

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item D – Mayor’s Comments**  
**September 14, 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**  
**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)**

**Mark Trowbridge, President, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce**  
**Aura Reinhart, Executive Director, Business Improvement District**

---

Agenda Item D – Mayor’s Comments

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I’d like to move on from this discussion, but currently I’d like to freeze the public comment for one second, if possible. I’d like to bring up Mark Trowbridge and Aura. Mark has somewhere and I’d like to hear from him very quickly in regard to the Mayor’s Comments, would you please. Thank you, gentlemen. I’d like for you to briefly discuss our progress in regard to what we are working on downtown. This is part of my Mayor’s Comments and my only item that we are going to be discussing today in regard to Mayor’s Comments. I’d like for you to discuss a little bit about the progress that we’ve made, where we stand, the meetings that you’ve had, and what we are going to be doing hopefully in the near future.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you Mr. Mayor and I apologize that we stepped over a little bit on the Public Comments, because of our schedule, but we have had over the last just two or three weeks about ten different meetings you or I, myself met three different times, we’ve now been able to

*City Commission Meeting*  
*September 14, 2021*

meet with the Vice Mayor, with our Commission, with Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Fors and Commissioner Menendez.

Mayor Lago: If I may, I want to thank both of you for that, along with my colleagues.

Mr. Trowbridge: Oh, sure.

Mayor Lago: Because I know that everybody – it was very short notice, I wanted to get it into this Commission meeting, my colleagues were incredibly flexible, and you came through. This is an effort to build consensus amongst everyone.

Mr. Trowbridge: All of them very accommodating and very thoughtful on the subject. We also met with Kevin Kinney, our Parking Director. I see Deena Bell-Llewellyn here, we had a good conversation as well about weeds. We also met with Tim Schum, the Director of the Lincoln Road B.I.D. and a little before you back at the past Commission meeting and again today. And I'll certainly ask Aura to chime in. I think our biggest takeaway is that we talked a little bit about the Block-by-Block agreement where that stands today, and if that needs to be addressed in terms of scope or expansion. We talked a little bit about grow season, I never knew about that, but Deena informed me about we have a grow season here. We are in it as you might – its affecting what we're seeing. We no longer use pesticides. This is the first season, grow season without pesticides. We are using herbicides and Deena, correct me if I'm wrong, but we are using something that's a mixture of salt and vinegar, correct?

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn: It's called Wow.

Mr. Trowbridge: It's called Wow.

Ms. Bell-Llewellyn: [Inaudible – off mic]

Mr. Trowbridge: Right – it's an herbicide, so its not as aggressive. We are learning what its able to do and its capacity, but as you might imagine it's a little bit different than pesticide. Continue to really address the litter issue downtown and in surrounding areas and also talking about pressure cleaning. I think our open questions that Aura and I have and have had with each of you is, what is our plan going forward? – is the Block-by-Block agreement correct, is it robust enough? – does it need to be amended, expanded? We have to work with the City Manager, and we look forward to sitting down with him and his team. Who is the ultimate responsible party for a lot of these issues? We have a lot of different types of businesses that front our streets. Sometimes they think it's the city's responsibility, sometimes the city thinks it's the property owner; the tenant might think its...

Mayor Lago: And if I could touch on that one point.

Mr. Trowbridge: Yes, please.

*City Commission Meeting  
September 14, 2021*

Mayor Lago: I copied both of you on an e-mail that happened this week from a city, excuse me, a resident who contacted my office saying, hey listen, there is a business that I'm in front of, the sidewalk is full of gum. Can the city come and clean that? – and I responded back, I copied Mark, I copied Aura, I copied the staff, and I said, that's not our responsibility. That is the responsibility of the businessowner to maintain their sidewalk. So, we have Covid, but people have not been reminded, just like we are doing with cardboard that what are the requirements to follow our protocols. This is the point. I thought it was very poignant when we received that e-mail that it basically said, people just don't know. They need to be reminded.

Mr. Trowbridge: And his response back to you was, oh, I thought the city was responsible.

Mayor Lago: Yes – literally.

