

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item L
December 13, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item L [11:55 a.m.]

Discussion Items

Mayor Lago: Are there any other further comments?

Commissioner Menendez: I just have one thing to add, I'm sorry, I usually have a visual, but I can't do everything.

Commissioner Anderson: We will imagine it like you do.

Commissioner Menendez: More or less. December 18th, Miracle Theater, 5 p.m. free to Coral Gables residents, the original Star Wars, is going to be shown at the Miracle Theater. I'm hosting. Tickets are actually going fast, I was told, obviously for the right reasons. The original Star Wars was shown at the Miracle Theater, so December 18th, Sunday, 5 p.m., free to Coral Gables residents. You can purchase the tickets online or directly at the Miracle Theater. Bring the family, bring the grandkids, bring the kids, bring the grandparents, because its definitely a family affair.

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Mayor Lago: Love it. Commissioner Anderson.

Commissioner Anderson: Happy holidays. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year – we won't see each other.

Mayor Lago: Yes, we won't see each other.

Commissioner Anderson: So, I hope you all have a blessed holiday season. Grab the moments before they fleet by, that's what I have to say to you.

Mayor Lago: Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just reiterate that. Happy holidays to everybody and thank you to staff for everything this year and the year ahead and looking forward to it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Just to reiterate again, World Cup Finals, December 18th, please, I've asked my staff.

Commissioner Anderson: What time?

Mayor Lago: Starting at 9:30 a.m. I've asked my staff, I've asked the City Manager, Martha, to have, please get the word out. This is a family event, the more the merrier. We want to have hundreds of people out there. The business community come out and enjoy. We are going to have food trucks. I know that we are working on getting some food trucks out there. It would be nice to see a lot of people enjoying themselves that morning and really celebrating, not only soccer, but celebrating what an exceptional community we live in. So, let's do everything in our power to get the word out there.

Vice Mayor Mena: If Martha can get us something we can share on social media.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, that would be great. Make sure you put it on my calendar, please, I forget things when they are not on my calendar.

Commissioner Menendez: And if Fred and Carolina can directly communicate the event to all the kids and families that are already registered at the Youth Center, you already have plenty of families that would love to participate.

City Manager Iglesias: We will do that, and it will be on E-NEWS tomorrow also.

Mayor Lago: Okay. And I want to make sure that we send everything to police, fire, all the employees. Make sure the employees are aware, please. I ask the employees to join us. Maybe we can do something special for the employees, maybe a voucher or something help cover the cost or myself, whatever it is. Provide them with a free lunch or something, if the employees are interested in coming and joining us on a Sunday. I know people have a lot of commitments with family, but

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it would be nice to have a good mix of families and employees out there celebrating with us, police and fire. Before I close out, I'd like to bring up, Mr. Manager, if I may, our Police Chief, just to discuss a little bit of police activity that's been happening in the city. Everything is good. We are being very diligent, numbers again, continue to trend in a downward fashion, but I want the Police Chief just to talk about a little bit about the Hartnett issue and also talk a little bit about what we need to do during Christmas. We need to be vigilant. We need to understand. We live in a community where people are coming to, not only enjoy our great amenities, but also to rob this community. So, we need to be very thoughtful, be very careful. Lock your cars, you're coming home, get off your phone, make sure there is nobody behind you. Be very careful – make sure you have your lights on in your house. I'm not trying to scare people, but I want people to think proactively, to ensure that they are not put in a position where they leave a backdoor open or a front door open, or their house is not properly lit. But I'll let the professional, our Chief talk about that.

Police Chief Hudak: Thank you Mayor. The one thing that we do see this time of year, starting from Cyber Monday through Black Tuesday and all the other retail things that they have is, we have porch pirates, as we affectionately, unaffectionately refer to them as, where they are going and preying on them. To date, and I believe it was sometime yesterday they told me, our NSAs have moved over 680 packages from obviously where they are at. We put doorknockers on.

