

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-9
April 26, 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
Assistant Public Works Director, John Osgood
Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller
Sustainability Specialist, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-9 [Start: 11:25:16 a.m.]

Initial discussion addressing trash collection in swales: issues and options.

Mayor Cason: Let's move onto H-9, discussion on swales, trash.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We'll have our Public Works Department come forward for the item. You'll remember John Osgood is a new addition to the Public Works team, he's been here for almost two months, yes?- and he's Assistant Director that supervises several initiatives including sanitation.

Mr. Osgood: Thank you. Good morning Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners and Madam Manager. John Osgood, Assistant Public Works Director for Public Services. The use and oftentimes the misuse of trash collection in parkway swales represents a real quality of life issue for residents and in some instances conflicts with community efforts to preserve and enhance the

beauty of our City. We have a brief presentation to frame your initial discussion on trash collection and swales, to answer questions about our existing service and conditions, to talk about short and longer term options, for how we manage, collect, and dispose of trash in the community and to receive direction as to the next steps in the future of the service model. So this slide summarizes our existing service and what's allowed currently under Code. Basically, weekly collection up to one cubic yard per week; no household refuse before 6 p.m. the evening prior to collection day; and yard clippings and cuttings are allowed to be placed anytime throughout the week in the swale.

Mayor Cason: Can I ask you at this point on the second point, one cubic yard per week, are we enforcing that?

Commissioner Keon: No.

Mr. Osgood: I don't believe so, but we can be very liberal with that.

Ms. Keller: Yes. We've been very liberal and staff generally will let up to four cubic yards be collected. In the past we have done some random studies to see what that translates to in dollars, and if my memory serves me and I think we did this study about two years ago, it was about \$120,000 per year.

Mayor Cason: But if it's a humungous and they cut a giant tree down and you see some of these eight feet high, those we make them pay, right?

Ms. Keller: Correct.

Ms. Osgood: We make them pay and we are looking a little bit deeper into the charge, the fee that we are charging for that, and we can have that larger discussion about whether we want to cover our full cost to service for picking those large piles up, because they do have an impact on return trips and they sometime interfere with our schedule and our ability to keep on schedule and sometimes the teams will have to pass – we have some pictures of these massive piles. I think we are charging \$10 a cubic yard on top of what we do, depending on the will of the Commission going forward, if we want to really charge and recoup our cost for that, we can have that larger policy discussion. Anecdotally, I think when residents ask their landscaper how much do you charge me to pick it up, we say there is a charge to pick it up, we do get the call and say, you know what?- come and get it, so we are figuring at least very competitive or maybe undercharging, but we can look more into that.

Commissioner Slesnick: Just an observation though. Some yards that are 5,000 foot lots don't have nearly as much trash pickup as the 20,000 foot lots, and again, there is no extra additional charge for trash pickup, but those larger properties do pay more in tax dollars.

Ms. Osgood: Yes.

Commissioner Slesnick: On a 20,000 foot lot they do have a lot more palm fauns and yard clippings and so forth.

Ms. Osgood: Yes. I'm glad you mentioned that too, because that's a model that I'm not familiar with. I'm more familiar with solid waste and sanitation being an Enterprise Fund, you'll hear me say cost of service over and over again, but it's a great point.

Commissioner Slesnick: We all pay the same fees for garbage fees, but I mean some yards in Coral Gables are, especially on Granada and our major thoroughfares they are much larger lots.

Mr. Osgood: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Think back five years ago, we used to make something like \$100,000 off of recycling, off of – I don't know whether the trash, that's gone down I think, because the value of recycling has gone down.

Mr. Osgood: We are going to touch on that in this presentation too. The commodity market has changed dramatically in the last five years, so where Coral Gables and other municipalities would be paid for recyclables and where they have to pay to dispose of them, but be paid for them, based on how many times they process. That's changed right now; we are in a low point at this point.

Mayor Cason: Is any of the trash, if it clean, mulched and available anywhere?- what happens to it?

Mr. Osgood: That's what I'm going...

Mayor Cason: You'll get on that too?

Mr. Osgood: Jessica may have a more definitive answer, but in terms of next steps that's something that Jessica has tasked me with as we look at options other than landfilling of material, because right now the vast majority of the tonnage, actually I'll do this slide right now, because it gets to your question. The key takeaway for this slide is that of the approximately

45,000 tons that we collect annually, trash represents by far the highest percentage of tonnage at around 75 percent. So in terms of both collection operations and aesthetics, it makes great sense to focus community discussion on that category of our waste stream; and relatable we'll touch on this later in the presentation. You'll notice the red figure for recycling costs, as is the case in a growing number of communities across the country the commodity market for most recycles at a very low point at this point in time. So for now we actually are paying as opposed to being paid or at least breaking even for processing our recyclables; and we have some strategies for addressing that as well, one of which would be to go out to bid and see what the other collection and processing options are. To Commissioner Slesnick's point, the following set of slides illustrate some of the operational and aesthetic issues that exist on a weekly basis throughout the community and may reflect or serve as an example for the type of conditions you've been observing over time. The first two are examples of just very large piles and work that most likely was done by a landscape company and placed for collection by our crew. I don't know that for sure, but it's an assumption that we made based on the size of the piles and the size of the stumps that were placed out there and so forth. The next few slides illustrate sort of the blight and just messy looking conditions, but they also represent an educational opportunity in terms of the volume of cardboard in the piles, and then over time we can get that material out of the trash piles and into the recycling where it belongs. So that one you see predominantly...

