

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-1
January 12, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Gordon Sokoloff
David Winker
Rhonda Anderson

Agenda Item 2-1 [12:24 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City of Coral Gables Transportation Advisory Board requesting that the Coral Gables City Commission adopt a resolution amending Resolution No. 2015-101, passed and adopted on June 16, 2015, to incorporate the Transportation Advisory Board into the review process for site plan approval or other development applications for individual projects, and into the review of proposed legislation that could impact transportation, including but not limited to the City's local Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, Zoning Code, Code of Ordinances, Development Overlays, and Master Plans; further establishing a requirement for recommendations of the Transportation Advisory

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Board to be considered by the City Commission or other quasi-judicial decision-making board of the City before final approval; providing for implementing Code modifications as may be necessary; and that this resolution shall become effective upon the date of adoption.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're missing Commissioner -- Vice Mayor Lago, but I hope he joins us soon.

Commissioner Keon: Do we have a quorum, Chair?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Keon: We have a quorum, right?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, we have a quorum. Madam City Attorney, will you read 2-1?

City Attorney Ramos: Yes, sir. These are resolutions of the Transportation Advisory Board seeking Commission action. The Commission can choose to take action or not, obviously. 2-1 is a resolution of the City of Coral Gables Transportation Advisory Board requesting that the Coral Gables City Commission adopt a resolution amending Resolution No. 2015-101, passed and adopted on June 16, 2015, to incorporate the Transportation Advisory Board into the review process for site plan approval or other development applications for individual projects, and into the review for proposed legislation that could impact transportation, including but not limited to the City's local Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, Zoning Code, Code of Ordinances, Development Overlays, and Master Plans; further establishing a requirement for recommendations of the Transportation Advisory Board to be considered by the City Commission or other quasi-judicial decision-making board of the City before final approval; providing for implementing Code modifications as may be necessary; and that this resolution shall become effective upon the date of adoption.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. I'd like to comment on this proposal and I'll start by saying that I'm radically opposed to it because although it will save us a lot of money, it would take over or duplicate the functions of our Planning Department, our Code regulations, our Zoning Department, our Planning and Zoning Board, our Board of Adjustment, our master plan functions. It would usurp our quasi-judicial decision-making process and it will save us a lot of money. I mean, we'd get rid of Ramon, for example. We'd get rid of our Zoning officers. We would get rid of three or four boards. I mean, what is this? What are they trying to do? This is an antidevelopment usurpation and antidevelopment move by taking over our Planning and Zoning Board and our Planning Department and our Zoning people and our Construction Regulation Boards and our Board of Adjustment and our master plan functions, and again, having the quasi-judicial functions with us, the City Commission, I think it's an incredible usurpation of authority. And if you look at the composition of the Transportation Advisory Board, we have the chief pilot of American Airlines, which is wonderful. We have Nicholas Barshel, which is an (INAUDIBLE) attorney who would probably have to recuse himself from all of this. We have Gordon Sokoloff, a magnificent dentist; Steve Williamson, the director of Capital Improvement in Miami; Peter Wood, Community Health, in the health field; Sue Kawalerski, who owns a bicycle shop; and Debra Swain, with a finance accounting management team for utilities. I think I am very, very much opposed to this except for the budgetary function, and I would ask them to stop trying to prevent rational, good development by using all of these surreptitious means to take over functions. Planning and Zoning, again, Planning, our regulations, Zoning Administrator, Board of Adjustment, master plan function, Ramon Trias, quasi-judicial decisions, this is amazing what they're proposing, and I don't think that they were really considering very rationally what they were proposing. But I am very, very much opposed to it.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah. I would ask, Miriam, what was the initial mission of the Transportation Advisory Board when it was formed?

Unidentified Speaker: Transportation issues.

City Attorney Ramos: So they've had two purposes. So, in 2005, their purpose was to encourage public input on traffic calming measures and disseminate information on the alternatives available to the community through the implementation of a Citywide traffic calming plan and to serve as an oversight committee for transportation-related projects, which will include the City of Coral Gables trolley system and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program, and to provide recommendations to the City Commission.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Traffic calming, the trolleys, intracity transportation -- that has nothing at all to do with planning and zoning.

City Attorney Ramos: Then in 2015, it was slightly tweaked to add -- and I'll just read it. The purpose of the board is to -- that's the one in place now -- to identify and recommend improvements to develop transportation connectivity of all modes to provide a variety of transportation alternatives. One of the primary objectives of this board would be to maintain a well-integrated urban street grid, providing access to commercial centers without sacrificing the high quality of life that exists within the City's neighborhoods. It will review traffic calming opportunities and recommend policies to apply in City neighborhoods. The ultimate goal would be to effectively protect and maintain the multi-modal transportation network and safe and effective use of the public right-of-way. That is their purpose today.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That has nothing at all to do with planning and zoning or what they're trying to achieve at this point, nothing.

Commissioner Keon: Well, I support...

Unidentified Speaker: May I speak?