Mayor Lago: I just want to congratulate the NSAs. I've gotten multiple calls from residents that told me hey, I received a phone call, I received a note, had an NSA track me down and say hey, listen, there is a package visible from the street. So, they are doing a really good job.

Police Chief Hudak: They are. And again, their interaction with everyone has been very positive, but they've also – that's our eyes and ears. We have a big campaign going on with Careless with your key fab means carless tomorrow. When I tell you we've – some of the cameras that we've had, we've watched people get cars stolen within 30 to 40 seconds that somebody parks, they go inside, they see it. We had our PSI meetings yesterday with my Command staff and started talking about some of the innovative things that we're doing working with Broward County, working with Miami-Dade. This is an organized group that is stealing cars, using juveniles. They understand some of the limits that we will do in pursuing those individuals. We've recovered cars within two hours with some of the technology both in the cars and otherwise. So, a lot of it has to do and I know I jokingly say, sometimes we all make stupid mistakes. I can't fix stupid mistakes. Keep the keys with you. Some people don't even know that there is a valet key in their glove box, and they come back and take it. We've had stories where people have had a car stolen, got it replaced, got it stolen the next day. So, we're averaging between on the low side, 70 percent of our cars are stolen in the city with key fobs in them, and its just technology is a scary thing. There are certain cars where they can override the key fab frequency with computers, and they take them that way. Is definitely be aware of your surroundings, is what we're looking at. We do have increased patrol,

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our holiday bike patrols, as well as down in certain areas where we have foot traffic. We've seen an increase, which is a good thing for our businesses and our partygoers as well, but we do have our DUI patrols out there, so again, I enforce everybody that's going to holiday parties use Uber, that's a big thing. The other issue that came up and I had a lot of questions this week was, the issues that came over on Campusano Drive. The gentleman was taken into custody yesterday by the federal marshals. He is now looking at federal charges as well as state charges. He was arraigned this morning; I think he was in bond court. Commissioners, I'm going to be very honest with you. I know we take our officers, and our firefighters do a lot of things. Firefighters – everybody loves the fire guys, got it, because they are saving. We're the ones that have to kind of enforce those laws. When anyone, and I mean when anyone would cross or attack your families or especially these officers' families or target them, I'm going to have a zero-tolerance policy. Now, I say that being fiduciary sound, we are going to put in for cost reimbursement for the individual for the round-the-clock and he was basically on house arrest; and my reasoning for doing that, along with the Manager and talking with our City Attorney, was that I wanted to make sure that everybody in that neighborhood was safe, not just our officers. It is appalling to me that anyone would go to any of our houses, and we sign up for these jobs for a lot of different reasons, we being the police, but also elected officials, federal judges. We've come to the point where we have to do something and realize, we all signed up for this, our families didn't, and I mean this is the public safety part of it. I hope that those families sleep a little bit better, because the individual is going to be held accountable. This is not his first sign. I don't there were a lot of people because of where he lived. There were other people that were worried about it, which is why we did what we did. We use technology, so everything I've come and asked you for we put to use, and we will continue, but I thought it was important that we do it that way and for the moment he wouldn't come out of that house, and we didn't have the legal authority to go in and working very well with the State Attorney's Office. I will tell you, to your point, Mayor, I'm going to see the Governor, because I think there are some things that we can do to increase the laws and the reality of not just making it a misdemeanor, to come to some officer's mother's home with a golf club in your hand and come to the station with a golf club. There is evidence of this. And again, I don't think its anything intentional from the law side, but we're going to work with the State Attorney's Office and push to try and spearhead that for all law enforcement, first responders throughout the country. So, I understand that was quite a presence. By Friday we couldn't – I wasn't going to sustain it through the weekend because we had the parade and everything else, so we used the technology, we used the CIC Center, the person and the family were being watched the entire time. Whatever the person may be, criminal, whatever psychological issues they have, I'm all in favor of that, but our job is to protect everybody else. So that was that presence that – it was really kind of alarming to a lot of people, and we'll continue to work with it. Today, the person was released, not on the federal side, on the state side. So, I was just advised that the judge is okay. We're not going to be there, but we are obviously aware of the situation.