Commissioner Slesnick: Boxes.

Mr. Osgood: Just cardboard boxes placed out. This isn't particularly big, but it's an intersection and again, predominantly cardboard and sort of messy looking. Again, assuming that this material was placed out the night before that's legal or its within Code, but I think as you've been observing at 6 p.m. the night before it tends to stand out a little bit longer, and again, just the same sort of examples. The last two slides in this section represent opportunities, I think, for education and maybe telling our story a little bit better. In this one, just about everything in this pile should be in the garbage can or the recycle bin. This would be something that's illegal under current Code.

Commissioner Slesnick: Looks like someone moved.

Mr. Osgood: Looks like someone moved; there is household garbage, some of it in bags, some of it not, there is cardboard that could be recycled, but it does look like somebody just moved out and put that stuff. All of that could be not in the swale; it could all be either is in the garbage can and the recycle bin.

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you just a quick question, because we have a lot of residents that are watching our usual Commission meetings. When a resident sees this type of activity, you would recommend that they call Code Enforcement, correct?

Mr. Osgood: Yes. Correct. The next one is kind of on the opposite end of the scale, but this is one that I believe was called in as a miss-trash collection. So going forward we can let residents know that this type of situation they can use their garbage can for this or wait until they have more material to throw out and add it to a pile; and as it relates to our efforts to be as operationally and sustainably efficient as possible, maybe consider the time and labor, the miles driven, the fuel consumed, and the greenhouse gas emissions associated with collection trips of this type.

Mayor Cason: How many pits do we have?- something like 5,000?

Ms. Keller: Yes. We have approximately 5,000.

Mr. Osgood: So based on a review of past Commission discussions and talks with our trash collection team and feedback from residents. This slide just attempts to capture some of the key issue areas and suggested actions associated with, again the aesthetics and the operations of our current collection service. Specifically actions could include, prohibiting the place of garbage, pet waste, and recyclables in the trash pits.

Mayor Cason: Let me address that one there. The second one you are never going to get that, that waste. It's not the owners that throw it, its people walking by or their dogs who will just do it. They don't care. So, I don't think you are ever going to get the pets unless you have – even if you have more of these dog stations, people just walk by and they throw them.

Commissioner Lago: The only way that you are able and it just goes to what the Mayor is saying, the only way you are able to get rid of people dropping waste in the pits is by getting rid of the pits, that's the only option. Then you won't see people just dropping plastic bags full of...

Commissioner Slesnick: On somebody's yard.

Commissioner Lago: On somebody's yard or on their swale. I just want to be realistic on that. I don't want to set expectations that – especially around the golf course because when I drive by in front of your residents, Commissioner Slesnick, it's embarrassing what people do. You are not talking about four or five little plastic bags; you are talking about dozens and dozens of plastic bags in front of someone's home.

Commissioner Slesnick: I don't have a pit but my neighbor two doors down have...

Commissioner Lago: How bad is it?

Commissioner Slesnick: It has a space that's dug out and so people pitch it where there is a dug out space, they won't put it on the grass, but they will put it out where there is a dug out pit.

Commissioner Slesnick: But put it into context. How many bags do you see in that pit?

Commissioner Slesnick: I mean like five or six the day of trash pickup, but I also found them in the Banyan trees, people walking on the golf course pitch them into the Banyan tree roots. So when the trees were recently pruned you could see all the little plastic bags in there.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor let's hold our residents to a higher standard. Those plastic bags may not be the owners, but they are neighbors and you are going to see us placing a lot more pet stations citywide, and I think we need to keep the pressure on our residents as what's acceptable behavior. In many instances, we don't have many pet stations in areas like around Phillips Park, they've raised the issue, we are going to be adding them. Let's not say the item number two is, the pet waste issue is unrealistic to enforce, let's go ahead and let's push to enforce them.

Mayor Cason: Yes. I think the pet stations – we used to have two around Granada Golf Course. Somebody complained in the one toward Coral Way and it was taken away and moved somewhere else, so you had sort of “not in my backyard” applied here as well. But there is the other one on the North Greenway-South Greenway, you don't see too much in the way of the bags in the pits there because there is an option, you can put it in there.