Commissioner Keon: Your mission.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Keon: As was -- you know, as read by the City Attorney. I think that's a most appropriate mission and a very important one is to see that we have connectivity throughout our City and how it works and how it serves the residents. I think it was a resident board that gave you the opportunity as residents to talk with other residents about how well you are served by the transportation systems that currently exist in the City, and I hope you'll continue to do that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And traffic calming.

Commissioner Keon: And traffic calming, yes. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Fors, you have a comment?

Commissioner Fors: No, I'd like to hear the speaker speak.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: So, Mr. Mayor, first we have Dr. Gordon Sokoloff. He's the chairperson for the Traffic Advisory Board.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Sokoloff -- or Dr. Sokoloff.

Gordon Sokoloff: Yes. Thank you very much. Mayor, with all due respect, I think that you are really misinterpreting what our effort is about. In fact, the purpose of the board is not changing that much at all, and when you say you're going to save a lot of money -- we're volunteers. We're

not asking for any money. We haven't been asking for any money. To your point, Commissioner Keon, initially, the board was for to represent neighborhoods, and we still do. But over time, the purpose of the Board has changed, as the City has changed and the City has grown, and there are developments that are affecting and encroaching upon neighborhoods, and even downtown has become in and of itself a neighborhood where residents are living right there on -- you know, by Miracle Mile, and there's even prospects of some living on Miracle Mile. We are not looking for power other than making sure that we find out about the projects that are coming up in the City, which we haven't been informed of. Many projects like the Terranova project, the Zoning Code, the Ponce Park Tower, these are things where we've had residents come to our board. And it's only because I've reached out to find out or members of my board have reached out to find out about these projects that we're able to inform citizens. So what we are looking for is to be dutifully notified of all the projects that are going to be coming up before our board. We do not veto anything. We just want to be able to project our influence in front of the City Commission and/or the Planning and Zoning Board, that's it. I'm not looking to, you know, take power away, but our board is integral. We know that transportation and development go hand-in-hand, and the development in the City has grown exponentially. You know, our board serves as a conduit between the residents and you, the City Commission. And we have so much to -- information to provide our residents that I wouldn't get unless I reached out and got the information from the City, because the staff certainly isn't providing it to us, and otherwise, you should sunset our board. That's why we are there, and we're not looking to get paid any more, but I think our opinion counts. And I will go one step further to say that the makeup of the City is that the staff pretty much works with the developers, and I get that. And then the staff talks to you, the City Commission, which you rely heavily upon, but the people who elected you, which are the people on your boards for the most part, are kind of left out of the discussion unless they're given two minutes at a time to speak in front of a Commission meeting. But these boards serve a purpose, and if you allow us to do our job then you'll just make sure that all the projects that do come out are put in front of us so that we can hear about them and opine on them. And you know, otherwise, this is a City that's, you know, of the people, by the people, but for the developers, and it shouldn't be like that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, doctor.

City Clerk Urquia: Next you have Mr. David Winker.

David Winker: Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for allowing me a chance to speak. I represent the Ponce neighbors, which is the neighbor...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm sorry. You represent who?

Mr. Winker: I'm sorry. Let me start again. My name is David Winker. My law offices are at 4720 South Le Jeune Avenue. I live at 2222 Southwest 17th Street. I represent the Ponce neighbors, which is a neighborhood association made up of residents of the Crafts Section. I am speaking in support of both resolutions 2019-28 and 2019-29. We are asking that you adopt the Transportation Advisory Board's recommendations that the City Commission delay the late approval of any Zoning Code changes affecting the City's Craft Section until a comprehensive traffic study has been conducted detailing the potential impacts of those zoning changes. We're also fully in support of the Transportation Advisory Board's participation in development decisions. We are at an inflection point with regard to development in the City Beautiful, and traffic considerations are a critical component of ensuring the right balance between development and resident quality of life. Having a comprehensive traffic study will equip everyone with the information necessary to ensure smart development that benefits everyone. Thank you for your time and consideration and for your public service.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Mr. Winker.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, next we have Ms. Rhonda Anderson.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Who?

