

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
May 24, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick**

City Staff

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Acting Public Works Director, Jessica Keller**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-1 [0:00:00 a.m.]

A Resolution directing staff to work with Miami-Dade County (County) to develop an Intergovernmental Agency Agreement with the County that will delegate approval authority from the County to the City of Coral Gables, for certain traffic control and neighborhood street modifications.

Mayor Cason: We'll do H-1 and then F-2.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Going to ask Jessica Keller, the Acting Public Works Director, to come forward. We are very excited about this item.

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Agenda Item H-1 – Resolution directing staff to work with Miami-Dade County to develop an Intergovernmental Agency Agreement with the County that will delegate approval authority from the County to the City of Coral Gables, for certain traffic control and neighborhood street modifications.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Good afternoon. This is a resolution directing staff to work with Miami-Dade County to develop an Intergovernmental Agency Agreement with the County that would delegate approval authority from the County to the City of Coral Gables, for certain traffic control neighborhood street modifications. As you know, in September of 2015, the City awarded a multimodal transportation plan to Atkins International. Originally, the approach being pursued to address traffic calming as a citywide effort through the planned contract was to roll out the effort of community outreach in March and April. For those that are watching, I know that the Commission's already aware, the County currently maintains approval authority over traffic control, and those are things like stop signs, term restrictions and any calming. We recently learned that Miami-Dade County had entered into agreements with the City of Miami Beach and the City of Miami to delegate the authority with added flexibility. So, what this would allow us to do is we would set our own thresholds and criteria, with the County approval, to implement certain traffic calming devices. In order to enter into a similar agreement, we must develop our own standards, which will be approved by the County, and once we enter into this agreement, we will hold community meetings. So, if you're getting questions about where are we with the comprehensive transportation plan and opportunities for the community to provide input, we have delayed it, but it was more important that we agree to the criteria that would be more flexible and suitable for the City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Cason: I think this is really important because, as I understand, I think the article was in Miami Today, that the City of Miami got -- it was -- if their traffic calming was within 250 feet of a County road, they could make the changes.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Instead of 750; is that right?

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Correct. And we will be looking for more flexibility

because when you overlay 250 feet to our city, it really does still limit the locations that we can install traffic calming devices. So, we will be working with the County to get added flexibility.

Mayor Cason: And does that include -- you didn't mention traffic lights and signalization, left turns, crosswalks, flashing lights, all of that stuff. What's...

Acting Public Works Director Keller: No.

Mayor Cason: What's in the scope?

Acting Public Works Director Keller: That would not be included at this point in time. The County is retaining control over those things. But I'm working with the County. They have come quite a way as far as being more progressive. They're looking at things like leaving pedestrian intervals where, you know, the complete -- the traffic has stops at the intersection, the automobile completely to allow pedestrians the ability to cross the street for -- safely.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, and if I may. We had a great meeting about two weeks ago with the Assistant City Manager, Mr. Iglesias, along with the interim director, with Darlene Fernandez, who's been working for about seven months with the County, and we addressed all these issues. So, we're in really, really, really good shape in regards to a few initiatives. I know that the Vice Mayor, a few years ago, had talked about lowering the speed limit within the neighborhoods. I took that away from him and now I own that. And Darlene Fernandez made it very clear that she should be approving that pretty soon, and we're going to be bringing that to the Commission to see if you ratify it. But you know, it was very interesting to see, like Ms. Keller just mentioned, the very progressive attitude and the atmosphere that they're trying to foster. It's really interesting. And I think that you're going to see a lot more red tape cut. You're going to see a lot of these projects that we've been talking about actually get done, and I think a lot of it has to do with some of the staff that Mayor Gimenez has put in place, from Alice Bravo, to Darlene Fernandez, so it's a good situation. And I know that Assistant City Manager,

along with Ms. Keller are going to really jell well with them. I think the meeting went really well. I think it was just good to see -- it wasn't like your typical meeting between cities and county. It was a great meeting, just pushing the agenda, pushing the ball forward. So, I really think that you're going to see a change in reference to relationships and attitudes.