Ms. Osgood: Thanks for the input on the pet waste too. To Madam Manager's point about the rest of that, especially in the placement of garbage the potential exist, and we can talk about this in a public, get input from the public and I appreciate the input here. But maybe as we, if we decide to transition away from anything but green organics in those swales, maybe the mindset won't be just to throw that bag on, especially if there are other bags already on top of the pile if it's the night before. I think this was mentioned before and it's a behavioral thing and have the mindset be, if it can go into the garbage, go into the garbage, if it can go into the recycle bin, go into the recycle bin, you keep the trash and the bulk for the big things.

Mayor Cason: I certainly think that the garbage and the recyclables is doable right now in the trash pits, particularly if you have a larger bin that can be used for cardboard and things rather than those little red ones, if you have something bigger. So even if you just scrunch up your

cardboard and you are not out there trying to cut it, because a lot of people are not going to do that. Fold it and put it into a bigger bin and keep it out of sight and be picked up as recyclables people wouldn't throw it in the front.

Mr. Osgood: Right. Thank you. You can read the rest of these. As this discussion has already indicated, it won't come as a surprise to you that there will be differing perspectives around these options as potential amendments, which is sort of a good logical lead into the next slide in terms of next steps.

Commissioner Slesnick: Before you go to the next slide. I really like the last one on here, placing yard waste no sooner than 24 hours prior to the collection day, but if people knew that they couldn't put out their yard trash they wouldn't cut their grass on Monday or Tuesday when their yard pick up is on Monday, they'd wait until at least Saturday or Sunday or whatever, but rearrange their yard service if the yard service is using that on swales.

Ms. Osgood: Yes.

Commissioner Slesnick: Is that especially on North Greenway, our pickup is Friday morning and people put things out on Friday afternoon and it's there all week, for the whole week.

Mr. Osgood: Yes.

Mayor Cason: And they'll cut the grass on Saturday and Sunday and it stays the whole week.

Mr. Osgood: Yes. The County also, I don't know if we talked about this. I've heard the issue of the grass-cutting too. Knowing Coral Gables, you've probably talked about this in the past, I don't know to the extent that it's used, but this concept of grass cycling and actually cutting the grass and leaving it where it falls has a number of advantages and I think Miami-Dade County publicizes this and has some good guidelines on that. If the landscape companies are cutting the grass and then bagging it up into non-recyclable plastic bags and throwing it away, another option could be considered of just cutting the grass, leaving it where it is, it's got some nutrients in it, it's probably 95 percent water anyway, grass by the time you cut it. So maybe again, to points that have been made before, maybe just thinking a little bit differently about how we even manage our grass clippings.

Commissioner Slesnick: Are there recyclable bags for grass and leaves?

Commissioner Lago: That I don't know. I know there are some recyclable bags for dog waste, those doggie bags.

Commissioner Keon: I don't think they are bio-degradable...

Commissioner Lago: I apologize, bio-degradable, great catch, great catch.

[Laughter]

Commissioner Lago: But just dovetailing off your point. I had a conversation with a gentleman who cuts my yard, and I've been going back and forth because there was an issue a few months ago and I brought this up to the City Manager a few months ago, where I got home and he was cutting my grass and I asked him, how long have you been here, because I've been here about ten minutes, and I said, OK, why is there a pile already existing on my, excuse me, the pit, why is there a pile of clippings. He said, I don't know, when I got here that was there. My adjacent neighbors hadn't cut their yard and they have pits for their own properties. So what ended up happening and what he explained to me, because he cuts a lot of individual's homes in the City of Coral Gables. He says that you have gardeners and landscaping companies, they schedule Coral Gables for the afternoon and they do South Miami, Pinecrest, other municipalities that require that the grass clippings be taken away with them and when they get to Coral Gables they use Coral Gables as a dumping ground, and there is nothing you can do about it. I'm giving you a number, 50-60 percent of the people in this community are not home during the day, they are working, so when your landscaper comes you never barely see him or her. So what they do is, I'm not saying all of them, but some of them, they dump instead of going and taking it to the dumping facility and paying a fee, they dump it in Coral Gables knowing that Coral Gables is going to pick it up. Similar to a situation that we had that the Mayor so astutely brought to our attention was the garbage fee issue, which we had over three and-a-half million dollars of uncollected fees. We are going to pick up the garbage no matter what, so that's what happens in our City, we have no control over that. That's why I agree with the issue of requirement placement of yard waste by residents no sooner than 24 hours prior to the scheduled collection date, but I would still like for the City to somehow, someday potentially entertain going into a similar collection strategy as neighboring cities, which require the landscaper to take the clippings with them. Maybe we can offer some sort of rebate on our garbage fee, a nominal, we can research and see how much the costs are. How much does your landscaper charge you to take that waste with them, five extra dollars?- ten extra dollars? I just think that keeping those clippings there; we can make exceptions for individuals in North Gables that cut their own yard. There can be a list of people who have an exception if you really show a hardship, but I think that across the board it's just very unsightly when you drive by and you see all that waste and all that garbage in front of people's homes for a week and it smells bad.