Commissioner Fors: If I could jump in right here, because this touches on a topic that I discussed with you too, where its always a question, who is responsible, even myself I have to sometimes e-mail the City Attorney and say hey, who's responsible for this here. That even if its an internal document, I think something helpful as we embark on this mission, which is a great goal, of cleaning up downtown is to create a matrix which I think, frankly the City Attorney could probably create in 30 minutes easily, a matrix where on the top center of the table it says what the area is, sidewalk, swale, this, that and the other; on the left it will have the entity, whether its City of Coral Gables Public Works, adjacent property owner, or etc., and you'll be able to make reference, even if its just internally from when we are answering people, have a quick reference guide, because it doesn't require you to read different things that you have to find in the code. Oh, she wasn't here listening to me.

Mayor Lago: Repeat, repeat, its important.

Mr. Trowbridge: ....obligated you to do something in 30 seconds.

Commissioner Fors: 30 minutes I said.

Mr. Trowbridge: 30 minutes, sorry.

Commissioner Fors: If we could create a matrix and this goes right to the downtown cleanliness issue, which is essentially a table where the top lists different areas, sidewalk, swale, etc., etc. On the left trees on the swale, let's say; on the left it has the stakeholder or person responsible, whether it would be City of Coral Gables, and I would even go as far as saying, City of Coral Gables by department, Public Works.

Mr. Trowbridge: Right – all the different stakeholders and parties.

Commissioner Fors: Or the party to which the duty has been delegated whether it be Block by Block, etc., etc., so that then or the property owner, so that all of us without having to ask you in a separate e-mail on a one-on-one basis forgetting what the answer was, having to go back to ask you again, education and parking on this goal obtained downtown, have a quick reference guide

*City Commission Meeting  
September 14, 2021*

where we can say, okay, sidewalks in the CBD not on, I guess, Miracle Mile, you go down the graph, you look to the left you see exactly who's responsible for it.

City Attorney Ramos: So, my understanding is that in the integration to the new system that we are going to be using the Manager's directed Development Services and Public Works to put together exactly that once everything has been inputted into the system. Perhaps you can give an update on where that's at.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, I believe its clear who's responsible. The property owner or the tenant is responsible to the edge of pavement, and we've been, Kevin Kinney, we've passed out information and so forth. I think that what we need to do is do another campaign on that and make it clear as to where that responsibility lies. It lies up to the edge of pavement as far as that frontage is concerned. So, your frontage up to the edge of pavement is your responsibility.

Commissioner Fors: Okay. I'm still talking about a cheat-sheet, one-page cheat-sheet that we can circulate to people, give it to people, maybe put it somewhere on the site, and I think what would be an added level is not only adding city responsibility, but vendor responsibility within the city. So, we all know right off the top of our heads and can educate people on who's responsible for what.

City Manager Iglesias: We can certainly do that. We also have a handout that we've provided all the properties along Miracle Mile and Giralda because of the special cleaning requirements for those products. What we can do is have an additional sheet, as you suggested that really clarifies those responsibilities, and maybe that will clarify this.

Commissioner Fors: I'm thinking about something internal. I mean like I could sit down and create it.

Mayor Lago: Let me tell you why I think this is important of what the Commissioner is saying. We are going to get to the point like we are doing now with cardboard, where there is going to be a decision day and we are now educating. On my own street, I see people continuing to not follow what the rules are going to be coming in December. So all the businesses, and that's why I've enlisted the Chamber and the B.I.D., they are going to have three months to be educated, to understand and this is going to be complicated, because its going to be, I don't think its complicated, but people are probably going to think its complicated, we are going to ask for certain areas of the city, certain blocks to be pressure cleaned at certain times so that you don't have one owner pressure cleaning and the neighbor not pressure cleaning. You have a week to do it in the following quarter, so the blocks look clean, they look uniform, so it looks beautiful. I know for a fact that people don't know what is their responsibility and I'll give you an example. The Palace – when you drive down The Palace, I've already included photos a month ago, and I showed them to you, the garbage is everywhere. Let's forget the garbage, let's look at the light post, the light posts are broken. There are no lights. Look at the palm trees, the palm trees are dead. I have photos of them here, I've sent them. Who's responsible for that? – Oh, the city is going to replace those palm trees. No, you have a development agreement that you signed with the city, you have a development agreement with the city. So, a lot of these things are being inputted into our brand-