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Mayor Lago: Chief, first off, thank you very much for your efforts. This is my neighborhood. I live two blocks away and I think that you, along with your entire team conducted yourselves very professionally. I got calls from a lot of residents; everybody felt the same way. You mentioned about firefighters how admired they are. Let me tell you a quick little story that I haven't told anyone. So, about two weeks ago, I was on the way to a baptism where I'm the Godfather to a friend of mine's son, and on the way there I passed by the park on Alhambra, and I noticed about ten police officers there. They had pulled over two gentlemen. Like I normally do, I stop by, and I asked the police officers how they are doing, is everything fine. They had stopped two individuals because a resident had called and these individuals were casing the neighborhood in broad daylight, probably 11 o'clock in the morning, in broad daylight they were casing the neighborhood and they had come from West Miami and I think South Miami where they had stolen items out of vehicles that, obviously, were retrieved inside the car; and what they were looking for was obviously, to find victims, find individuals, cars, homes, that looked like they were abandoned, people were on vacation. So, we need to be very vigilant, incredibly vigilant, because these are individuals that are coming to our neighborhoods and looking to rob our working families, and the police did an incredible job. They got those individuals off the – this is my final point was, we can't have a police officer on every single corner, so we need to be vigilant when we are in our neighborhoods. We need to see who's walking around the neighborhood, who's driving, when you see somebody suspicious, looking for an address, obviously is a different story, engage people, ask them, see who these people are, because I know that a lot of opportunities where the police officers are able to solve crime or able to apprehend someone come from resident interactions with those individuals. I'm not a police officer. I was very happy to see them.

Police Chief Hudak: If you go to the Holiday Inn I can make you a police officer, because apparently if anybody stays at a Holiday Inn, they could do those things. To your point, Mayor, and no kidding aside. That was a phone call from a resident who said somebody was suspicious and we are also able to tie them to another attempted burglary on Mandevia; and to your point, and the see something say something, its easy for me to say that, because quite proudly I've sat in front of you before and up in Obispo we had a regular burglary alarm, we're there in five minutes. We catch two more people tied to other burglaries and other places. So, the see something say something its got to be a mantra, it can't just be a saying, because we pride ourselves and you've heard me say in public to our taxpayers, they pay a lot of money in taxes, but that's part of it. You can't get the three-minute emergency response time from the police department, and I think that's a lot of the partnership that we see. Chief Hanlon is not here, but he had kind of tussle with a homeless person who was obviously psychologically challenged and had some violent tendencies to him. We're all in it. So, it's that time of year, but that's the partnership that we look for every day.

Mayor Lago: By the way, it could be anybody.

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Police Chief Hudak: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Criminals don't come in one specific look. It could be anybody. These are two young Hispanic males that looked pretty clean-cut and who knew what they were up to. It was incredible. So, another thing I wanted to mention since we are here in the public and the Sunshine affords us this opportunity. I met with some residents in Gables Estates this past week. They were talking about the car theft that occurred. Again, kudos to the police department, they addressed the issue.

Police Chief Hudak: When they called us, we had it back in two hours.

Mayor Lago: They had the car back in two hours. But let's talk about the issue, talk about the issue. Just so you understand, look how brazen these people are, this is how brazen they are. They are going into Gables Estates that has, number one, a security guard, cameras, roving police, private police – you've got to really, really not be scared of the law, and then they go into someone's property, steal their car, drive off, and remember, goes to the point where we mentioned before, please, I just got a new electric car – the electric car, the windows, the rear windows, if you do not close they stay open. That is a call sign for thieves that they understand that that car – they don't even need to get out their car. If they know the make and model – not the headlights, but...

Police Chief Hudak: The sideview mirrors.