Commissioner Slesnick: I'd like to research though for so many properties in Coral Gables has trees and at this time of year the trees are all shedding, that if we had some kind of bio-degradable bags for them to put in and not the great big black plastic bags that would be great to have it on the trash pile.

Commissioner Keon: And also just before hurricane season people tend to go in trim their trees and work on their yards to make sure that there is not debris that's going to go around in a hurricane.

Mr. Osgood: Bagging leaves in a bio-degradable compostable type bag and restricting landscaping companies from placing those huge amounts on swales would be the biggest bang for our buck in terms of our collection operation and our aesthetics. The way we pick up the trash now with those big cranes and the claws and to try to pick up the leaves at this time of years its very labor intensive and not very efficient.

Commissioner Lago: Could I ask you just a quick question Mayor, if I may? Are we the only City that allows clippings and trees and green matter to basically sit in front of someone's yard and then we pick it up? How does that work? I just want to understand. I'm not going to hold you to it.

Mr. Osgood: Jessica is coming up with a matrix of how the different services in our surrounding community. The way I understand it in Miami-Dade County which also services, I think about 19 municipalities is, for the bigger piles it's an on-demand twice a year...

Commissioner Lago: Twice a year, three times a year.

Mr. Osgood: But I'm uncertain on the weekly because I think some of the municipalities use different terms for trash and garbage, and I just kind of ran into that yesterday as I was trying to anticipate that question. So we'll look into that and figure it out.

Commissioner Lago: When I drive through the City and I imagine my colleagues also have the same inkling, but I don't see any other City that allows that.

Mr. Osgood: And I think part of it's to your point before. It just has to be taken away.

Commissioner Lago: And what's the cost associated with that?

Mr. Osgood: With taking it away?

Commissioner Lago: No, no, with currently. How much are we paying or subsidizing to pick up green matter?

Mr. Osgood: We pay about a million, over a million dollars for trash disposal alone. That's uncontained, bulky...

Mayor Cason: Whatever is out there in front.

Mr. Osgood: Whatever is out there in front.

Mayor Cason: It seems to me that there are a couple of things you can do. One is when people are going to move there ought to be a number they can call and schedule a pickup.

Commissioner Slesnick: That would be great.

Mayor Cason: Because you are going to know when the moving company is going to come; you call up, and we'll send a truck and pick up all that, because you'll see it a lot. People will move out and they just dump everything and figure, well I stopped paying the rent and let the landlord take care of it.

Commissioner Slesnick: Well they schedule their move for the days before trash is picked up too.

Mayor Cason: So, I think something can be done in terms of those masses of stuff that are put out. I do think that not allowing other than green stuff to be put out is a good option; and secondly, the landscape companies, as long as we are not enforcing the over 4 yards there is no incentive for them to take it.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, I'll give you a perfect example, and I told the City Manager about this and I told our staff about this. I was driving down Bird Road in front of the Presbyterian Church, I saw a large truck, basically dumping, dumping palm fauns, tree clippings and I stopped and I asked him, why are you dumping this in front of a "no dumping" sign?- and the person was frozen, they didn't have a response for me, because someone had caught them red-handed going down Bird Road...

Mayor Cason: You took a picture?

Commissioner Lago: I did. I took a picture of it and I sent it to our staff, they have it, Chelsea and Martha have it. So this is pervase all over the City. The problem is we don't see it because

nobody is home, nobody is home. Imagine we are spending over a million dollars to pick up other individual's green matter that don't even live in the City. My issue is, I'm willing to make exceptions for individuals who can show that they have a hardship, we've made a lot of exceptions for people who have hardships on all different accounts. If you have a hardship I don't have an issue with it. If you show me that you cut your own grass and you need to have that trash pit, then fine we'll make an exception.

Mayor Cason: But even if you don't cut your own grass, the fact is we have 41,000 trees on the swales and what happens, I go out every day and a strong wind you've got palm fronds, coconuts, stuff laying. One way or another pit or not, somebody has got to have a place to pick it up. So I can't see trash pits going away, but I can see the bulk stuff that should be taken away by the commercial companies, and that's probably the bulk of it. If you didn't have that you could probably pick up twice a week with the claw and even get rid of the rest of the stuff. And then Code Enforcement, because again, unless people they get a warning – I see it on North Greenway one particular house that over and over again is filled with stuff the day after a pickup, because either they don't tell their maid, they don't tell the gardening people don't do it, they throw it out and there is no repercussions. If they have to pay a fine the word will get down to the help, don't do it.

Commissioner Slesnick: Another thing too. You asked about other cities – West Miami has a very good, it's very similar to Coral Gables trash pickup, and they do, they put a lot of stuff out on the swales and pick it up on a regular basis and that keeps the streets, I mean West Miami is a lovely little community and it's always has groomed drives and so forth, because of the trash pick up there. I think that enhances having a neighbor like West Miami to our west.