City Clerk Urquia: Rhonda Anderson.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Rhonda Anderson: Thank you, Commissioners, for -- and Mayor for the opportunity to speak. I am in favor of both of these resolutions and I'd like to detail for you the reasons why. Having sat on the Planning and Zoning Board for a good period of time, it's clear that how a project is designed and how the traffic calming efforts are implemented into a project is a necessary component for the boards to consider how the design should be done; where, you know, the traffic comes out, how wide the sidewalks are. We have plenty of examples where poor decisions were made, such as the Aloft Hotel, where that building could have easily been set back further from Le Jeune Road for better access for pedestrians, a nicer environment for people to make their way down to Miracle Mile. We could have done a land trade behind that building because we had a City parking lot. We didn't have that opportunity because we didn't have the information; in fact, it didn't go before the Planning and Zoning Board. It was only because I noticed we only had 24 inches of sidewalk space between there and Le Jeune Road and brought that to the attention of our prior City Attorney that we got a little more space between the pole and the building. Had the Traffic Advisory Board been involved, had the residents been more involved that walk that street every day and know what the issues are, much better than people that don't live here, much better than, you know, someone that's not walking that street every single day as I did in front of the Aloft Hotel and spotted it while it was still a swimming pool, but too late to do this land swap, we would have better information and it would save the residents and the City money because as part of a development project, we can get these traffic calming devices installed. We can have the lighting system fixed on the street, and we can have a safer environment for everybody. It's costing us in the way of lost business. It's costing us in the way of lost quality of life. It's one of the biggest flashpoints for residents right now is between development and traffic that's affecting our quality of life. When I worked on another project before, I was able to get the developer to pay for the traffic calming on the Segovia median. I was able to get the traffic calming done on the block off Le Jeune Road and the drainage done at the developer's dime and not the residents. So, as with

regard to the Crafts Section on Item E-2, I would add to that, we've never done something like this before. We had never rezoned an entire section. And rather than take the droplet approach of one traffic study at a time for each development that comes in, we need a comprehensive traffic study so we know the total onslaught of traffic that's going to result if we decide to allow a certain level of development. You will have more information to make better decisions with and to be able to proportionally spread the cost of the traffic measures that need to be taken to prevent another residential area from receiving an onslaught of traffic and making unlivable conditions on the east and the west side of the Craft Section. There's a lot of development that's proposed right now, and we need to have a comprehensive approach. There's additional factors you want to look at in the Crafts Section as well, such as, are we going to provide a safe pedestrian corridor for people to walk on? Do we want them to walk next to Le Jeune, or are we going to make a nice path like we did up in the North Ponce area visioning that it's necessary to make this a really nice place in the future? Are we going to choose where we want the parks? Are we going to preserve the healthy trees and designate green spaces where people can go out and have a picnic or a barbecue? So, I'd ask for you to delay the vote and get this traffic study done now, rather than pay for the consequences later.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Ms. Anderson: Thank you for your time.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Ms. Anderson. Who else?

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor. No one else has requested to speak.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Let me address some of the comments that have been made, starting with Rhonda, who I respect very much. Le Jeune and the Aloft Hotel. Le Jeune is -- Le Jeune doesn't have sidewalks basically from, I think, Catalonia up, and the reason is that Le Jeune used to be two lanes that go south from Alhambra Circle, south on both sides of the street, and when

the -- when Le Jeune was widened to four lanes, they ate up the sidewalk without thinking what is going to happen to pedestrian. The size of the sidewalk in front of the Aloft Hotel has nothing at all to do with the Aloft Hotel. It has to do with the widening of Le Jeune 40, 50, 60 years ago, and that goes up to Alhambra Circle. I am against -- I mean, I think the Aloft Hotel being there is an abomination and it is an intrusion -- a commercial intrusion west of Le Jeune, where it should be just residential. But you were wrong by saying that the Aloft Hotel narrowed the sidewalks on Le Jeune. Ponce neighborhoods and Mr. Winker with the Ponce Neighborhood Association, there is intrusion. I mean, there are people that have law offices, medical offices, dental offices in Ponce that wish to park in residential areas. That is wrong, and that should not be permitted, but that's something that the Ponce neighbors should look into. Dr. Sokoloff, your opinion does count, and developers are subject to traffic studies by us, the Commission, to the point that we do not accept their traffic consultants. We hire our own traffic consultant paid for by the developer, but we hire our own traffic consultant to tell us what is happening with traffic and what impact it's going to have on the neighborhood. There are so many things that the Transportation Advisory Board could and should do, including traffic calming. Look at traffic calming on Edgewater Drive. Look at traffic calming on Alhambra Circle. Look at traffic calming in a lot of neighborhoods and the street, and you should be concerned with those issues, not antidevelopment issues like you have been every time you come up with a proposal because of your composition, leadership, whatever. I'm very much against this, against 2-1, and you mentioned 2-2, but 2-1, which is the usurpation of functions that our Planning and Zoning Board has, that our Planning Department has, that our Zoning Department has, that Ramon Trias has, and I'm very much opposed to bringing in another board into this when we have very competent boards appointed by us, and very competent people in our staff, and you want to replace them with your decisions taken by people that have very little to do with planning. I'm very much against this, as far as I'm concerned, I'm going to vote against it. Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mayor. So if I could hear from the ACM in regards to the Traffic Advisory -- Transportation Advisory Board. When there's a project, or when there's a potential

development project that's coming before the City, what engagement does the board have? What is the process? I want to learn a little bit more and put it on the record.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Well, the current role of the board, they are not specifically guided to provide input, but they do have the wherewithal to do so. All of the projects that go before the City and eventually come up before this body are publicly noticed. Everyone has the opportunity to see what the projects are about. Every Planning and Zoning Board meeting is available to the public. Right now, we have meetings that are being recorded, if I'm not mistaken. And so to the extent that the board is there to represent neighborhoods in terms of the impact of traffic and transportation, they can always avail themselves of information regarding a project, and they can always have discussions regarding it, and serve as an advisory board to this body. That is available to them right now.