*City Commission Meeting  
September 14, 2021*

new software, which we have been working on for two years, and I understand that it takes time, but I don't want to be in a position where there is that ambiguous nature of who's responsible for what, and what the Commissioner is saying, I think is one of the critical components to delivering a roadmap to success. Everybody needs to understand what is their responsibility, because right now if you look at the downtown, we've been talking about this how many meetings have we had? – we are going to change this, if not, I'm going to go out and change it myself. So let's make it a point when you see something as simple as what the Commissioner is saying right now, that is a simple way for people to say give them a document and say you need to comply with the following, and you have three months to comply with this, and the following blocks are going to be required to do the following things on the following months or following quarters, whatever it is that staff wants to do, whatever my Commissioners want to do, but we need to have a roadmap to simplify the process so when the Chamber and the B.I.D. go to speak with the businesses, they don't have to spend 45 minutes explaining it. Time is valuable and there are 200 restaurants in our downtown, I mean how many businesses we are talking about hundreds and hundreds, potentially a thousand different points of contact, and I've already talked to – I went to visit with Mercedes, they are all in. I went to visit with Vice Mayor Kerdyk, he told me he's all in. I'm building consensus with the largest property owners in our downtown and they've been waiting for this. Let me give you an example. Mercedes Bens, the conversation I had with Mercedes Bens, they told me that they just relandscaped their entire frontage on all their properties in an effort to beautify. That they have someone who cleans on a monthly basis their sidewalks. I think they are going above and beyond, but they are selling quality, they are selling luxury, so at the end of the day it makes sense. What are we selling here in the City of Coral Gables? – we are selling quality, we are selling luxury, we are selling the best, and I think that we need to take a page from that book and say, hold people accountable, how people's feet to the fire. So, I think what the Commissioners said right now is one of the best things I've heard in a long time, and I commend them for joining us on that.

City Manager Iglesias: We can certainly do that. There are two issues; the basic responsibility and then there is when you have a development agreement, which goes beyond.

Commissioner Fors: I think the development agreement is – I don't think you are going to have every development agreement in that matrix, I think that's less necessary. There is not that many of those, there is a good amount, but we can deal with those agreements individually. It's a matrix that deals with responsibilities that really apply just to the public at large under regular code. I did have one question that came up when we were discussing it. I don't know if the Mayor has already looked into it, its probably a question for the City Attorney. What goes into the definition, the details of the definition of maintenance, in other words, does maintenance include cleaning? – is there a line where its no longer maintenance and then its cleaning and I think about this in the context of pressure cleaning, which I'd love to see, but where do you draw the line between cleaning and maintenance? – because there are certain things that we want done that aren't maintenance and the question is, do we have to add those things to our definition of maintenance?

City Attorney Ramos: So, I'm trying to find the exact language in the sidewalk provision, but specifically sidewalks. There is a duty to repair, which means of course if its cracked, lifted, etc., but then there is another section that talks about having slippery substances, I'm going off memory here, so that goes to cleaning.

*City Commission Meeting  
September 14, 2021*

Commissioner Fors: It goes to cleaning, but just black stains on it is not really slippery substance, and I think that's what doing the matrix leads us to, because when you do the matrix, I'm a business owner, here comes the sidewalk, I get to that point, should list the bullet points of what I need to do; and then we have to ask ourselves if everything we envision is already embodied by the obligations that are part of the code.

Ms. Reinhardt: May I say something?

Mayor Lago: Please. Please, of course.

Ms. Reinhardt: That's a very good point, because I think the chewing gum situation, which the Mayor brought up now on one of the properties on the 300 Block on the street, that is something that most property owners do not have the capacity to clean themselves. In fact, Block by Block has one machine, they put it on their back, and they go, and they steam the area that they are responsible for to steam it and then they can scrape it off. So, then we run into the situation of we recommending to these other blocks to go out and rent this material, this unit, so that they can clean in front of them or is this part of a program that we can develop where there are facilities for them to use or for rentals or whatever. So that's where I think that question that we had about what's maintenance and what's cleaning.