Mayor Cason: Any idea what it cost to have a bigger bin to put the trash stuff that's outside, inside the bin, inside your yard that can be picked up a recyclable time?

Commissioner Keon: Doesn't the City of Miami, I thought everything in the City of Miami now went into bins.

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes, they have the big ones.

Commissioner Keon: They have those big ones and you have to take them to the street, we don't have to do that.

Mayor Cason: I think we discussed this at the last meeting; our little red ones are too small.

Commissioner Keon: They are much too small.

Mayor Cason: If we had bigger ones or something for – everybody is going to have cardboard at some time and unless you have something to put it in, they are going to put it out front and they are not going to cut it up.

Mr. Osgood: We are going to talk about a little bit about that later in the presentation, specifically for recycling containers. We have not talked about the green – if you are talking about the tree limbs or small tree limbs that you would put out for collection, we have not talked about that at this point yet.

Ms. Keller: But we do have a price and it's under \$100 to get the large rollouts that you could put your landscape waste in them; and one thing I wanted to clarify in an earlier slide, it was an oversight, but pet waste is prohibited at all times in trash pits, it's a Code violation. So, it's not a matter of when, you can never do it.

Commissioner Keon: It's not enforceable.

Ms. Keller: Right – exactly. We've sent out E-NEWS in the past trying to educate the public, but animal waste is never allowed. It is considered – it belongs in a closed container, it belongs in your garbage bin.

Commissioner Slesnick: Can we write that in big letters on the next trash bills that go out?

Ms. Keller: Of course.

Commissioner Slesnick: You know you have the trash bill, you have to look at the figure of what you're paying, if you had big letters across there or in yellow or something, at least people would notice it.

Commissioner Keon: They don't want to take it home with them.

Mayor Cason: But again, in the interim when we are looking at all the options, Code Enforcement needs to enforce the regulations now because they are not doing it.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Code Enforcement is doing it Mayor. I mean even on Saturday, they are going out and they are doing it. I understand what you are saying in terms of the level of detail in which it's done. We have asked them to really target those trash piles that are – it's not acceptable if you are moving that you dump everything out onto the street knowing that your trash pickup is four days away. It is not acceptable. And so that's really what we've

been targeting with Code, but this feedback is important and will continue to work on it. We've also talked about even having something which we have had in the past and don't have now, a sanitation inspector whose only job is to go around making sure that outside services are not using Coral Gables as a dumping ground, and so that we would be able to ticket, fine and follow up. This discussion is important; this is why we are having this dialogue with the Commission and why we would also anticipate you wanting us to go community-wide, because when you talk to our residents the three top things that are important to them police, fire, and our trash pickup. It's important to figure out where is that sweet spot of service. None of what we are talking about is talking about reducing our work crews. We have excellent sanitation workers, so much so that I answered an e-mail this weekend where an unresponsive resident in a driveway and our crew came by and they called 911, they knocked on the neighbor's door, and they stayed with them until Fire Rescue arrived. That's our sanitation team, and they are doing an excellent job. So we are excited about the discussion. We look forward to being more of a City Beautiful as it relates to the trash pit question, and it's going to be a sticky issue, but we are going to work through it.

Mayor Cason: Another reminder too, a service that the sanitation crews can provide, I think we discussed this two or three years ago, when you lose your dog or cat, rather than putting a sign up on a pole, call the sanitation people, they know what's going on in the neighborhood, they know if they've seen a dog or a cat wondering around, they know what belongs where. On our web page, I think, we added something a couple of years ago, but they are the eyes and ears, not only for crime and other things, but for lost animals.

Ms. Keller: One of the other things I'd like to bring to your attention about bagging leaves, for example. In other parts of the country they have additional seasons and in the fall there are many cities across the country that use mulching blades on their lawnmowers and John touched on that, but I wanted to be very specific. There is a type of blade where you are not required to bag your leaves and put them in plastic bags and put them on the swale. They also do make large paper bags for your leaves if you insist on bagging your clippings and your leaves.

Commissioner Lago: You know there is another thing you are forgetting to mention, because I met with a resident in Milan last week that brought this to my attention in regards to some other issues with trees, Milan Avenue, I wish... One of the issues they brought up was the mountains of leaves that are all over the swales and how it's killing the grass, and she made a comment about the fact that if you use a mulching blade that mountain is like one-fourth the size, it's really compact. I never thought about that. Another quick question that I had since we are talking about swales and all these other issues, have you noticed these entities that are going around the City and they treat your lawn One, Two, Tree, or Truly Nolen, they are leaving these little signs, these little signs that are like plastic...

Commissioner Slesnick: With the little paper.

Commissioner Lago:...With the little paper and they are on your lawn, basically advertising One, Two, Tree, or several other...

Commissioner Slesnick: Spray companies for the yard.

Commissioner Lago: Spray companies...

Commissioner Keon: I think it's to keep your animals or something off of the lawn.