Vice Mayor Lago: So -- and I appreciate that, just like any resident, obviously, can join.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That is correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: For example, we have a meeting discussing Miracle Mile, and obviously -- not just Miracle Mile, but the Zoning Code, FAR, obviously, a litany of different things that deal with the proposed Zoning Code on January 14, and anyone can join us, resident or nonresident, and give their input. And like I talked to the Manager a few moments ago, we could be there three hours, we could be there four hours, we're going to listen to everybody. But my point is, and again, I'm not in favor of this legislation, but I'm always in favor of more interaction, more input, especially when it's advisory. I don't think we lose anything by having more roles, more of an advisory role. And I'll tell you because we have a lot of great people in this community who are a great resource, who are highly educated, who have a lot of great experiences and have a lot of history in regards to the City of Coral Gables. And I don't -- to me, you know, I don't think this is properly worded correctly, the resolution, but what do we lose? I don't feel it taking away any power from me as a Commissioner, as an elected official, if they provide me with input in regards

to a project and say, "Listen, Vince, in regards to the Transportation Advisory Board, I think that we could do a bus stop here. We could add the following bike lane. We could do this, we could do that. These are our recommendations, advisory." What is your opinion on that?

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, if I can say something?

Vice Mayor Lago: Of course.

City Manager Iglesias: If I can say something -- and coming from the private sector in which you work in, and I think that -- how many advisory boards...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: Do we need really? We have an excellent Planning and Zoning Department that we are looking -- as a matter of fact, the sidewalk issue we've already addressed it. And all the projects that we've done on US-1, on Le Jeune Road, on Douglas Road are with an additional five -- ten feet of sidewalk to really generate something like that. Those were mistakes that we're done before, and you can go back and look at mistakes that are done by many. We have an excellent Planning and Zoning Department that we're in sync and we're providing great projects. We have a Board of Architects that looks extensively at all these projects from a study point of view and how they relate to the streetscape. We have the DRC, which all these large projects have to go to. We have a traffic consultant that works for us to provide traffic studies. Now those traffic studies are not for a level of service because we've decided that level of service would stop construction everywhere.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: And however, that traffic consultant can operationally tweak all -- tweaks all our designs, and it's an internal -- and we went to an internal consultant, not a consultant

provided by the developer. We have the Planning and Zoning Board that looks at all these issues and has an extensive presentation which is noticed. And then we have finally the elected Commission looking at these projects as a conditional use. The majority of the large projects over 20,000 square feet are conditional use and will remain conditional use. So, as far as review, we have probably the most extensive review. And by the way, we noticed the 1,000 feet and we noticed the 1,500 feet on land use issues. That is...

Vice Mayor Lago: Which is far and above what any other municipality does.

City Manager Iglesias: I mean, multiple times above anybody else. So I do think that we have a substantial review that -- much more so than any other city, and I think it's really sufficient. And I think what we're doing now in Planning and Zoning and the projects that we come up with -- Vice Mayor, look at the Agave project. What an incredible high-end project that is. We are looking at the Mediterranean bonus as a truly Mediterranean effect. We've really looked at our streetscapes. Our streetscapes are a major issue. Sidewalks on Le Jeune Road are five feet, and we've been dealing with that; US-1, Douglas Road, as I mentioned. So I do think that the Planning and Zoning are doing a great job. The whole city is really clicking to get the most that we can for our residents, certainly with respect for private property that we must have.

Vice Mayor Lago: But I just don't want -- I don't want this...

City Manager Iglesias: So I do feel that we have a substantial review and very thorough, thorough input from everyone.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just don't want this to be thought as an indictment on any other board. You know, I just -- for example, you look at Dr. Sokoloff and you look at the other members of the Transportation -- I value their input. Am I going to agree with them? Are we going to agree with them every single time? No, we're not. But I don't want anybody to ever think that their service to this community is in vain.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Their services to the community are very much appreciated.

Vice Mayor Lago: Of course, and you said that very clearly, very clearly.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And as the Transportation Advisory Board, we have some many issues in connectivity with the trolley, with the traffic calming. That's their function. Let's have the Historic Board get into the transportation issues or the, you know, whatever -- the Water Advisory Board get into historic preservation. No, no, I very much object to that.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is an attempt by the members of -- some of the members of that board, some, to impede development. And they tried to do it with the concurrency the other day. This is another attempt, and I'm very much opposed to it. We should look at it as what it is.

Vice Mayor Lago: And at the end of the day, like I mentioned, this is an advisory role. This is not quasi-judicial. We're not talking about historic preservation or...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They're trying to adopt quasi-judicial functions.

