

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-1
October 25, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Economic Development Interim Director, Belkys Perez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item 2-1 [9:50 a.m.]

A Resolution of the International Affairs Coordinating Council expressing their desire for the Coral Gables City Commission to establish a Sister City relationship with the city of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item 2-1.

City Attorney Ramos: 2-1 is a Resolution of the International Affairs Coordinating Council expressing their desire for the Coral Gables City Commission to establish a Sister City relationship with the city of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Economic Director Perez: Good morning, everyone, Belkys Perez with the Economic Development Department. I believe we have Brett Gillis on Zoom, and he is a member of the International Affairs Coordinating Council that will be making a presentation.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

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Mr. Gillis: Hello, good morning, this is Brett Gillis. I am here, I believe you all received a copy of the resolution and the background memo on the item before you. At our last International Affairs Coordinating Council meeting, we had made a unanimous recommendation to the City Commission to consider establishing Stellenbosch, South Africa as a Sister City. So many things in common between the two cities, both university towns, garden cities, rich history, rich architecture, and I'm available if you have any questions. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: This was reviewed and vetted through the boards of the city. It was addressed, it was reviewed.

Economic Director Perez: Yes. And so, it was Mr. Gillis who brought this city to the board. They decided, they had talked about it on October 18, 2021. There was no quorum at some point, and they had other things, other matters that they were dealing with and for that reason it just came to the board again for approval, and it passed unanimously.

Mayor Lago: I'm always concerned when you tie another city to our city, because I want to make sure, obviously we hold everyone to the highest standard, similar standards that we hold ourselves to. If the board feels comfortable and my colleagues have any other further questions or statements.

Vice Mayor Mena: I have two questions; one is, what are the criteria, if any; and two, is there any cost associated with having Sister Cities, if so, what is it?

Economic Director Perez: There is no cost associated. There are really loose criteria and I think that's an area where we need to step in and create more of a defined criterion.

Vice Mayor Mena: What's the objective.

Economic Director Perez: The objective is to have cultural exchanges, economic development purposes, to have things that we can mutually benefit from. So, whether it is bringing businesses to the city, vice versa, or have some cultural events, but that is the goal. And so, that's what we try to do with all of our Sister Cities.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't have an issue. I happen to have been to Stellenbosch, South Africa, it's a lovely place. Its kind of like Napa Valley, actually in a lot of ways, its their wine region. I don't know how much business exchange there's going to be between Stellenbosch, South Africa and Coral Gables. I'm not really sure. Again, lovely place, I recommend it for people to visit. Not opposed to it because it doesn't cost anything and that's fine. Its so far and so challenging to get to, and such a different type of economy from ours that there's not enough overlap there. That's why I asked about the criteria and trying to understand sort of what the objectives are, because it seems to me you would have Sister City programs with places a) where you have more travel to and from, more exchange opportunities and have similar, I don't want to say economies, but generally speaking to have the type of businesses that you might see some sort of exchange

involved. That's all. Again, it's a lovely place, recommend it, but I think we should have maybe at some point a conversation about what we are looking to get out of this and how we get there.

Mayor Lago: Any other questions or comments from the Commission?

Economic Director Perez: I do want to point out, Mayor, if I could, the third whereas clause there's a scrivener's error. It should read, the IACC discussed Stellenbosch, South Africa as a possible Sister City for Coral Gables. So, was introduced needs to be crossed out.

Mayor Lago: Okay. I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: Make it.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Thank you Belkys.