Mayor Lago: If I may interrupt just one second, I apologize. I think the issue with Block-by-Block, why we use that special machine is because the sensitivity of the marble, of the pavers, so you can't just use a scraper. I use a scraper on all my job sites; my superintendents know that I want things done a certain way, and I give them a scraper, I give them a pick, so that they can get rid of the weeds and I give them a handheld grabber so that they can pick up all the garbage, at the end of the day and make sure that the place is spotless for the next day, just in case the owner shows up, an inspector shows up, its got to be that you can eat off the ground. So, my point is, that I think that that special machine is for Giralda and for Miracle Mile due to the sensitivity of the pavers.

Ms. Reinhardt: It also steams and allows for the scraping to happen.

Mayor Lago: I understand that.

Commissioner Fors: So, pressure cleaning doesn't take care of gum?

Ms. Reinhardt: No.

City Manager Iglesias: We did get that product because it's not concrete, it's a special stone.

Mayor Lago: I wanted to show you some photos that I prompted here, if I may, let's just do G-8 now since we are here. I wanted to show you the way that our downtown should look, and no one can tell me that this is a location that doesn't have much traffic or traction. This is Bachour, they have their building and I want to recognize this, because I go eat there once or twice a week and I know that all of you do too, its spotless, look at the landscaping, and its not because I caught them

*City Commission Meeting  
September 14, 2021*

on the day that they were doing it. Look at the sidewalk, look at the light post, look at the landscaping, look at the street, everything is picked up, there is no garbage, because they have someone that picks up their garbage in the morning and they have someone that picks up the garbage in the afternoon. They have a maintenance program. Now I want to show you, I don't know if they updated the photos; these are photos that I took that I sent to you, let's see if these are up. These are other photos of the Quickie Mart where we honored those police officers that apprehended that individual, I don't know if they are up yet, but these are photos of the Quickie Mart in the City of Coral Gables. Let's see if they have them up already, they may not have them up already. My point is that when you see those photos, the amount of garbage, okay look. This is an example, this right here, this photo is what I was mentioning before, this is the Quickie Mart. This is the amount of garbage in the morning, by the way this is 7 in the morning when I took these photos, when I left my house, the amount of garbage that you see present. Next photo. Look at the landscaping in the back, there is no landscaping in that median. These are things that a Code Enforcement officer should be able to pick up immediately. Next photo. Look at that.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor these are not right-of-way issues.

Mayor Lago: Its unacceptable. Its unacceptable. Look at the amount of weeds growing in front of this business. Next photo. That cooler right there used to be inside the property, it broke, it's been outside sitting there for over a month blocking the window. Again, this is Coral Gables, its Coral Gables, and the first photo I showed you was our Palace, which is a city owned building with a 99-year lease that has elderly people living in it, the lightbulbs are busted, so imagine when they go for a walk, and the palm trees are dead. If you are a property owner and you see that and that doesn't bother you, especially when you are dealing with elderly people, to me I think that's where we are slipping in regard to the quality that we are offering here in the city. So, I don't want to take up anymore of your time. I would like for Mark and Aura to say whatever they have to say, but more importantly than anything, your commitment is what's driving this, and I want to thank the B.I.D. and the Chamber for continuing to meet, to making this a priority and this is not about embarrassing the businesses, the property owners, the City of Coral Gables. This is about addressing a problem that we have that we are going to deal with it one way or another.

Mr. Trowbridge: Mr. Mayor we certainly appreciate that. You have invited us to the table to be part of this dialogue and we are going to continue to do the factfinding that we have. I think the next step for us is to come back in a couple of weeks to the Commission with a little bit more of a concrete plan, so whether that's talking about the matrix that Commissioner Fors is talking about, we'll have a follow-up meeting with the Manager and where some of those responsibilities lie, in terms of what is not in the right-of-way versus private property. And then Aura and I have also talked about a branding campaign that really talks about taking pride of ownership, in terms of having that beautiful, classic downtown that doesn't look shabby like we see here but has that classic look to it that draws people and that you are proud to walk up to that storefront. It's the same conversation we've had over the years about having beautiful windows and clean windows, now we are just extending that out into the front of house.

Mayor Lago: Remember we said this before, 27 percent of our tax base comes from the downtown. If you want to increase services for the residential neighborhoods, you've got to increase your tax  
*City Commission Meeting*  
*September 14, 2021*

base in the downtown. How do you do that? – you beautify, you welcome. You make sure that people understand that this is a place to come and not only conduct business, but to spend your hard-earned money.