Vice Mayor Lago: I understand, but I mean, we could always pare back -- you know, the request -- we don't always get what we want, right, Mr. ACM?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That's correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: We could always pare back the request. But at the end day, I just -- listen, we don't have -- in this form -- I want to be very clear. In this form, I'm not ready to approve this or even vote on this, in my opinion. I'll vote no, clearly. But I just want the individuals on this board

to understand that we as a body appreciate them. We're grateful for their efforts. And if someone wants to talk to me about development, if somebody wants to talk to me about a project that's forthcoming and they feel that they should be notified, I don't have an issue with them being notified.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They're welcome to do it.

Vice Mayor Lago: I don't have an issue, and I want to listen to them.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I will say that this process and their role has already functioned in that manner. In fact, I do remember at one point that Dr. Sokoloff came and spoke about the -- I believe it was 220 Miracle Mile, if I'm not mistaken, because that was discussed at one of their board meetings and there were some concerns that were raised to the board, and Dr. Sokoloff took it upon himself, on behalf of those concerns, to come and speak to this elected body. So, in my opinion, there is a system that already works. The information is out there. Residents are informed. There's ample notice. The board should be able to determine which projects -- maybe a resident brings it to them, or maybe they look at a project and say this is an interesting project. Would anybody like to discuss it? I don't think that that discussion is beyond the role of the board.

Vice Mayor Lago: And what would it hurt for us to be able to say, "Listen, this month before the P and Z, there's these two possible projects."

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We already do that.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm asking again...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We already do that.

Vice Mayor Lago: You already do that?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Yeah, we do. I mean...

Vice Mayor Lago: And obviously, and the Transportation Advisory Board gets that notification.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Every -- all you have to do, sir, is look at what's coming up on the website and to look at the City's notices. And that to me, if you're serving on a board and you're volunteering, that is one of the responsibilities because you should be a resident that is informed greater than other residents because you're serving on an advisory board.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Mena, comments?

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, although I just -- I don't know if you all are able to see it. I'm on the Zoom, so Dr. Sokoloff has been raising his hand trying to speak, so whenever appropriate, if he could be given that opportunity, I certainly have no issue with that. And I only bring it to your attention because I'm able to see him on the Zoom. The -- look, my issue is most fundamentally, I just don't think that what the board is requesting, the Transportation Advisory Board, not the Traffic Advisory Board, as some people have incorrectly referred to it as, is just not within the purview of the board. It's not what they do. And to the Vice Mayor's point, have no problem with them -- there's nothing precluding them from looking at the agenda for the next P and Z meeting before their meetings, evaluating them and deciding if they want to have input, input that's within the purview of their board. But the idea that, you know, they should be -- and I'm just looking at the resolution -- incorporated into the review process for site plan approval, that's what we have a P and Z board for. That's what we have a Commission for. The -- I sponsored an item a couple of years ago, where, you know, we tinkered with the independent review process for traffic studies in an effort to improve that process. We take -- all of the points made by Ms. Anderson, Dr.

Sokoloff about the importance of the traffic issues is well taken. Nobody would dispute that. The issue here is it's just not within the purview of this board. I welcome Dr. Sokoloff and anybody on the board's input on development projects. Frankly, I looked at the membership of this board, and most of you regularly chime in on development projects, certainly Dr. Sokoloff, Ms. Kawalerski, regularly chime in on development projects and issues, so we certainly get their input. I mean, there's no doubt about that, but this just seems to be beyond the purview of this board. And you know, Dr. Sokoloff, with all due respect to you, when you as the chairman of this board -- and I'm happy -- and I would ask that you be unmuted. I don't like to speak to somebody who can't speak back. But the -- you know, when you come on the meeting as the chairman of this board and you say something to us like, well, otherwise, it's a government by the people, but for the developers, frankly, it's offensive. And it's -- that certainly -- that type of commentary is definitely not within the purview of the chairman of this board. The board is supposed to give suggestions and substantive input on the issues that fall within the purview of the board. And you know, it's indicative of this being about more than the role of his board within the City and something much more personal, frankly. And I welcome your personal opinion; I really do. I've met with you before. We've heard from you on meetings. You're a very intelligent person with a lot of good insights. But to come in here and say that -- first of all, it's just not true because governments are for the people and by the people because its elected officials are elected by the people, and everybody who sits on this dais was elected by the people. And you know, if you or anybody else feels that developers run this city, then you should vote somebody else into office, and I encourage you to do so. I certainly take exception to that, and I find it offensive.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Mena: I respect your opinion. I respect you as a person, and I respect the other members of your board. I'm happy to engage with you on issues that are within the purview of this board in terms of your function on this board. I'm happy to separately engage with you as a resident when it comes to issues that are not within the purview of the board. But to comingle the two I don't think is correct, and I just don't think this particular proposal as phrased is within the

purview of the Transportation Advisory Board, which again, from my reading, the goal of the board is to effectively protect and maintain the multi-modal transportation network and the safe and effective use of the public rights-of-way. I just don't think that having the board involved in the review -- site plan review process is really within the purview of the board. That's where I am with this. I'm happy to hear from Dr. Sokoloff...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: You know, when appropriate. But that's where I am at this moment.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you very much for your opinion.
Commissioner Fors.

