

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C – Public Comments
December 7, 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

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item C [Start: 10:10 a.m.]

Public Comments

Mayor Lago: Quick question Mr. Clerk, how many people do we have for public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: At this time, one.

Mayor Lago: Alright, let's hear public comment. Open the public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: I'm here.

Vice Mayor Mena: And if there is any public comment on the...

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Ms. Cruz: No.

Vice Mayor Mena: Not you. Not you. If there is anybody else who would like to comment on the Mobility Hub, we are going to be taking that next.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. Thank you. Alright. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Because I don't want to overstep, I wrote it down this time. This is not off the cuff. Years ago, we had an administration that had the attitude that they knew what was best for our city, regardless of what the residents wanted. As time went by, we have seen our elected officials pay more attention to us, the people. They understand, I believe, that their power comes from us. At election time most of you promised, in one way or another, to be the voice of the people. Today, I'm here to ask you to put aside your wishes and wants, to stop trying to be daddy and mommy knows best and listen to us. As you discuss the items before you today, please do what you know is right and as promised not to hear but listen to the people. Please remember that even after an item is voted on, Robert's Rules gives you the opportunity to bring it back if you were on the prevailing side. And to finish, after all promises made should be kept. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you Ms. Cruz.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, Mr. Holmes was going to speak on the Mobility Hub, but he said he'd rather address it during the public comments.

Mayor Lago: Fine.

Mr. Holmes: I thank all of you for doing the Mobility Hub, its just incredibly great leadership. I chose, Mayor, to do the public comment section, because I think I get three minutes instead of two minutes, so I apologize for that confusion. Safety. I think that our citizens will want to know that there is a tremendous safety issue involved in this Mobility Hub and I think that our citizens, our voters, our residents, our businesses can take great satisfaction and great reassurance that the city is hitting a Babe Ruth home run on safety with this Mobility Hub. We pride ourselves on Coral Gables with being leaders, sometimes even national leaders. This building with its safety breakthrough technology is going to save lives. There have been critics and criticisms made and that none of them mention safety, because they are avoiding this, because they know that the city is right, the Gensler design is right for safety, and the critics are wrong on safety. We had a slide; can you try to get that up there. When I came back to Coral Gables, the time of the Village of Merrick Park and I really did not anticipate becoming active in Coral Gables politics or even running for office, I'm a perennial losing candidate, I'm a perennial loser, but I'm involved and the reason is that I realize that we could try to bring a department store to anchor low-rise Miracle Mile retail to a redevelopment of a parking garage, specifically the one right behind my property and the one down the road, 345. So, I've been focusing on parking garages for over 20 years, and one of the most constant refrains, if you look at the slide in this picture here, what you'll see is, it says that the FBI data show that parking garages are the third most dangerous type of property in our country, and you don't normally think about safety in a parking garage, but women do actually. I found this over the years. You talk to them about parking garages, they say, well you know what,
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I really don't like them, they are too dark, criminals can hang out there. And then you find out that there are serious safety problems. So, if we look at our two alternatives, let's say with this parking garage. Look at the garage on Aragon, which we think is a nice city garage, but guess what, its dangerous. Guess what, if we do the Mobility Hub as the city has shown extraordinary leadership in finding a safe way to do a garage, we are going to have no problems. If somebody is being mugged in the new garage, someone can see it out on the street and call 911. Whereas, if we go to, what some of the critics want, which is something akin to the garage behind the old John Martins Pub, that is a dark garage, and it's a garage that the FBI tells us may result in muggings or even killings. I want the public, I want all the people who care so deeply about Coral Gables, about Miracle Mile, to be aware of the safety factor. The city is showing George Merrick leadership and embracing and finding and putting out here the safest possible parking garage that will save lives. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you my friend. Thank you for being here.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Let's close the public comment. Let's move onto our 10 a.m. time certain. I apologize that we're 15 minutes late.