Commissioner Lago: But I think a lot of it more has to do with advertisement, those end up flying away, those end up being run over. Do we have anything in regards to legislation that does not allow that type of signage on people's lawns?

Ms. Keller: I'm not certain.

Commissioner Lago: OK.

Commissioner Slesnick: Jessica don't we have a truck in the City that goes by and it's like a vacuum cleaner, it picks up the leaves?

Ms. Keller: Yes, they are cleaning out the catch basins.

Commissioner Slesnick: Oh, OK. Where we have a lot of the trees that are shedding in any particular time of the year on the parkways, maybe the City could be a little bit more responsive on picking them up, so that they don't go into the neighbor's yards.

Mayor Cason: Do you have more of a presentation on this or are you going to come back to us at a later date with..

Mr. Osgood: Just a few slides left, if you want to go through those?

Mayor Cason: Yes. We have Agave here.

Mr. Osgood: OK. So we really kind of touched on this. The first two bullets are related and intended to provide the Commission with meaningful suggestions and input from the public about the trash collection service. Regarding the two pilot projects; two neighborhoods right now have expressed interest in piloting a modified service program with objectives tied really to

evaluating reduced trash collection frequency, requiring landscape companies to dispose of the material they prune and cut, and prohibiting non-green organic materials from being placed in the parkway swales. Those are the three issues we've talked to the two neighborhoods about and that seems to be what they care about most in their neighborhood. Relatedly, staff could develop a series of community meetings to frame the discussion for residents, sort of like what we are doing here, solicit input and ideas and expand the pilot areas if appropriate. Real quickly – we touched on the last bullet earlier in the presentation, but this one reflects some great work that Public Works has been doing over the past few years in support of the City's ambitious diversion goal to meet 60 percent of the State of Florida's overall waste diversion goal of 75 percent by 2019. It's a very ambitious goal. During the upcoming budget process, and again, we touched on this earlier, staff will bring forward three significant diversion initiatives for Commission consideration in the following areas: diverting trash; yard waste and green organic material to a waste energy facility; introducing larger 65 or 90 gallon recycling bins with lids on them, introducing that into our residential recycling program. The primary objectives for that would be to enhance the convenience for the recycling public by increasing container capacity and providing a closable lid, which is convenient for the residents, also protects the quality of the material that we are collecting; and increase the City's recycling tonnage. I should note here that that would not affect the current backyard service model, it would not be effective by that particular initiative; and third is, strengthening our recycling presence in parks, recreation centers, and throughout the downtown area.

Mayor Cason: Great. I think this is a great discussion.

Commissioner Keon: We talked about this once before about increasing the size of the recyclables. I had two e-mails from people in the North Gables that are on 50-foot lots that are very narrow that talked about the size of containers and their space on the sides of their house to put things that it's a little difficult, whatever, so. I don't know if you can have – I don't know what a family's capacity for recyclables or use are, but maybe we could have a couple of sizes so possibly in a very small house in a small area, whatever, they may not need as much, and so we could maybe you'll look into that.

Ms. Keller: Sure. I wanted to note that the University of Miami, we partner with the University of Miami last semester and their research showed that the number one reason that people do not recycle more or don't recycle at all is because of our containers, and so that is what initiated us to take a look at the closed containers. The other thing is that I have a very small household and I have two 95 gallon recycle containers that I use. You would be amazed at the amounts of recyclables that you can generate. I live through Amazon, Amazon is over at my house (laughter) and you'd be amazed at the amount of recyclables that you generate, and I generate very little garbage at all.

Mayor Cason: Would you when you come back also give us a status report on the pits, the use of asphalt. Five years ago we had a pilot program with slabs that didn't work out. I think they cracked, so we went to asphalt. I'd like just to know how many people are aware of them?- there are still some enormous pits on Granada that they can have them filled with asphalt which doesn't get dug out with the claw, and its safety for cars parking there at night not knowing there is a big pit, but just as a supplement to what you tell us about garbage in general.

Mr. Osgood: Absolutely.

Commissioner Keon: Is there a different bucket-type apparatus that can pick up the trash and not dig into the ground. I mean I've seen buckets that don't have big teeth in them. It's a different kind of collector, but maybe...

Ms. Keller: We'll take a look at it.

Commissioner Keon: No, because the teeth on these that dig into the soil because of the type of soil we have and whatever, they dig in, where if it's something that's a flat edge or whatever...

Mayor Cason: It doesn't penetrate the asphalt that's the advantage on those.

Commissioner Keon: It will damage the teeth and then you have to go get the teeth replaced on the things which may be more expensive than the asphalt...for all of it, if you can look at.

Mayor Cason: Anything else you want to tell us now and you are going to come back to us.