Commissioner Fors: I'm not going to beat a dead horse, Mayor. I'm not willing to vote in favor of making the Transportation Board a quasi-judicial board. If we did so, I think there's other steps we'd have to take similar to the things we do for the Planning and Zoning, where members have to have certain experience in certain areas and trades before being handed a quasi-judicial capacity and making decisions that can be appealed up to higher bodies eventually. With that being said, I'm always open to hearing from members of the Transportation Board and members of the public about any development. I think, like Mr. -- like Commissioner Mena said, I often do hear about proposed projects and developments from members of the Transportation Board. And for that reason, I think that what we are doing is working. Anybody can sign up through the Clerk's -- the City Clerk's amazing new feature where you can give your email address and receive agendas. You can not only sign up to receive agendas of the City Commission, but also of the Planning and Zoning Board. You can see what's on the schedule at the DRC. I think providing more notice, specifically to the Transportation Board, is just a matter of somebody taking that same notice and emailing it instead of the City automatically emailing it to the members of the board. I think that's being done already, and for that reason -- although I invite opinion; the more voices, the better and

value those opinions -- I don't believe that -- I think it's overstepping to go ahead and create another quasi-judicial board that substantially overlaps with some of the ones that already exist.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Mr. Sokoloff: May I speak, please? May I say a few words?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Wait, let's -- I'll let you speak, but wait a second. Commissioner Keon.

Mr. Sokoloff: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: As I said in the beginning, I think that the original mission of the board, you know, remains, and instead of maybe looking at development, what you have to look at is how we maintain the inter-modal transportation system or the multi-modal transportation system throughout our city as the City develops and as road conditions change and as these things happen within the community. And I think that's where you provide great value to the City is in giving that input as residents as to how these different things are being -- are affected and your recommendations as to how we deal with them. So thank you.

Mr. Sokoloff: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Commissioner. Doctor, you want to say a few words?

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, just say a few words. You know, another part of the purpose says to maintain a well-integrated urban street grid, providing access to commercial centers without sacrificing a high quality of life that exists within the city neighborhoods, so it does have to do also with the development. I'm not trying to offend...

Commissioner Mena: Really quick, really quick, Dr. Sokoloff...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: And I'll let you keep speaking, but access to a commercial center is not the same as whether there should be a commercial center.

Mr. Sokoloff: There already is a commercial center. It's just getting to and from it, which seems to be the problem. I mean, there's so much density that's occurring. Let me say this, that...

Commissioner Mena: Before site plan approval...

Mr. Sokoloff: May I please...

Commissioner Mena: I'm just talking to you. I'm talking to you. I'm giving you an opportunity. I just want to engage with you on this discussion because I think it's important. The -- if you're involved in the site plan approval process, it's before there's a commercial center.

Mr. Sokoloff: Okay.

Commissioner Mena: Right?

Mr. Sokoloff: We're not looking -- you know, somehow this is translating differently. We're not looking to be a quasi-judicial board. We are not looking to impede development. We're a board that just wants to make sure that we hear what's going on in the City because we're not. And I'll give you a good example. When it came to the Terranova project, which had passed the Planning and Zoning Board, and I did speak in front of the City Commission, this developer had the audacity to design a seven-story hotel with not one single parking place or a single driveway to have unload and loading of passengers or people in and out of the building.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Doctor, and it didn't pass. Yes, you're right. It didn't pass and you got to speak before the City Commission. Doctor, if you have any new evidence or any new testimony, please say so, but otherwise, we're going to continue our meeting.

Mr. Sokoloff: What my point is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please.

Mr. Sokoloff: Is that the developers were able to speak before me and after me. I had a time limit; they usually don't. I think developers have a lot of benefits that we don't. They get to rebut; I didn't get to rebut this guy when he spoke. You know, I think that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The project was denied, Doctor.

Mr. Sokoloff: I see I'm hitting a brick wall, so...

Vice Mayor Lago: No, Doctor, don't look -- Mayor, if I may. Don't look at it that way, okay. Whatever time you need, we'll give you that time, okay.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, I'm just talking about...

Vice Mayor Lago: I want you to be able to express yourself. I don't want to hear later that you were rushed stage left. I want to make sure you have the necessary time to discuss your concerns and your issues. If it gets voted up, it gets voted up or voted down. That's a different situation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead, go ahead, please.

Vice Mayor Lago: But tell us -- finalize your thoughts, please.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Mr. Sokoloff: Well, I know the way that you all are thinking...

Vice Mayor Lago: Continue, continue, continue talking.

