

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item G-4**  
**April 12, 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**

**Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz**

**Resilience & Sustainability Manager, Matt Anderson**

**Public Speaker(s)**

---

Agenda Item G-4 [Start: 12:08 p.m.]

An update from staff on stormwater catch basins and grates.  
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto G-4. Mr. Anderson, Hermes, Mr. Diaz.

Public Works Director Diaz: Good morning, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director.

Resilience & Sustainability Manager Anderson: Matt Anderson, Resilience & Sustainability Manager.

Mayor Lago: I put this on the agenda, because this is one of my projects that I want to see done, and I want to see expanded. There is more and more trash we are dealing with in the downtown and we've got to make sure it doesn't get into the catch basins. So, we've seen the success of the installation of some of the grates that we are putting into the catch basins. I want to understand when are we rolling out the rest of the downtown. When is the rest of the downtown going to be done?

*City Commission Meeting*  
*April 12, 2022*

Public Works Director Diaz: This is a pilot program.

Mayor Lago: I got it.

Public Works Director Diaz:...that we started about a year ago, we put three baskets and seven grates. The baskets we're able to quantify the volume that was picked up, analyze it at 161 pounds per filter. If you put it into perspective, we picked up about 1.2 million pounds of garbage with the street sweeper. In order for us to implement the baskets for, not only downtown, just the basing that goes out of the alpha, we are looking at, at least over \$400,000, that was based on the original estimate for about a year ago, the price now will probably be bigger than that. We also don't have the staffing to clean them.

Mayor Lago: Let me ask you a question. Are any other cities that you are aware of over the United States going down this route?

Public Works Director Diaz: I know that Miami has installed some drains in a few areas.

Mayor Lago: I'm talking about putting baskets in the critical areas.

Public Works Director Diaz: Oh, absolutely its being done in other areas.

Mayor Lago: And if we put together a plan and we go after federal funding and state funding, could this be an opportunity to be able to implement and get the \$400,000 we need to install them.

Public Works Director Diaz: We could try and get a grant for that. There will also be recurring costs maintenance-wise, we are looking at over \$100,000 a year. We don't have the staffing to clean them regularly.

Mayor Lago: Let me tell you the importance of this Mr. Diaz, and I want to have my colleagues consider this and I don't want to talk too much because we have a lot of stuff on the agenda. There comes a point where there is a cost, correct, but there comes a point where we have to put the bay as a priority. The bay represents billions and billions of dollars of economic push, of economics for this community, it's a driver. As the Vice Chair of the Watershed Board, I was named by the County Commission and by the board members, we have to set an example. And I know it cost \$100,000, I understand that, maybe cost 75, maybe cost 50, I don't know the exact numbers, but I'm willing to chase this project down using state and federal dollars if we are ready to go. I'd like to understand what it will take for us to have a plan in place so that I can go and chase those funding down. This year, for example, we are hopefully, if we don't get vetoed, this Commission is going to bring home the most amount of money that's ever been brought back from Tallahassee. That was a concerted effort making four trips of this Commission. This is a priority for my administration. We have to stop, I'm not saying you, we, all of us have to stop with, yes it cost money, but what we're doing right now is unacceptable. The garbage is going into the bay is unacceptable. We've got to find an answer, and we have to lead by example and hopefully other cities will follow suit also, because everybody is responsible. We are the city that's most

*City Commission Meeting  
April 12, 2022*

downstream in certain points, where we basically get all the garbage, we get all the pollutants. You've seen it all our canals. You've seen it in our areas, right before it goes out into the bay. So, to me, this is a priority. I want to find a way that we are ready to go and try to get us that funding, so we can implement this.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor we have two positive systems; one that is this one, which is the one that's Ponce related, it's the Ponce trench that goes north to the old industrial section across, and actually dumps water at Riviera right near Coral Gables High School. Also, the FDOT trench dumps water right there. Then we have a second system that goes west and then goes south to the pumping station that's right near the Girl Scout House. This system will require maintenance probably four times a year.

Public Works Director Diaz: Quarterly – if we put the baskets, yes, it will have to be looked at quarterly.

City Manager Iglesias: Because Mayor, its impervious. If something goes wrong, it goes up, its going to go into the property, so that's why it requires maintenance so much, because its all impervious.

Mayor Lago: But my issue is not the basket, my issue is that at a minimum we can do the grates, and that will require, again, sometimes when you see the grates, you see garbage and you see all kinds of things around the grate. It means that we've got to pick it up with the street sweeper.

Public Works Director Diaz: The grates are a lot cheaper and the follow up maintenance...

Mayor Lago: And it's a positive step in the right direction. You don't think so?