Mayor Cason: So, what it really does for us is it speeds up their process.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, yeah, quick.

Mayor Cason: And waiving some of our process.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Mayor Cason: So how much time do you think we would gain by -- if we had control? And then would you let the viewers know exactly what are the items that are going to be covered and not? Because you'll get a call saying, well, how come the traffic lights are not synchronized and...

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Mayor Cason: They don't do that.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Traffic signals are not included in that. But just to give you an example, in the past before this new administration came to the County, we would submit something for review. It could be a stop sign where we've already done the data collection, we'd make a request for a stop sign. We have already done the work in advance, and previously, we would submit our study and we would get -- it takes eight weeks just to review it. And that -- but that was in the past, and now, working with the County and the new administration, those times are cut down tremendously. Another example of how things have moved along more quickly,

I'll give you an example of the crosswalk at the Kerdyk Tennis Center. In the past, we would have to do a crosswalk warrant, and I think Commissioner Keon's going to like what I have to say about this because I know you've come in many cases and say, you know, we need crosswalks at Coral Way -- across Coral Way. We need crosswalks, and it was always, you know, the chicken and the egg. We could never get the warrants because no one felt safe enough to cross the street because there wasn't a crosswalk. But working with the County, recently, we installed the crosswalk at the Kerdyk Tennis Center, that we didn't have to go through with a warrant analysis. It just made sense, and it was installed and approved by the County, and we'll see more like that moving in the future.

Mayor Cason: What the handbook to the County puts out about it, here's all the steps and here's all the options. That's still in place.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Right now that's in place. What we will be doing is we will be working through our own criteria. We will be developing our own criteria. The County will have to approve that criteria, but once we have it in place, it will speed up the process quite a bit. You know, where we're going from eight weeks review time, it will cut it in half.

Commissioner Lago: Like, for example, Mayor, when I went to see the -- when I went to see Mayor Gimenez from the County, it was in reference to crosswalks. We had -- staff had designated probably about 15 crosswalks that were -- you know, that they were issues that we needed to deal with. And when I went and spoke with him, he introduced -- he didn't introduce me. I knew her from before, but -- now it escapes my memory. I apologize.

Commissioner Keon: Alice.

Commissioner Lago: Alice Bravo, Ms. Bravo. And we kind of went through the progressions of the review process. And she said that, like, for example, before we would have to do a traffic study. We would have to do a traffic count, and then the County would have to verify with its

own traffic count, so it's like basically a double effort. You're spending double monies. So, now it's, okay, listen, City, you're in a hurry to get this done. It's a huge traffic liability. It's an issue in regards to somebody can get hurt. We're not going to take your word for it, but they're going to count -- they're going to review it, but they're not going to be forced to go into a long study. It just gets expedited even much...

Mayor Cason: But things, for example, everybody around a potential traffic circle has to agree, that's still going to be in place?

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, that's still in place.

Mayor Cason: And in terms of who pays for it, usually they approve it, and then you pay for it. Is that still...

Commissioner Keon: No, we pay for it.

Mayor Cason: We -- I mean, us.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Mayor Cason: They approve it, and we pay for it so...

Acting Public Works Director Keller: That's correct.

Mayor Cason: It's not like we're getting anything for free here. We're going to get things faster and hopefully be able to address...

Commissioner Lago: Safety issues.

Mayor Cason: Life safety and then tie it in with the master plan so that we can actually have the tools to address the problem.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: And one of the reasons it was really important for us to have this criteria identified before we go into the community meetings is that reasonably so, everyone wants to know, well, what are the thresholds. How do I get a speed hump in a certain area? And if their -- we want to know very specifically what that criteria is going to mean -- what it will be for the City of Coral Gables.

Commissioner Lago: And not only that, I mean, like when you talk about these contractors that will be hired to do these traffic counts, the City was basically hiring -- there's very few people that do this kind of work. So, the City and the County were overlapping in regards to these qualified professionals. So, you know, if you follow the criteria and you follow the individuals that are prequalified in the County, I mean, there should be no reason to double- and triple-check these items. They're qualified professionals who are in all these -- who are involved in all these contracts.

