

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting  
Agenda Item H-3  
July 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  
Public Service Director, Brook Dannemiller**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item H-3 [4:09:35 p.m.]

A Resolution authorizing the Public Works Department to proceed with the implementation of a permit process to allow decorative crushed stone and low, non-woody landscape plants in the public right-of-way.

Mayor Cason: Let's do H-3 and then H-4.

Commissioner Keon: H-3 and 4?

Mayor Cason: H-3 first and then H-4.

City Attorney Leen: And Mr. Mayor I have two like a minute each after these that I have to say before 5, just because we have to do them before August.

Mayor Cason: OK. H-3 this is crushed stone and non woody landscape plants. Go ahead.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: This is a follow-up to the January 26<sup>th</sup> where we discussed the need for alternative materials in the swales other than where grass won't grow. So this is a resolution authorizing the Public Works Department to proceed to allow decorative crushed stone and low, non-woody landscape plants in the public right-of-way. So we currently have three conditions to fill throughout the City. We have single-family home locations where grass will grow with proper maintenance. The solution to that is to maintain grass or other non-woody ground cover plants usually within a three-foot radius.

Mayor Cason: So in that case if somebody everyday parks their car on the grass and kills it, they don't have an option to put stone, they have to put the grass in.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: That's right. The intent of this is to where grass won't grow because of shade or the next option is where we have apartment buildings, condos, duplexes, townhouses, higher density areas, where they need that parking and there is no other option for parking, then they can be granted for that situation. Also areas under Banyan trees and single-family homes where conditions are impractical growing grass, the solution for those two would be alternative solutions such as decorative crushed stone – the alternative solution such as decorative crushed stone and other non-woody ground covered plants would be used for those situations.

Mayor Cason: And you pick plants because they didn't need much maintenance, I assume.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: What was that?

Mayor Cason: You pick the plants that you...

Public Works Director Dannemiller: Yes. In a couple of slides I have the plants, our suggestions for the plant palate, which is a limited palate based off of local conditions that will grow well. Three main considerations for alternative materials are aesthetics, we want to preserve lush, green vegetative character of our neighborhood City swales, enhance unsightly areas. Secondly, our swales are important for storm water management, so we need to maintain the capacity of the swales to continue to percolate rain water as a vital part of the City's storm water management system, and also we wanted to be consistent throughout the City. We don't want a hodge-podge of different solutions, so we want to create guidelines and a process that will allow for a consistent and methodical process for reviewing and approving alternative swale solutions. So our staff recommendations, our first one is to allow 100 percent of the swale area to be planted with 18 to 24 inch tall, non-woody ground cover plants that are limited to Wart Ferns, Philodendrons....those are the ones that grow best in the shade and under roots of the trees.

Secondly, allow parallel or head-in parking spaces to be created in the swale using a limited number of pre-approved decorative crushed stone types in 18 to 24 inch tall non-woody ground cover...

Mayor Cason: People who apply for a permit.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: Yes. So the last slide would be the permit process which we are going to be using our existing right-of-way encroachment permit process, we are slightly modifying it, so it's a process that we already have.

Mayor Cason: And do they pay for this permit or is it a freebie?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: The currently landscape encroachment permit is \$200.00, so we can discuss whether or not we want to maintain that fee or have a different fee.

Commissioner Lago: Are you offering an option or are you providing some sort of guidance in regards as to how they are going to keep that stone that crushed granite or crushed stone, whatever you may use on the swale versus all over the street?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: The three materials which I'll get to in just a moment that we tested as a pilot study, once they are compacted in place they don't really migrate; and at the Library we actually have the catch basins clogged with some debris and they backed up with water and the stones still didn't migrate, that's why we picked those particular materials. So we'll start with the plants; the plant design guidelines we are recommending is that plant will extend fully from the sidewalk or the property line with no sidewalk to the edge of the road creating a hedge along the road where sidewalk is not permitted. We don't want someone to just put a row of grass so if you ride along the asphalt to keep people from parking in the area to look lush and green. Swale plantings are intended as an alternative to grass where grass cannot grow. As such plantings beyond a three-foot ring around the street trees are limited to a single plant type in the swale along each property within that three-foot ring around the trees. Residents will still be able to plant non-woody; low bearing plants of their choice as long as the plants are maintained at a maximum height of 24 inches, because that's what they are currently allowed to do. So expanding that, we don't want 20 different plant types in the swale, we want kind of a uniform green grass or a uniform fern or one of the other plant materials. The best plants for growing on top of roots with very little soil are work ferns...Wart Ferns on the left Philodendrons Burle Marx on the right, so where you have lots of roots and no soil these two plants will grow just fine. So that would be the two plants that are going to be used most frequently. Where you have a little bit more soil, you can do Liriope which is on the left, Variegate Liriope in the middle and Flax Lily. Variegate Liriope and Flax Lily look similar, but

they are two different plants, and lastly, Red Congo. This was the only plant that we approved for under Banyan trees, because Banyans have deep shade and really large leaves that will crush the other plant material and it will look kind of unsightly, and so this is what we used over at the Library.

Commissioner Lago: And by the way, I drive by there basically two or three times a day and it looks spectacular. It looks as if you planted it yesterday.

Commissioner Keon: It looks nice.

Commissioner Lago: The trees look super healthy, the color vibrant, it looks very, very nice.

Mayor Cason: So you will guide people that want to go this way in terms of which ones their particular home or apartment building, for their fee they'll get some advice as to which of these probably none of us now what those things are.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: So on the application we'll have these predetermined plants, basically the slides that we just had kind of explaining which plants are best for which scenarios, and when we get to that slide we have some requirements for dimensions and plans.

