, the applicant refined the language slightly, and you're getting the last version of that, just to enhance their commitment to what they proffered to you before so that the content is the same.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Do we have cards for people who wish to speak? Just one? Okay. Only one person who wishes to speak Elizabeth -- or Lisbeth Bustin. Hello.

Vice Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Morning.

Lisbeth Bustin: Good morning. And thank you for allowing me to speak. This increase in enrollment may seem small to you, but when you think about it, it really is a regional -- it has a regional impact. There are numerous communities south that need to get to work or other schools or business, whatever. And the routes leading north are extraordinarily limited to Red Road, Old Cutler. There was -- I missed the August meetings. I was in Oakland, California, welcoming my new grandson. So, I apologize for that. So, I'm not sure what happened there, but I was at the

Planning and Zoning meeting. And I was a little surprised because I heard that Gulliver did commission a traffic study and the traffic consultants recommended that they stagger their times, their morning times. Well, I don't know about the afternoon. I guess it would be the same so that there would not be such an impact on traffic. Gulliver rejected those ideas because it didn't fit in with how they want to run the school or maybe some -- for some other reasons. But, the fact of the matter is, is that we have a real problem now. I'm not sure how many of you get caught up in that, but it is -- I'm a runner. I'm 68 years old. I run 13, you know, a mile minutes, but I can run a lot faster down Red Road and Old Cutler Road than the traffic permits in these morning hours during the Gulliver school drop-off and pickup. So, my question is -- I don't really even know how this got through Planning and Zoning. I know that, you know, when I was there, they said, well, the Commission is going to do what the Commission's going to do, so we might as well approve it, so it can move on in the process. But when you have a severe impact to a region, I think it deserves a little more consideration than that. And so, this is maybe, you know, late in the hour, but, I really don't feel that this should be approved until there is very clear processes that are going to be put into place by Gulliver, if there are such alternatives, to minimize the impact of their traffic now, and especially, with the additional vehicles. As far as I know, there was no condition where the students that were being transported from another campus that increased the enrollment would be, in the future, a condition of adding extra enrollment. I mean, this is to solve a current problem, but what if they decide that they're not going to continue this particular program? That still means that there will be extra students. They'll just, you know, allow more students in the school.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. Bustin: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You made your point.

Ms. Bustin: Thank you.

City Attorney Ramos: Ma' am, I don't think you stated your address for the record. Would you mind doing that, please?

Ms. Bustin: I'm so sorry.

City Attorney Ramos: Thank you.

Ms. Bustin: Yes, 12750 Red Road, in Gables by the Sea, right across...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Ms. Bustin: From Coral Bay Park.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anybody wishes to speak from Gulliver?

Laura Russo: Good morning, Mr. Mayor and members of the Commission. For the record, Laura Russo, with offices at 2655 LeJeune Road. I am here this morning with co-counsel, Melissa Tapanes, and I have with me on behalf of Gulliver, the principal of the Montgomery campus, Ms. Donna Fong-Yee, Mr. Charlie Rue, who is the Chief of Operations. Ms. Valerie Bostick, who is the head principal of the Academy, and Elizabeth Scott, who is the principal of the middle school, along with Tim Plummer, our traffic engineer. Some of you may remember when we were here on first reading, we had had meetings with the neighborhood prior to our presentation before you on -- or in August. And from August until now, I know that our traffic consultant worked with the staff and with the Chief of Police because some of the proffers we had made would not allow the police to be able to effectively monitor traffic. There are currently at least four police officers during the morning drop-off and four police officers during the afternoon pickup. And some of

the suggestions that had been made were items that the Chief of Police felt that we're going to impinge on the actual ability of the officers who were there at the time to monitor traffic and determine what needs to be done and where a queue should be moved. As you know, there are two officers that are actually hand changing signals at 128th and 120th. We have worked very diligently with the homeowners' association. And the language that you see in the amended ordinance is language that was crafted with the assistance of the attorney for the homeowners' association, acknowledging the fact that this program has been in existence, the Montgomery program, for over 20 years. It will continue. The Gulliver Academy has a commitment to children with different educational needs. And so, we crafted the number to make sure that there can be no increase to anyone, even if they're visiting the campus for other classes. We were very careful to make sure that it is a capacity number, and we've committed to not increasing that capacity for another 10 years, until October 2029, if need be. So, we respectfully request that you approve the amended ordinance.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Have there been any changes since the last time?

Ms. Russo: No. The only changes are that the language is actually presented to you so you can see it in the ordinance.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, the issues that, you know, they had in regards to the police were already resolved? The Chief has no concerns?

Ms. Russo: Completely resolved.

Vice Mayor Lago: They're able to monitor traffic. They're able to deal with any issues that were still pending from the first reading?

Ms. Russo: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear motion, comments?

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Vice Mayor Lago: Second.

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

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Ms. Russo: Thank you very much.