Mr. Osgood: Just the last thing, that last slide you've touched on and it really gets to the next steps about maybe some of the future step longer term diversion strategies, such as the waste to energy that we talked about, green organics to compost to mulch. There are other uses for this material other than throwing it into landfill, and strengthen partnerships, as Jessica mentioned with the University of Miami, Miami-Dade County, the private sector, there are other cities in the region that have the same goals as us and if we work collaboratively, maybe on a regional basis we can get creative and figure out alternatives to throwing the material away.

Commissioner Keon: Can you go back here for a slide on the amounts that we collect trash-garbage in whatever and the cost, the first slide you had up.

Mr. Osgood: Yes. That's tipping fees only. That does not include the operational cost.

Commissioner Keon: Right. These are just our cost to dispose of it – wow.

Mayor Cason: To the extent that we reduce that, that money could be used for enhancing services...perhaps buying the more expensive multi-size containers.

Ms. Keller: And this price also doesn't, as John mentioned, the operational piece of it, and the amount of money that we spend filling the holes.

Commissioner Keon: These are just tipping fees.

Ms. Keller: Yes, just tipping fees.

Commissioner Lago: As I requested in the beginning of the presentation, can you make sure that when you come back you drill down a little bit and find out what are the prices, like in reference to what are we spending on organic material versus non-organic material.

Mr. Osgood: We are spending about \$32 to \$33 a ton to dispose of the trash and the garbage, that's pretty similar and that's just disposal cost.

Commissioner Lago: Besides that, I also wanted you to find out about what other adjacent cities are doing in regards to the pits. Somehow somehow it gets collected.

Mr. Osgood: Yes.

Mayor Cason: And not only just Florida, but look for other tropical cities around the United States that have palms and difficult things to deal with. Maybe there is somebody else like we are doing on the sustainability looking at comparable cities, Boulder and other things.

Commissioner Lago: I've encountered – a lot of the people that I've spoken to in regards to this issue, the question is always the same. When are we finally going to do something about the trash pits? People keep using it because it's their only option, but I think if there is an opportunity to kind of meet the same goal or demand without having such an eyesore, I think that the residents would buy-in. I just think that we need to offer them something, and I think that currently what we have right now obviously doesn't work.

Commissioner Keon: Well, I think we need to, as a Commission or as a group, we need to decide what our goal is in this process and if the first goal is to get everything but trash out of the trash pits then we move to maybe the bigger containers and whatever else. But I think that we need to establish some objectives as a group what we want to see done and then have strategies for those

specific things and then keep moving, and if eventually it is to remove the trash pits entirely that's also an objective MO and we'll find a way, but I think we should somehow have some strategies. We should decide amongst ourselves what is our objective.

Commissioner Lago: Do you want to have a discussion when they come back with further information?

Mayor Cason: Yes, because this is going to tie in with workshop on Capital Budget some of these things. So the soon you can come back with delving more deeply into this and get some community meetings and then we can set those objectives.

Commissioner Keon: Yes, but I think like we set up when we did the budget before and we set up priorities as to for dollars, I think there are operational issues within the City that would be a good exercise for us to go through in prioritizing different objectives and goals for the coming year that there is common ground on; and then looking at those just like we look at quarterly reports and whatever on finance, we should look at quarterly reports and where are we with some of the goals and objectives that we have stated. And I know that the Manager is looking at actually surveying those and seeing how well we meet our goals and everything else.

Commissioner Slesnick: I'm looking at the pictures of the houses that you've taken for the trash piles. One's for sale, so I can see people getting rid of things, but two of them are rental properties and I don't know how, one's on Astoria and one's on North Greenway, no one's on Columbus and one's on Astoria, they are rental properties and how do we notify tenants that move into the City of Coral Gables because the trash bills go to the owner?- and they do have those little cards that she's made, door hangers that maybe notices could be given to those people when they first move in, we don't really know when they first move in, but if you see a trash pile out there, how do we alert people that have never lived in Coral Gables about our trash pickups and so forth.

Commissioner Keon: I think we should also, when it's an owner that's renting the property, I think we really ought to notify the owner also that there is a problem. We need to notify the owners, it's the owner, they are responsible for the behavior of their tenants with regard to obeying the laws and they will be the ones that will be fined if they don't communicate these issues.

Mayor Cason: The one's paying the garbage bills, so you can put your – they probably pay in advance too, so when you send them a bill put in something, by the way when your tenants move out you are going to be responsible...

Commissioner Slesnick: Maybe. I know for these owners they are good landlords, but they probably have not made a connection. One other thing is the metal that's in the trash piles. So often people go, these metal people come in the night before or the morning of the trash pickups and go through the trash bins for metal. Do we have any special place that people can put metal or items like a microwave which is almost all metal, they would put it in the trash pile that we could have that picked up, besides our recycling?

Mr. Osgood: Yes. In fact, Matt and I were talking about that the other day. We are still not quite clear if our residents are able to take that material to the Miami-Dade transfer facilities, but I think we are, and if we aren't right now we can make that, however we have to do it contractually or some sort of system where they can do that. The other thing that I'm familiar with is, we can research this as well. There are companies that will come out and pick up white goods and in some cases...

