

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
September 28, 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

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-2 [12:48:17 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, censuring American Airlines, JetBlue, Spirit and all airlines engaging in National Origin Discrimination by flying to Cuba, and urging them to discontinue these flights, given that Cuba does not allow Cuban-born flight crew members to stay overnight on the island, and urging the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners to consider denying these Airlines access to and use of the Miami International Airport for any flights where National Origin Discrimination is occurring. (Sponsored by Commissioner Lago).

Mayor Cason: Let's do F-2.

City Attorney Leen: I think we need Commissioner Lago here for F-2 though, it's his item.

Mayor Cason: It's a discussion.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Can someone just grab him and let him know. You are recusing yourself, are you not?

Mayor Cason: Yes. I'm recusing myself.

Vice Mayor Quesada: You've got to pass that gavel over my man (laughter).

City Attorney Leen: And Mr. Mayor respectfully, you have to leave the room.

Vice Mayor Quesada: So because the Mayor has a conflict, I'll be handling this item on the agenda. We are looking at Item F-2, Commissioner Lago, this is your item.

Commissioner Lago: To make it brief, this is exactly the same thing that occurred in reference to, I think it was Royal Caribbean, and basically to me it's perplexing...

City Attorney Leen: It was Carnival.

Commissioner Lago: Carnival, I apologize, excuse me.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Commissioner for those at home that don't know what we are discussing can you just give a brief summary.

Commissioner Lago: OK. Basically what happened with Carnival and they backtracked, the Cuban government backtracked and so did Carnival, and correct me if I'm wrong, basically they were not allowing Cuban-born American citizens who basically were born in Cuba, came to this great country and became American citizens from visiting the island in some sort of capacity as an employee for the cruise ship, and then staying and getting off on the island and staying overnight.

City Attorney Leen: So just to add to that. What was happening with Carnival was, even residents of the United States who were born in Cuba who were just visiting tourists, were not able to go because they were not let off the ship, so they could not be on the ship that was national origin discrimination. What this Commission did was it issued a resolution which received – it was a newsworthy one actually. I remember it was in the newspaper, I remember the Cuban-American Bar Association picked it up as well, but basically what you said was that national origin discrimination should not occur, including at the Port of Miami. So what this does, it does the same thing. I'll turn it back over to you.

Commissioner Lago: And let me tell you why it's important, not only because I'm Cuban-American, I was born in this country, it's because we have to always be considered and really understand when you talk about discrimination and the impact of discrimination and discriminating against gender, sexual orientation, or a person's background or religious background; and I think that we in 2016 really need to strive, if we are going to do business in a foreign country, as an American corporation that we take into consideration, are we going to put profits over American God-given rights as per our Constitution, and are we also going to put profits over safety, and the reason why I say safety is, because especially when you are flying planes or you are working on a plane, there are certain laws that escape me right now and I wish the Mayor was here because his son's a pilot and he probably has more information that I do, but there are certain laws in place or maybe not laws, but there are certain protocols in place that state that if you fly for "X" amount of hours, you have to mandatorily for public safety take "X" amount of time off.

City Attorney Leen: That's the issue.

Commissioner Lago: That's the issue and what ends up happening is that now it becomes not only an issue of our God-given Constitutional Rights as American citizens in this country, now it becomes a safety issue and whether people now will be discriminated upon who are employees of American Airlines and they will not be allowed to work certain flights, potentially maybe even losing their job and losing income and not being able to provide for their family. So this is just a simple statement that I would like to put forth to our County and all the municipalities, to the League of Cities and to our Clerk, so I'm making that request, if it approved today to just basically urge American Airlines to just like Carnival Cruise Lines did and eventually Cuba buckled under its totalitarian regime that they allow for Cuban-born individuals and citizens to stay the night, overnight on the island.

City Attorney Leen: So just to be very clear for the public record, this resolution is not focused on whether there can be flights to Cuba or not, it's focused on the national origin discrimination that's occurring.

Commissioner Slesnick: So moved.

Commissioner Keon: Second.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Quesada: So Commissioner Slesnick makes the motion, Commissioner Keon seconds – Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

(Mayor Cason: Conflict of Interest - Mayor recused himself)

Commissioner Lago: Mr. Clerk can you do me a favor please and send out this resolution to all municipalities and the County and to the League of Cities.

Commissioner Keon: And to the Miami Herald.

Commissioner Lago: And to the Miami Herald please and to Broward and Palm Beach for their consideration and adoption, if possible.

[End: 12:48:22 p.m.]