Public Works Director Diaz: It is. Its unquantifiable because there is no way to figure it out how much garbage went into the grates or garbage picked it up. The grates mostly will prevent the big things from falling into the drainage system. So that's what the grates will do.

Mayor Lago: I'd rather have us pick up that garbage with our street sweeper than have it go into our bay, that's just my opinion. Mr. Anderson, what's your opinion on the matter?

Resilience & Sustainability Manager Anderson: I agree with Hermes. You know what we've seen through this year pilot study is about 96 to 99 percent of the debris that was captured in the baskets is organic matter, leaf debris. So, I think, and Hermes can correct me, we are street sweeping that area probably more frequently than any other area in the city along Ponce.

Public Works Director Diaz: I believe we sweep it most places get swept twice a week, and we collect a significant amount of debris. Approximately 2021, it was 1.2 million pounds, roughly, worth of debris.

Mayor Lago: Can you tell be before the next Commission meeting, we can schedule a meeting. I want to understand what it would take to just, at a minimum install the grates in downtown.

*City Commission Meeting  
April 12, 2022*

Public Works Director Diaz: We can definitely.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk for the next Commission meeting, can you please put on the agenda grates in downtown, installation of pending grates in downtown, please.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes Mr. Mayor. We also have a member of the public requesting to speak on this. Its Mr. Armillio Lopez.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Lopez, good morning, good afternoon, excuse me.

Mr. Lopez: Good afternoon and thank you for talking about this topic. So, I'm with SOP Technologies and we're the ones that provide the solution. I just wanted to say that if funding is an issue, I'm more than willing to help provide more data, more information for the grant applications and for any resources that I can in order to achieve this. Our mission is to stop ocean pollution, so that's really what we are here to do. And if the technology implementation of choice is for the curb opening rather than the baskets, I'm pretty supportive. Like your team mentioned, anything that can help to protect the bay and also to the credit of Public Works, we went out there with the vacuum truck team and everybody has been very supportive from Public Works. And I completely agree with Hermes that funding for maintenance should also be considered, because if we're not allowing this debris and trash to get into the bay, it has to be collected. So, any technology implementation should always consider the ongoing maintenance cost for personnel and equipment that the team will need. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. So, for the next Commission meeting, I would love to know what the costs are. You heard that he's willing to help out in any way or form. Tell me what you need so we can install the grates and at a minimum, it may not look pretty, but again, similar to what Commissioner Anderson was saying before, if the leaves and the dust are on your property and you just blow them into somebody else's yard, it's the same thing we are doing with our catch basins. Yes, you don't see the garbage, but the garbage is there. Correct me if I'm wrong, we've got to deal with this issue, and I would love nothing more than the county to see what the city is doing and say listen, we've got to follow their example. We've always led, so I understand. At a minimum the grates are not going to cost money, except for the installation, the procurement of them. Maybe we can't do the catch, excuse me, the baskets now, but maybe someday we can find money for in the future at the federal or the state level.

Commissioner Anderson: I think it's a very big step in the right direction, because if you think about water quality for allowing all these leaves which inevitably have some oil and so forth with them, just the leaves alone end up in our bay, you're talking about dumping organic matter in there and more algae blooms. So, as it breaks down, we don't want to turn our waterway into a compost bin, we are going to have to dredge the waterway. You are not going to escape the cost. I think they'll just get bigger. Its an economic impact for our entire region as well as our waterway.

Resilience & Sustainability Manager Anderson: And Mayor, to your point about the city showing leadership. I do want to add that we have been at the cutting edge of this. I don't know of any other  
*City Commission Meeting*  
*April 12, 2022*

city that's committed the amount of resources to studying our waterway and what we're doing with FIU and UM and really studying and coming up with where these nutrients source pollutions are coming from, impacting our waterway. We are currently piloting with FIU as well, a floating wetland off of Blue Road-Anteragona, so our city has been at the forefront as far as looking at solutions to help deal with, not only the health of Biscayne Bay, but the health of our local waterways.

Mayor Lago: Listen, Mr. Anderson, that's no longer in doubt, we're the leaders and its through your efforts and Public Works and the City Manager and Solanch and our team. But I want to continue pushing the envelope forth, and I think that we can do certain things that don't cost a lot of money and that can have a big impact. Listen, if the grates aren't installed and the garbage just sits there that means that we've got to pick up more garbage and that's what I've been saying in the downtown for a long time, just like I talked to Ms. Bell and I'm waiting to know when we are going to replant the downtown and that's something I'm going to talk about at the end of the meeting. These are all things; the downtown is going to get better. The downtown is going to look cleaner. The downtown is going to look more presentable, because we are working on it together, all of us. Thank you very much.

Public Works Director Diaz: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: So, I look forward to the next update at the next Commission meeting.