Mr. Sokoloff: But I just want you to know that there is not a power grab. We're not anti-development. We represent citizens. The citizens have a point of view. They are literally like Rhonda Anderson said. They are boots on the ground. These are people who live in the neighborhoods and know a lot more about what's going on in their streets and their blocks than traffic studiers who might not even exist in Coral Gables itself. And by the way, some of those traffic study manuals have been told to me by staff are outdated. I mean, when I referenced this traffic study for the Terranova project, it claimed that the existing two-story building that's there now has more traffic than the proposed seven-story hotel that was proposed to be built. I mean, that's kind of how wacky it is, but I understand. We weren't trying to impede traffic. We're not trying to do a power grab. We just wanted to make sure that projects do come in front of us and they don't automatically. It's just from us paying attention that they do.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That is not your function, Doctor. That is not the function of the Transportation Advisory Board, it isn't. And you can testify before the Planning and Zoning Board, or before the City Commission or whatever, but the Transportation Advisory Board's function is mobility, it is traffic calming and not as you have it here, review of proposed legislation, review process for site plan approval, land development regulations, overlays, master plan, judicial -- quasi-judicial making board. That is not your function, Doctor, it isn't.

Mr. Sokoloff: I understand that. I'm not a traffic engineer; no one on the board is. We just wanted to opine on those things. I think all of -- none of you are doctors, but you don't need to be a doctor or cardiologist to know that when you have thickening of the arteries that your blood pressure goes

up. When these big development projects get approved, the traffic is going to congest. Because one thing's for sure, our streets aren't getting wider.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, Doctor.

Mr. Sokoloff: But I do want to let you know that our board is not ignoring all the other issues that are going on. We are -- a big part of the earlier part of the year was spent -- or last year rather was spent talking about the Alhambra bike lanes. We talked about scooters. We are not ignoring our other duties, but there is a lot of development. And the Plaza is monstrous, and the new Park Plaza tower that's proposed to go up, a 17-story building, that's even bigger as far as height. And these things affect the neighborhood and the neighbors come to us. And you need to hear or know it. And I guess if they don't come to our board, they'll come to your Commission meetings.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, Doctor.

Commissioner Mena: One thing I would add, Dr. Sokoloff, is, you know, there -- they do come to us as well. We are...

Mr. Sokoloff: I know.

Commissioner Mena: Their elected officials, and the meetings where people have limited time to talk are not the only avenue of communication with us by residents. We get emails daily. We have meetings weekly. Vice Mayor has open office hours Friday afternoons. So it's...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm here Mondays and Fridays. We're accessible.

Commissioner Mena: The idea that the residents don't have a voice in the process is belied by the fact that the ultimate decisionmakers in the process are the elected officials, duly elected by the residents of Coral Gables. That's the way a representative democracy works. That's what we have.

You know, we are intended to be the voice of the residents of the City. Now, you or any other resident can disagree with us on any issue, perhaps you may opine that we don't -- any one of us doesn't do a good job of representing interests of the residents or they do. Those are subjective opinions that anybody can hold. But our role in the process is to be the voice of the residents of the City. I take that job very seriously. I try to do a good job of that. I don't claim to be perfect; I'm sure none of my colleagues do either. But that is the avenue by which the residents not only have a voice in the process, but by which they are actually ultimately the decisionmaker in the process, because they are the ones that elect the people who take those votes. And we know -- I mean, you and many others have made abundantly clear that there is a lot of reluctance and concern about the amount of development and the impact on traffic. It's -- you know as well as we know it's a top two issue in every election, if not, number one, at this point. So, you know, it is what it is. Again, I -- and I welcome -- as I said before, I continue to welcome your voice and everybody else's voice in that process. My issue with this resolution is merely that I feel that it's beyond the purview of the Transportation Board and that's all.

Vice Mayor Lago: Commissioner Mena, let me ask you a quick question -- and this is for all my colleagues. You think it's worth not even voting on this resolution today and having the Transportation Advisory Board come to us, come to staff with a real alternative for notification on projects where they can just speak about issues and put it on the record, which at the end of the day, as Commissioners, I know that we all read all the boards and what the boards say and their concerns, and we look at them. We speak to our board members. They bring up issues and concerns. I'm not going to vote in favor of this obviously. I don't think that this is the path that the board should head on, but I don't have any issues personally with a board, you know, discussing projects, having an opinion on a matter and giving insight at the end of the day, positive insight, which will only benefit the City. What do you think, Mr. ACM?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm very much opposed to not voting on this. This is the second or third time this comes up. If they want to come before us, I will absolutely, certainly put them on the

agenda to hear their comments, but I think it would be a dereliction of our duty if we don't vote on this today.

Vice Mayor Lago: If you want to vote on it, it's fine, but I mean just -- we're talking about...

City Attorney Ramos: Just a point of procedure.

Commissioner Keon: Pass the gavel and make the motion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Keon: Pass the gavel and make the motion.

City Attorney Ramos: I point of procedure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I will make the motion that we deny.

City Attorney Ramos: Mayor, just a point of procedure. Neither of these resolutions are City Commission resolutions. They are asking you to take action. If you do nothing, you're taking no action.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah, that's what I'm saying.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It says here resolution, Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Ramos: A resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board, not of the City Commission.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, well, I will...