Commissioner Slesnick: White goods?

Mr. Osgood: The stoves, the refrigerators, so we could once we research it and see if it's possible, we could link that on our website and say, if you have white goods or refrigerator or stove call this number, West End Recyclers...

Commissioner Slesnick: That would be wonderful.

Mr. Osgood: Then they place it out the day before and a private company comes in and gets it.

Mayor Cason: You have the Salvation Army; you've got a lot of these people.

Mr. Osgood: Goodwill all of those. That's the other mindset, if it's usable and it can be repurposed...

Commissioner Slesnick: We just had that last week – someone wanted a really high-tech refrigerator and they called, I've got junk, you've got junk, to come pick it up, but if there were a number that could go into recycling that would be better. And one more thing Matt, when I was out here at City Hall parking lot the other day, a couple people that came up to me mentioned how thrilled they were to have this opportunity to bring their electronics, but there is also a lot of medical things in Coral Gables at different houses that people would like to make sure go to a good home like wheelchairs and walkers. At one house I have two wheelchairs, electric motor bike, the individual walkers and so forth, is there a place, could we have a pickup for things like that?

Mr. Anderson: I can check with STS Recycling, which is a company that we've used for the last two electronic recycling events and see if that's material that they can take. With regard to the medical, the Police Department is actually starting a prescription drug disposal program. They have the bin installed on the first floor of the facility, the Public Safety Building, and from what I understand we are the first City to be able to offer that service.

Commissioner Slesnick: But will they take wheelchairs and things like that?

Mr. Anderson: Not at that particular one.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: It's not a medical supply, its only prescription.

Mr. Anderson: Yes, prescription drug.

Commissioner Slesnick: Well that's good to know.

Mr. Anderson: Yes. And the success of the electronic recycling events between the last two we've had, we've collected over 18,000 pounds of electronic waste, and the residents have been very, very happy.

Commissioner Slesnick: They are happy to have an opportunity to make them go to a second home. Could we maybe have the one for the City of medical equipment?

Mr. Anderson: I believe STS does – people would be eligible to bring that and drop that off, because of the metal being recyclable, but I'll confirm with them and maybe we can advertise that more...

Commissioner Slesnick: And not just recycle, but maybe we can send them to South America or someplace where we have Sister Cities that are a little bit less affluent than Coral Gables that could use things like that. That's what this person suggested, sending them to one of our Sister Cities in South America that might be able to use them like our fire truck.

Mr. Anderson: OK.

Commissioner Lago: Just one last comment Madam City Manager, if I may. Will you do me a favor and speak with Will in regards to Code Enforcement and I know they are very short staffed on the weekends, but what you are seeing is a lot of dumping in the swales and in the trash pits, and again, that's obviously not allowed as was clarified by staff. So I want to make sure that, I don't want to fine people, I want to warn people, I want to educate people that, again, the last

thing you want to see on a weekend is driving through Blue Road like I do on Saturday mornings and having all that trash just sitting out there the entire weekend.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So we are not into warning we are into fining when it's on Saturdays and Sundays, just so that you know; and I'll tell you the team work with Code Enforcement and Public Service has been amazing. So we are working on that. We do want to do more education so people know that you can't do it, but some of the issues that neighborhoods have been confronted with, we've needed to be more aggressive in our enforcement.

Commissioner Lago: Listen, I agree with you. Again, I want to give people the opportunity to curb their habits.

City Attorney Leen: Mr. Mayor one issue with that. One thing that maybe would be good to look at as part of this too, because it comes up from time to time with our office is that you'll have a homeowner who someone dumps materials in front of them and Code Enforcement does their best to determine who did the dumping and that's who they fine, but if they can't the issue is, do you fine the homeowner or not?- because they are a victim in a sense and they also have a duty to maintain the swale, but sometimes that can be a high burden. So, I think that that's one thing that should be looked at in this; from time to time we do get a complaint about that. My office has typically allowed someone to file an affidavit saying that they didn't do it and that could resolve the matter. But you know that's really a policy issue ultimately, to what extent do we hold the homeowner liable, and it's something that's a little unclear in the Code. It does place responsibility on them, I want to be clear about that, but it also has the idea of fault and who is the violator. So I think that's one thing that should be looked at.

Mayor Cason: Will you bring that up when you come back with a menu of further suggestions for us when we set our objectives.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you. I'd like to really applaud the departments that were involved in removing all of the – I was in Europe and I got an e-mail Saturday morning that, I guess, someone was moving out, and they emptied the contents of the house on the swale and I forwarded it to Cathy and asked if they could take care of it, and by the time I came back from touring I had an e-mail that said, Oh my God, they picked everything up already. So, I have to commend our staff for their work. They are exceedingly responsive, exceedingly responsive.

Mayor Cason: It's a great presentation by the way. Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

[End: 12:17:37 p.m.]