Mr. Trowbridge: Listen, we are selling the downtown, not only to consumers but to fellow tenants. Aura and her team are doing that every single day and if you show up here with your broker and you want to look at a space and the space to the left and right of you look like that, I'm not sure you are going to even get out of the car. Curb appeal is a legitimate thing.

Mayor Lago: Mark came up with a great idea. Solanch has been working very hard and we are going to discuss this later on. We are going to have a clean-up in the downtown on the 30<sup>th</sup>, its something that we are working on with the Manager's team. You had a conversation with Solanch after our meeting this week, last week, excuse me, and I look forward to that. So, what I would like to do, and I would like for my colleagues to support me on this with a resolution is, I would like not in the next Commission meeting, but the first meeting in October. I would like to have a detailed plan of action and that plan of action must include what Commission Fors said, must also include a plan of action of when blocks, Block A, Block B, Block C, which blocks and which areas are going to pressure clean, when it must be done. I want it to be so easy for Code to look at say, you were supposed to pressure clean last month, you had three months to do it, you had an entire quarter to do it, you didn't do it. Here's your warning. And it should be obvious, because every business should be cleaned and if there is one business that hasn't cleaned, they should be warned and eventually cited if they don't do it. If they have issues, we need to find a way to address this issue. I want a plan of action on the first October, the first meeting in October and if my colleagues want to collaborate on this, we can have a Sunshine meeting. If the business community want to collaborate, we can have a Sunshine meeting on this. I just do not want to let the year end without having some action in place so we can start addressing this January 1.

Commissioner Fors: With regard to pressure cleaning, another thing I would like to explore. I don't know if its feasible or if we are allowed to do it is, potentially work with two or three preferred vendors that will extend discounts if we make them a preferred vendor or a vetted vendor, now we can try to save a few bucks for the businesses.

Mr. Trowbridge: Sure.

Mayor Lago: I agree.

Commissioner Fors: And assure them that if you pick one of these companies, they are getting somebody.

Commissioner Anderson: So, I think we'll have a more uniform looking, because some pressure cleaners do a little better than the others, so you are going to have this variation in quality there.

Commissioner Menendez: I would just like to piggyback on what you said, Mayor, about protocol and its important to remind folks of their responsibilities, but its more important to inform them of what their responsibilities are, and we can remind them. I think the idea of the matrix is

*City Commission Meeting  
September 14, 2021*



phenomenal and after we are successful in this endeavor, I'd like to see if we can apply that matrix and this winning formula in other areas of the City. Apply them because there is a lot of need, a lot of areas that are perhaps need attention collaboratively, and I think what we are doing today as a team is coming up with collaborative solutions that we can apply elsewhere. So just a thought.

Mayor Lago: Its all about accountability. Its all about accountability and you've got to push. So, I'm asking my colleagues to do a resolution, or I'll pass the gavel for what I said before about bringing this back in the first meeting in October, so we can get a detailed plan that is put together by both individuals in front of me, along with city staff and I want it presented in that Commission meeting.

Commissioner Fors: I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Commissioner Fors: And including, as the Mayor already said, a responsibility matrix.

Mayor Lago: Responsibility matrix, I want also what Commissioner Anderson said, a list of ready approved vendors that will provide us with reduced pricing. I want a collaborative approach. I want an answer, like Commissioner Menendez said, about how can we address this issue on multiple fronts. Its about cleaning the store fronts, its about ensuring that the sidewalks are clean, that we delineate who is responsible for what and who needs to be called to address issues. If it's the garbage cans that they have gum around them, well there has to be a number for that, because I find myself doing that all the time and they come the next day and they clean them. So, you have a motion and a second, Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: In closing, I want to say thank you again, I can't say thank you enough to the both of you and to staff for helping the Commission on this issue. This is going to bear fruit, its going to pay a lot of dividends for the city as-a-whole. We can't do what we do without the business community, and I make that abundantly clear every single day in the Commission. Thank you.

Ms. Reinhardt: Thank you.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mark, thank you. I apologize for running over.

Mr. Trowbridge: It's alright.

*City Commission Meeting*

*September 14, 2021*