Commissioner Lago: Do you have a plan in reference to sitting down maybe with Will in Code Enforcement and his team and basically giving them an explanation so when they are in the field that maybe they can visit homes and say listen, currently what you have is not conforming or not within the Code and let's follow these criteria.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: If this is passed today we'll need to work with staff to notify the residents so if they have – because right now they have no grass we are not currently citing them, so we can basically give them a notification, a flyer.

Commissioner Lago: And in my opinion, I imagine my colleagues agree, the idea is not to fine people. Obviously, if they don't comply within a year after we've exhausted all remedy, but I think we need to make sure that we offer them this option as soon as possible, because I have several people who call me, they want that gravel surface.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: Yes, it's a very common request and I'm excited that we are coming up with a solution.

Commissioner Keon: And the gravel that we can use, what was acceptable?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: So that's actually the very next slide. So the decorative crushed stone, the...we have...I'll get to the next slide is the materials, but basically the parameters for this will be, the area need to be a minimum of eight-foot width, because that's the minimum we need for the car, and that's for head-in or parallel parking spots. Maximum width for a single family is a 20-foot width, which is also the maximum width for a driveway approach and that's for head-in or parallel parking; and maximum width for multi-family or commercial is 36 feet, and that allows you to do four cars head-in or two cars parallel; and the swale plantings around trees will be required for all decorative crushed stone installation must extend from the sidewalk to the edge of the road and be at least three feet from a tree trunk on either side. So if you have a 12-inch diameter tree, you are going to have seven-foot width of planting from the sidewalk to the street; and it's going to be a requirement to be able to put stone in the right-of-way, the crushed gravel to have that landscaping, because we want that visual effect of a lush swale. We don't want the entire swale to be the decorative crushed stone. And then the three types that we tested at the library, these were the aesthetically pleasing and available locally or somewhat locally. The first one is the crushed Oolite, which is a light grey white color that's our local stone, that's what the wall here right here in front of us is made out of. Then the second one is crushed Coquina, which is a beige color that's a crushed shell, it comes from Central Florida, and the last one if a blue/grey Granite, which comes from Georgia, so the shipping is the most expensive part. So these are all available locally and are...products; and the installation detail of these is three inches of compacted stone on top of a filter fabric layer and that allows you to keep a thinner profile.

Commissioner Lago: Let me ask you a quick question. I've used crushed Granite in the rear of my house, especially adjacent to my neighbor where there is no sun, but I also use an edge to keep it as clean as possible from where the grass is. Will that be allowed on the swale to just use an edge in between the street and the swale to make sure that you keep that Granite? I know the compaction looks well, but you still have a few pebbles that jump out once in a while if you don't keep it maintained.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: You'll have the edge of the sidewalk and the edge of the asphalt to put in place and then from side to side you are going to have landscape on either side so you don't need the edge in there and we also want to minimize the materials in the right-of-way.

Commissioner Lago: OK.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: So if you are...a sidewalk you want to put an edge on your property just inside of it that would be acceptable because then that's on your property.

Commissioner Lago: And you detail the edge that's required, right?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: What's that?

Commissioner Lago: You would detail the edge that's required, because some people may use little bricks. Again, the edge that I used was steel, like a metal.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: But there would be no edging in the right-of-way, that wouldn't be allowed.

Commissioner Keon: It would be the road.

Public Works Director Dannemiller: It would be the road and the sidewalk. Between the library and...we basically have the stone and the mulch comes up to it, they just touch and the plant material kind of hides where the edge actually, where the interface happens.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you – great work.

Mayor Cason: Anymore discussion?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: Lastly, the permit process. It's our typical landscape; our Public Works landscape encroachment and right-of-way permit application. With that application you would have the proposal of swale materials and proposed layout. Then Public Works staff reviews that and approves it, and the conditions are required for all right-of-way encroachments would be the same for this process, which would be the adjacent property owner maintains the encroachment and good repair at all times at the owners expense. The City of Coral Gables reserves the right to remove and maintain or have the owner remove any of the improvements within the right-of-way; and lastly, the owner executes a hold harmless restrictive covenant agreement.

Mayor Cason: Can you do this online?- will this be an online permit that you can do?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: You submit this to Public Works.

Mayor Cason: But can it be done online rather than...

Public Works Director Dannemiller: We have the application online, but we are going to need basically a hand drawn or survey with the plans and the dimensions.

Commissioner Lago: Why don't we start allowing the residents to...

Commissioner Keon: As soon as we pass it.

Commissioner Lago: I want to announce it.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Keon made the motion.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Second.

Mayor Cason: Seconded by Commissioner Lago – City Clerk.

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

Vice Mayor Quesada: Absent

Commissioner Keon: Can we make a...is it possible Cathy to do like a pamphlet that can be when somebody applies for the permit or they ask that you can give them so they can take it with them to a nursery to find the rock, to find the things – design and just do a pamphlet like some of the other things we've done so we can give that information right away to people, so they can go figure out and see about doing that. And also, do we have a list of the people – I remember there was a gentleman that came here when we asked for this to be done there was a street. I can't remember the street. It was the other side of the highway near to Merry Christmas Park and the other street was so bad. Do you remember that at all?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: We have a number of residents that....

Commissioner Keon: OK, that have come and spoken about it, because I think I put it on the agenda for that. So we will now get in touch with all of these people that we have, that we know of to have the conversation with them?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: We'll let them know.

Commissioner Lago: Will you do me a favor. Once you leave here would you mind speaking with Martha one second so you can provide her with the PowerPoint presentation?

Public Works Director Dannemiller: OK.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

[End: 4:22:36 p.m.]