Mayor Cason: The County has got, I understand, a new computer program to better synchronize all of the lights in the county; is that right?

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yes. They're expanding the program.

Mayor Cason: So, expanding that -- and are we finding receptivity when we say, you know, like outside of this building in the morning, the lights are not sequenced right, so traffic backs up all over the place. Are they -- do they listen to us and are they making changes that are reasonable that we bring to their attention?

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yes. And you know, it's my opinion that the County has always been responsive in that matter. They have always checked when we thought we had a deficiency. So, you know, I would not -- I was not displeased with what -- the work they had been done. It could have been happening more quickly, but they've always been very responsive in that respect.

Mayor Cason: Well, this is really important for us because the number one issue is traffic, which is only going to get worse as people develop. New technology comes along to tell the people how to get off Dixie and cut through your neighborhood to get to where they want to go.

Commissioner Keon: Waze.

Mayor Cason: This flexibility is going to be great for us.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Mayor Cason: Any more?

Commissioner Keon: I just -- but that doesn't help us with our issue of crosswalks on Coral Way, though, right because that's still a state road?

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yes. But what has happened is the County, the State and the local government were all talking. And two years ago, that was not the case.

Commissioner Keon: Good.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: You know, I can say very specifically, I'll give you an example. Bird Road at University, trying to get a crosswalk at that particular location, two years ago, the discussion was, well, the County controls the lights and the State controls the road, and

no one was actually speaking to each other. But now the County and the State have a great working relationship...

Commissioner Keon: Good.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: And they're including us at the table. So, I do see good things coming in the future for the City and the residents.

Mayor Cason: I hope that we use this new flexibility and the process and everybody talking to each other on Alhambra turning left on LeJeune. The left turn lane in the morning that had to do with which trees do you take out and -- it's been -- we've been talking for five years about that.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: That project is in the works.

Mayor Cason: Great, because that's one of the reasons that things back up on Alhambra Circle.

Commissioner Keon: Right, right. But I think the issue with crosswalks on Coral Way -- I don't think that people were really looking so much for, you know, like those lit crosswalks with those signs and all that lighting and everything else. I think it was just the striping and the stops for cars, you know, so that they -- you know, there is actually a place that when the light turns, there's a safe place to be able to cross the street.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Right.

Commissioner Keon: You know, if we can...

Commissioner Lago: That's the same situation that's going on in Ingraham Park.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, well that's a whole -- we need to -- you know, when we get around

to the whole Cocoplum Circle and that whole discussion, we can do that (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Cason: I hope you could bring up...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Mayor Cason: The issue of a painting where there's already lines that have faded, that we could do it. I guess the County has to do it, right?

Commissioner Keon: The County does the stripes?

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Right now, yes, but while the painting and maintenance of lines will not be part of this particular agreement, there are agreements similar that we are talking about. The City of Aventura has one and we'll be pursuing that as well.

Mayor Cason: That's worth doing because there's -- all over the city you see formerly there were lines down the middle. They're all faded. And if you've got to wait for the County that has all kinds of other priorities as well, it's going to affect the safety of our residents. So, to the extent we could get control of it and decide how much money we want to put toward it, it would help us with this whole problem.

Commissioner Slesnick: I will give credit to the County with twice in the last year we've called about traffic lights not being in sync and the next morning they were rectified. So, it solved the traffic problem, especially down near US 1 and Ponce.

Commissioner Keon: Didn't they just put in a whole new system for the synchronization of lights in the County? Recently...

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Not the entire county.

Mayor Cason: They're working on it.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Yeah, they're working on it.

Commissioner Keon: They're working on it.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: Doral is participating and I forget what other city.

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Acting Public Works Director Keller: And we will be looking at participating as well.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, good.

Mayor Cason: Alright, on H-1, this is a resolution to develop an Intergovernmental Agency Agreement. Do we have a motion?

Commissioner Lago: So moved.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Second.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Lago makes the motion. Vice Mayor seconds. City Clerk.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes.

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Yes.

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(Vote: 5-0)

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