

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-6
March 28, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner James Cason

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant Director, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-6 [2:37 p.m.]

Discussion on Waste Management Recycling Center. (Sponsored by Commissioner Cason)

Mayor Lago: Item G-6, Mayor Cason.

Commissioner Cason: I've always been interested in recycling. I wasn't sure if I was recycling correctly, so I decided to go out with Matt Anderson to our recycling plant in Pembroke Pines. We went out about a month ago, and looked at exactly what happens to recycling. Now, we have about 2,600 tons of recycling materials a year that goes through Waste Management system and about 9,000 tons of garbage. The stuff that goes into recycling, we don't make any money off of it, we don't pay any tipping fees, so it's sort of neutral in that sense. It's great for the environmental impact of putting all this stuff into the dumps. It cost us a lot of money. It costs us about \$213 a resident a year to do it, but I think it's worth it, but I, for example, found out that I was doing certain things wrong and so I thought it would be nice to show a very short film of what happens at the recycling plant. There's a larger version of this, I think seven minutes, it might be a good

City Commission Meeting
March 28, 2023

idea to put it into the city website but thought we would show this and then explain a little bit of what happens.

Mr. Anderson: So, this is the entire process. Once a truck enters the facility, they'll come in, they'll go through the weighing station, and then they go to the tipping floor, which we were able to visit and see this entire process of what's being deposited in there. And again, in our city, our contamination rate continues to be very, very low.

Commissioner Cason: One of the best in all of Florida, the top two, if not the top.

Mr. Anderson: Yes, at about eight percent. So right now, you can see – and this is their older facility. They are actually getting ready to build a brand new one, right next to it that's going to have a lot more AI technology and so on and so forth, for sorting, but right now we get a lot of questions all the time about kind of where the recycling ends up, and this video here kind of, thank you for Waste Management for sharing this with us, kind of showing how its getting sorted, how its getting separated. They do have a lot of people that still work inside of the facilities there helping sort, pull anything out. The number one culprit right now, the problems that they have in the recycling facility, plastic bags. We saw that first and foremost, getting caught up in the conveyer belts. You can see how they are separating the plastic.

Commissioner Cason: I, for example, was putting my recycling materials in a garbage bag and putting it into the recycling can, into the container which is wrong. Never put it in a plastic bag because the plastic bag is going to wrap around these gears, and they have to stop them, and they've actually found stuff that people put in the recycling is incredible. They put chains, they even put a hand grenade in there once. They had to shut the whole thing down. People think you can just put metal. People put bolts and chunks of iron and none of that goes in there. It can only be aluminum, and cans that can be crushed. So, this sort of shows you how complex it is. How would you like to have that job?

Mr. Anderson: They are separating all throughout the facility, making sure they are separating like all the different plastics, the aluminum, and then you see all the bailing's, how it all ends up going in there, and then the bails that end up going out to the different entities that are buying these products from Waste Management. So, you can see here, the aluminum of plastic, its going to be pushed out and then those bails are then loaded onto larger trucks that are then taken out. So, it is a very complex process. For us and our city, we really try to simplify our message over the years. When I first joined the city, like eight years ago, our messaging we tried to include everything in there, and when in doubt, put it in the recycling bin. We've really switched that up now with the way the recycling market has evolved over the years to where, when in doubt leave it out, because we don't want to contaminate the recycling bin. So really have focused in on really simplifying. I have a flyer here that we've been distributing all that goes out once a year also with the waste bill – narrow neck plastic bottles and plastic containers, flattened cardboard and paper, glass bottles

*City Commission Meeting
March 28, 2023*

and containers, aluminum steel cans, and the two items we definitely don't want in there are plastic bags and Styrofoam. Those are the two big problematic items.

Commissioner Cason: And not just any kind of glass, not metal, because metal is not recyclable. And one of the advantages that we have is the size of our containers, because that allows our Code Enforcement, I mean our garbage people to actually see what's in there and they can take out the stuff that shouldn't be in there. Whereas, like Miami has these huge ones, and what happens is people throw all their junk in there and the machines pick it up and they have recycling contamination up to 60-62 percent, which they have to pay, what it is?

Mr. Anderson: I think some are paying upwards of \$100 a ton to dispose.

City Manager Iglesias: Garbage would be, average is about \$70 a ton.

Commissioner Cason: \$70 a ton. So, the fact that we have smaller containers, they can see what's in there and not pick up what they are not supposed to be picking up is great. When people are doing the right thing, again, if in doubt.

Mr. Anderson: Leave it out.

Commissioner Cason: Leave it out.

Commissioner Menendez: By the way, I'm open to starting a say no to hand grenades campaign.

[Laughter]

Commissioner Menendez: Community outreach, just in case.

Commissioner Cason: And what they do is, they sample, what is it, every six months or a year.

Mr. Anderson: Yes. So, Waste Management does do an audit of our recycling stream that we bring in, so we can continue to monitor that and if we need to adjust our education at all, but right now especially on the single-family residential side, our community is doing really, really well. On the commercial side, we still need to focus in on that and recycling in the right-of-way continues to be a challenge, not just in the city, it's across the entire country. So that's something that we're really working closely with Waste, the recycling providers, to try to find better ways to get cleaner recycling.

Commissioner Cason: And glass ends up basically as, what's it called, sanding.

Mr. Anderson: It could be sand; it could be concrete.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much Matt, I appreciate it. Mayor, thank you for providing us with this information. Spread the word as much as we possibly can. Continue spreading the word.

*City Commission Meeting
March 28, 2023*

Mr. Anderson: Yes. Waste Management has attended our Sustainability Advisory Board meeting from time to time, to help educate our board, and then also, finding ways that can work with communications to see if we can get this video posted on our website and share that, just so we can continue that education.

Mayor Lago: That's great.