Mayor Lago: The sideview mirrors, thank you Chief, are not properly adjusted, meaning that the car hasn't been locked, they are exposed, so they know they can get off and that car is open. Yes, they may steal some change, they may steal your wallet, if you leave it in there, your glasses, some documents, a laptop. Its just a heartache. Close your car – close your car and take your keys and in certain instances, please, if you live in one of these gated communities, even if you feel that safe because things don't happen, take your car keys with you, don't leave your car keys inside the car. Its just more work for the police. They have their hands full already enough with a litany of different issues. Let's not make that even harder by making an unforced error like we say in football. And we do it because we become complacent, and we trust the things that we are doing here in the city. My last point was that, can we start connecting communities with our security cameras system?

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I know that you and I talked about that. I want to talk to the Manager about that, have my colleagues – places like Journeys End, Gables Estates, Coco Plum, we need to connect them to our system so that we can help the police do their job even better.

Police Chief Hudak: Right now, we have one ALPR system that ties into ours, but it isn't our vigilant system. So, we had come up with, we were talking about this yesterday at our Major staff meeting. We can offer to each of the homeowner's association, this is the system that, not that we
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recommend, this is our system if you want to tie into us. Now, there is an expectation to some of the homeowners' groups that we are going to give them the information, that's not necessarily the case, because when its run through our system it is protected and confidential. Now, we will know that a stolen car or something out of the way is done. Again, the issue with that are these public streets, so they can slow them down, they can get them, but if a car turns down the road and we get an alert, we are going to notify them right away anyway, they can still call us.

Vice Mayor Mena: I really think the vast majority of those neighborhoods would sign up for that. They would want to have that.

Police Chief Hudak: There is a cost associated with it that they would have to pick up and supply the camera feed to us, and our recommend that we all tie into one, because...

Vice Mayor Mena: They all predominantly have one point of ingress and egress, it's not that expensive.

Police Chief Hudak: Well, compared to closing it and making a private street, which is a heck of a lot more expensive, that's the only way you can stop, that's the best thing. And our ALPR system has proven, its worth its weight in gold, so hopefully they would think about doing that.

Mayor Lago: When you say additional cost, what are we looking at?

Police Chief Hudak: Somewhere between the camera system and whatever, could be about \$50,000 in that ballpark. I would have to get the numbers. I have my people working on it, of what they would partner with whatever the camera company would be, but it's the software side on ours so that we could see it from all different angles instead of looking into another computer that has several different things. When we first approached this, I believe it was Chief Weiner that started this program. The one HOA that still has it is a different system that ours. So that's just the one that we use for all of our cameras of the 201 that we have, that's camera that vigilant system is the one that we use.

Mayor Lago: I don't want to go down the route of forcing these communities to adopt this technology, but I really see the value in it.

Police Chief Hudak: Mayor, if we put together a package, we can give you all a package and meet with the homeowners' associations, as we usually do annually, and give them once they contact us, hey listen, if you're thinking about this package, this is what we recommend is the easiest way to contact us.

Mayor Lago: Can you do me a favor, I'll go with you.

Police Chief Hudak: Okay.

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Mayor Lago: Can you prepare a package, some talking points so that I'm more versed on the technology, obviously, you have Raimundo and yourself are very well versed on this, but I'd like to attend because I think its important. If we can get 5, 6, 4 of those homeowner's associations on a yearly basis to engage, it just spreads our ability to really protect the neighborhoods even more. Its just about redundancy, overlap, that's what it's all about.

Police Chief Hudak: The evidence, without going into the case, the evidence we have about the individual is all Ring cameras, including the cameras at our stations. So that's the kind of technology that we need to put into work with people coming in and out as well.

Vice Mayor Mena: Are we done on this subject?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: I have another topic. I texted it to the Manager and Hermes, but on Old Cutler and 57th there's a very large light post with a wall that kinds of comes out of it, one of these big square light posts with an old school light on it, somebody hit it and its literally on the floor. Your guys were there. Somebody crashed head-on into it. Its laying on the floor there, but I guess that's technically a county right-of-way.

