

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-1
September 24, 2024
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item E-1 [9:35 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Code of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, Chapter 2, Entitled “Administration,” Article III “Boards, Commissions, Committees,” Division 1 “Generally” by amending Section 2-52 “Qualification and Appointment of Members” in order to expand the benefits offered to members of City boards; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item E-1.

City Attorney Suarez: E-1 is an Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Code of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, Chapter 2, Entitled “Administration,” Article III “Boards, Commissions, Committees,” Division 1 “Generally” by amending Section 2-52 “Qualification and Appointment of Members” in order to expand the benefits offered to members of City boards; providing for a

City Commission Meeting

repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. As you recall, this was deferred from the last meeting and so, the ordinance as proposed has no changes from the last meeting. It's the same version.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Madam City Attorney. As the sponsor, the sole intent of this legislation is very simple. Personally, I'm not bringing anything very complex before the Commission, I'm just trying to bring simple things that, again, benefit the residents and people who serve on this board. Do we have anybody from staff that can provide further details in regard to information that was requested? Mr. Director, thank you for being here. There were several questions in regard to usage by members on different boards. Can you give a little bit more clarity, so people understand the depth and breadth of the concerns and why there is no concerns.

Community Recreation Director: We looked at, based on the request when we were last here, we looked at the usage of both Venetian Pool and the Tennis Centers as discussed by board members. What we found is actually less than I had estimated over the past year; Venetian Pool we had seven different board members that came and used it, so its only seven in a year, pretty small. Tennis – we had four board members that used it; three of the four ranged from using it four times in a year to using it eight times, and we had one board member that used it regularly, equal to one-and-a-half times per week. So not a super extensive use. If we're looking at value, like we said, if someone is coming and bringing their family. If you're looking at the pool or tennis, its between a few dollars, six to nine dollars, depending on what you're playing, whether tennis or pool; and for a family of four, the board member is already free, so you'd be paying like about \$18; family of five, you'd be paying up to \$24, depending on whether its tennis or pool. Tennis if you are playing in prime time, it's a little more expensive than what the admission is to the pool. So that's on a given day. What you are doing in terms of worth is, right now they get what's equal to a single person membership and you're giving all the board members a family membership. Now, the dollar cost of that, it's a few hundred dollars per person, but that's if they all use it at the same time, and as our use has shown, you're not getting that.

Mayor Lago: If I may, and I don't want to put words in your mouth. This is a nominal impact.

Community Recreation Director: Yes, in my opinion it is.

Mayor Lago: Miniscule impact.

Community Recreation Director: Yes, based on the information we got.

Mayor Lago: Obviously, this is something that I can add on personally to my own ordinance and say, review it after one year, see the impact after one year, come back to the Commission and say, this is the impact the uptick of cost associated with it.

Community Recreation Director: I think that's a great idea.

Mayor Lago: I continue moving forward with the legislation as is, or you can just repeat it, if it has a significant impact on the bottom line.

Community Recreation Director: I'm in agreement.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to comment. I have supported this item from the get-go. If I'm not mistaken, I think I mentioned last meeting, years ago board members had more benefits than they have today, access to different things, because of some financial hardships that the city experienced over the years. There was a cut back, cut back on what board members were allowed to participate in. I think we're in a position now where we should, like the Mayor is doing and my legislation in terms of going back and looking at the folks that serve our city and find a way to reward them for the service that they do. So, I think this is exceptional. We should do more of this.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I would concur, through the Mayor, with those comments and it's a small benefit, but for those of us who don't golf, this is at least recognition. I mean not everybody has the time to go out there and golf all day long, I don't, even as a board member. I never had an opportunity to really take advantage of any of the benefits of being a board member. We did it for special reasons, but the recognition is, I think, warranted and necessary. So, with that, Mayor, I'd like to move it, if you have no further comment.

Mayor Lago: No problem.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Commissioner Castro: I have no objection to this. The only concern I have is that we're not capping the household at least to four, and I feel that I have the full trust in our board members, but I feel there should be some limitation to at least four as a household. Are you open to amending it?

Mayor Lago: I'm not because if you have a third child then you have five people, so you have to leave one at home. So, at the end of the day, its like you said, it's a nominal, nominal impact on the board, so I think that personally the legislation – This is as easy as its going to get. Like I said before, I'm not bringing anything complex to the Commission at all. I'm bringing a simple thing as possible that are bread and butter items that should get full approval from the Commission. If you want to disagree with it, its perfectly fine, but based on the merits, this is just a simple, like the director said, there is nominal impact, I'm even giving you an opportunity at the one-year mark to be able to say, its working, or it has a very significant financial impact, all 300 board members are using it, let's scrap my legislation. I'm even giving you that safety valve to address it. So, I think that everybody should be able to attend Venetian Pool as a family, not have to leave somebody home or have to pay for one of their additional members.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'd like to add to that comment. I think it also creates an undue burden on staff having to do headcounts on families. It's just too much.

Community Recreation Director: I can say that tennis by virtue of if you're playing doubles, that's four on a court, its very hard to bring five to play tennis, so you usually – so tennis is an easier one. With the pool, you know, I mean if you have three children.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It makes no sense.

Commissioner Fernandez: I understand your concern. I think the one-year mark we'll have a better understanding if it did have a large impact, if we did have families showing up with all their friends, the kids' friends, that's something that we would need to keep track of, but I think the Mayor's addition of a one-year revision on this, I think that at least calms my concern on that.

Community Recreation Director: We will discuss with staff to make sure that once we've enacted this that we look at that and we're going to mark down if they are bringing parties of six, parties of seven, and we'll take a look at that. As you said, its our hope, we trust that they don't take advantage of the process, but we'll be able to see it and the one-year mark would be great, because if it turns out as the Mayor states, people are bringing parties of seven, parties of eight, all 300, 280 board members are using it, then we might have to relook at it.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Commissioner Menendez: We're ready.

Mayor Lago: We have a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I have a member of the public requesting to speak on the item, Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I have an issue because when we talk about members of the household, if you look at the board members, committee members that we have, we have a great number that are my age or older, and most of us do not have children living with us. So, this would not apply to those of us that take care of our grandkids, but they do not live with us, they are not members of our household, by definition. I think, to me, is a big issue because not everybody has children living with them and I'm not talking adult children, I'm talking about minors that we take care of, because parents work, or whatever the case, and those will be excluded.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, if I may.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm in favor of passing this as is, and we can look into the grandchildren at another point, give staff some time to digest that, because I think that's an analysis, they'll some more time with. I'd be in your same shoes, because my grandkids are not members of my household either.

City Commission Meeting

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Castro: Yes
Commissioner Fernandez: Yes
Commissioner Menendez: Yes
Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes
Mayor Lago: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)