Vice Mayor Lago: That's what I'm saying. We don't have to take action today. That's why. So at the end of the day, you don't have to pass the gavel.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I am very much opposed...

Vice Mayor Lago: So...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To approving this resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: Opposing.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I think it should be made known that I -- you know, that we should not approve this.

Commissioner Keon: Then I'd like to make a motion to take no action...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: On this item today.

City Attorney Ramos: Perfect.

Commissioner Keon: Is that...

Vice Mayor Lago: That's basically exactly what I said.

Commissioner Keon: Okay. I...

Vice Mayor Lago: And I think...

Commissioner Keon: Well, you can make the motion; I'll second it.

Vice Mayor Lago: And I think that we should -- I think what we should do, having Dr. Sokoloff and the members of this board continue to have a viable conversation, which is acceptable, not just clobber them over the head and say, "We're not going to discuss this. We're not going to vote on this." Again, we want them to understand -- and everybody here in this Commission says it over and over again and so does staff. These individuals do a great job. We're grateful for the work that they do. We are not willing to make them quasi-judicial. The doctor said it very clearly that's not what they're requesting. What they just want to be is notified on projects and give their input on that.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: With the permission of the Chair?

Vice Mayor Lago: Of course, please.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Every agenda for the Transportation Advisory Board includes a section called traffic impact study. Every traffic impact study that we do with relation to -- relationship to major projects is already on their agenda.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's what I asked for before.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And so...

Vice Mayor Lago: So what is it that they want then? Why are we --? What is the confusion? If they don't want to be quasi-judicial, they want to be notified about projects -- remember...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is...

Vice Mayor Lago: No, but Mayor, if I may. I'm agreeing with you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anti-development (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm agreeing with you. I'm agreeing with you. What I'm saying is, the ACM just made it very clear something that I had mentioned to him 20 minutes ago, correct? It's just an issue about notice. So, if they're already being noticed, what are they requesting?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I think what they're requesting is to be elevated to a quasi-judicial status.

Vice Mayor Lago: But the doctor just said he doesn't want to be elevated to...

Mr. Sokoloff: No.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: But that's the way that their resolution reads.

Vice Mayor Lago: But I mean he put it on the record and said he doesn't.

Mr. Sokoloff: No.

Commissioner Fors: I think the resolution doesn't technically say that they'll be quasi-judicial. What it says is that they'll be part of the process and allows -- and require for their findings to be considered by the Commission and/or the quasi-judicial boards. So I think what they want is for their input to be mandatory, not binding, but mandatory in the review process.

City Attorney Ramos: Right. So every site plan would have (INAUDIBLE) go to their board. Rather than them weighing in when they're concerned, it would hold up the process or make them part of the process in reviewing the site plan.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Which is wrong.

City Manager Iglesias: How many times do we have to review something? And if you review something thoroughly, then that's reviewed. I don't think we need to -- I think we have a very thorough review right now, and I don't really think that we require more and more reviews prior to letting the project proceed.

Vice Mayor Lago: We're not going to take action on this today. I can tell by the Commission's opposition. And as the City Attorney and as I mentioned to the Mayor, we don't need to take action. So I think that if the board -- if the Transportation Advisory Board has real interest, like they say they do, and they've mentioned it several times, obviously, Dr. Sokoloff here is taking up a lot of his time, which is very, very important to him and to us as a physician, maybe they can come back with something which is a little bit more in line with what Commissioner Fors was detailing a few moments ago.

City Attorney Ramos: My only concern is one of Robert's Rules really. So we did not need to make a motion, but I think someone did...

Vice Mayor Lago: No.

City Attorney Ramos: And it was seconded. Mr. Clerk, can you confirm?

City Clerk Urquia: The suggestion was made to second, but it was not seconded.

City Attorney Ramos: Okay.

Commissioner Keon: It wasn't seconded. Let it go.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is going to come back and bite us if they get their -- they will delay if their review has to be mandatory. And they are very, very much anti-whatever type of development is proposed and that is wrong.

Vice Mayor Lago: Mr. Mayor, I view it differently.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Vice Mayor Lago: I don't think they're anti-development.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, they are.

Vice Mayor Lago: I don't think so.

Commissioner Keon: You know...

Vice Mayor Lago: They want to provide input, and at the end of the day, this Commission, like Commissioner Mena said it very clearly is put in this position to render a decision on what the residents want. And I don't think they're anti-development. I think they want to provide their feedback and they take their job seriously. So we don't have to take a decision on -- we don't have to make a decision on this today. We don't have to vote on it. We can visit this another day or not visit it another day. Would you like to move on to Item 2-2, which I think is the last item on the agenda.

Commissioner Mena: I would just say...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well, wait, wait, wait. I'm in charge of the meeting.

Vice Mayor Lago: Mr. Mena, I think -- I'm sorry?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Wait, what is --? We don't have to take any decision at this point, right?

City Attorney Ramos: If you vote, nothing happens -- if you do not vote, nothing happens.