City Manager Iglesias: Its county right-of-way.

Vice Mayor Mena: But its our sign, a Coral Gables post.

City Manager Iglesias: We are looking at repairs and...

Vice Mayor Mena: When you turn onto Old Cutler from 57th, there's a sign light post, and a sign that says, welcome to Coral Gables or something like that.

Police Chief Hudak: That's where they hit? That would be ours.

Vice Mayor Mena: I can give you the photos. Again, your guys know, because they were there, I saw them.

Police Chief Hudak: We'll work on it and make sure...

Vice Mayor Mena: I think Hermes was saying that they put in – that they would need to probably put in an insurance claim.

Police Chief Hudak: But if its in the way, we'll have to mark it off.

Vice Mayor Mena: Its just laying down on the floor on the grass right now, but we should get it back up, because it looks terrible.

Mayor Lago: Thank you Chief. I appreciate it. Thank you so much for your hard work. One last point. I saw that we are continuing to work on the landscaping. We have a lot of work to do on Ponce. There is a lot of junction boxes that have been there for 20-30 years that are just exposed, now that we have removed those trees. A lot of the landscaping, for example, I sent an e-mail yesterday to Deena, we need a little bit more lushness, for example, in front of Zucca, in front of Bank of America. I know that we are still working on it, but I don't want to go through the Christmas month and not have – it looks kind of raggedy especially in front of the Colonnade, we need a little bit more work there. So, if we could have our team just to look at it and see what's going on. I know that the work is not done, but I imagine some mulching needs to happen and certain things are additional, the scope needs to be completed.

Commissioner Anderson: May I add.

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Anderson: It may or may not work. When I was up in Montana, I saw they had...put on some of these boxes in areas where you couldn't really do anything with them, but it looked nice.

Mayor Lago: Yes, they are actually contemplating right now doing some foliage to try to make those – all that technology that's on the corners addresses the light, traffic lights, kind of conceal. I met with the county, we had a discussion to see if there's been some new technology over the last 30 years in an effort to try to reduce the size of those, they are not transformers, what would they be called, Mr. Manager?

City Manager Iglesias: Which?

Mayor Lago: Traffic light management.

City Manager Iglesias: So those traffic controllers. They are control boxes.

Mayor Lago: It's horrible, horrible – control boxes. And they said they haven't updated the technology.

City Manager Iglesias: They are signalization control boxes.

Mayor Lago: I would love to see maybe something smaller we could tuck away, not be in the middle, especially with ADA issues that we have, for example, if you go in front of Bulla – two garbage cans, trees, the traffic controller. There is limited space for people to walk as it is.

City Manager Iglesias: We can talk to the county. I know they are trying to replace a lot of lights right now with different technology to remove – instead of going with the loops that are on the

pavement, they are looking at camera technology to manage better the light sequencing. As part of that, we can look into the size.

Mayor Lago: I'd love to know what's going on with that, that would be very nice. Are there any other comments? We're good. Listen, the holidays are the most wonderful time of the year, and the residents, the business owners, especially our employees and everyone who visits our city are the most wonderful part of our city. I want to say thank you for making this and every time of the year brighter for us, and allowing this Commission to lead, for us to listen, and for us to do everything in our power to make this city even better. We wish you and your beautiful family the happiest of holidays, a Merry Christmas, and a happy Hanukkah. I invite you all to join us as we light the Minora on Sunday, December 18th beginning at 4 p.m., at the Shabbat of Coral Gables. December 18th could be a wonderful day, we could see a great World Cup match, we could hatch Star Wars at the Cinema, we could light the Minora with our Jewish brothers and sisters, and I think that's what sums up what makes Coral Gables special. So, I want to wish everybody a fantastic New Year. I can't say thank you enough to our executive team, all my colleagues, everyone in this room, to everyone who joined us today. I love all of you. God bless and have a wonderful year. Thank you very much.