City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting Agenda Item 2-3 January 14, 2025 Police and Fire Headquarters 2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson Commissioner Melissa Castro Commissioner Ariel Fernandez Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr. City Clerk, Billy Urquia Historic Preservation Officer, Anna Pernas

Public Speaker(s)

Michael Maxwell, Historical Preservation Board Mayor Don Slesnick, Landmark Advisory Board Addis Corella, FPL

Agenda Item 2-3 [12:03 p.m.]

A Joint Resolution of the City of Coral Gables' Historic Preservation Board and the Landmarks Advisory Board requesting that the City Work with its lobbying team and the Public Service Commission to address certain issues regarding streetlights in the City.

Mayor Lago: Moving onto the next item, item 2-3, time certain 11:00 a.m. I want to welcome our friends from the Historic Preservation Board and the Landmarks Advisory Board, along with our employees who are here, please join us. Mayor Slesnick, it's always a pleasure to have you. Thank you.

Historic Preservation Officer: Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, just wanted to do a brief introduction. We have the Chairs of the Historic Preservation Board, Mr. Maxwell and the Chair of the Landmarks Advisory Board, Mayor Slesnick here to present the joint resolution.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Maxwell, good morning, good afternoon, 12:03. I apologize for the delay. We are very grateful for your hard work on the board. Thank you.

Mr. Maxwell: Thank you, Mr. Mayor and the Vice Mayor and all the Commissioners today, even with our absent Commissioner on Zoom. Thank you very much for hearing us and thank you very much for considering this item. All of you have received, I don't believe I need to read this into the minutes, all of you have received this resolution. Just very quickly as a background to this. Our joint boards met. We held lengthy discussions about this, and this is the resolution that the two boards, of which you have appointed to give you advice on, not only landscape and historic preservation, but also on the branding and maintenance of our city's historic fabric of which is what we sell and is our identity. This is our resolution. For those of you on the Commission, you'll recall that I had been here several times before, you know we started this in November or very early December, over a year ago. So, we've met with the City Manager previously about this and the point is that at this time we believe that the resolution that's presented before you is a very positive and, shall we call it a win-win proposal for both FPL and for our city to achieve what it is that we need, and what we would like to have and what maintains the historic character of our city. So, with that, I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Slesnick right now.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mayor, good morning.

Mayor Slesnick: Good morning. Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, it's good to be back with you again and especially on an important item like this. Let me call your attention to – I was doing some research and 100 years ago, 1925, the Board of Regents of University of Miami was deciding where to put the University of Miami. Some people think that it was a foregone conclusion that it would be in Coral Gables, but that's not true. There were a number of sites that were considered in the Dade County area for the University of Miami. But let me read to you – this is from, by the way, the book that was published at the University's 75th anniversary, and it talks about the meeting of the Board of Regents for the university and why they chose Coral Gables, and it talks about several things, but then it said the Regents also felt that Merrick had already established for Coral Gables a certain architectural unity and high grade requirements for buildings. The letter also paid tribute to the community spirit, which Merrick already had demonstrated. And then I found a clipping from 1984 that talked about tree canopies, and this tree canopy thing talked about the importance of tree canopy, and it talked about comparing Coral Gables had the most tree coverage for 77 percent, while Miami Beach had the lowest of 2 percent. And then I came across in my wife's journal a picture of the 1925 land sales that were held by Merrick with one of our streetlights right here, but the whole purpose of what I've just read to you

is that there's a great sense of place in Coral Gables. We have an incredible sense of place and if I were a realtor, I would tell you that's one of the reasons why real estate it is so desired here, that's why people buy homes here, that's why we live here, it's for this sense of place; and the streetlights that we have lived with since 1925 are part of that sense of place, and it's so important. The two boards that appear before you, the members are appointed by each of you and they represent good citizens of Coral Gables and they represent you all personally, and both boards voted unanimously to present this resolution to you because of their concern for the replacement of our historic streetlights with lights that do not appropriately represent our sense of place, and it's not just the streetlights. We talked also about the lighting of the streetlights, the replacement of the golden globe lights with white bright lights and some people may say, well that's good for safety purposes, but I live on a street that has gone from golden globe silver lights to black poles and white lights, the streets are no lighter. First of all, the lights are higher and for whatever reason, the lights, as I told FPL yesterday, the lights shine into our bedrooms, but they don't shine on the street, and so the golden globes set off the city as well as the silver poles and it makes us part of what we always thought Coral Gables was, a great and wonderful quote, "City Beautiful." So, I urge you to support the resolution in the sense that we'd like to work together between the city and FPL. I've always had a good relationship with FPL, as I told Addis yesterday, much to some citizen's displeasure, I actually showed up at the Dade County Auditorium one time to support their rate increase, because of the work that they did after Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma replacing and strengthening our grid, that it did a lot of good work then and the citizens were, should have been very grateful and many of us were. So, this is not something of City versus FPL, something that we need to work together to resolve, to keep Coral Gables Coral Gables. And I thank you for your time.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mayor. Mr. Clerk.

Mr. Maxwell: Mayor and Commission, this is not a difficult problem to solve. This is an easy problem to solve. This is a problem that most cities come up against, and where we have a public utility, they have it rate-based, they have it approved by the Public Service Commission. The lights that we have are historic lights, while they used to be in there, you know through no fault of anybody's that got left out at the last time. We need to come together with them. We need to work with them. As all of you know from our Public Works, there is almost 30 different kinds of streetlights in Coral Gables, 30, okay; and originally, there were only three kinds. So, what do we do? How do we deal with this? How do we deal with not only our branding and our history, but how do we work with our utility provider? – in a very positive way. We've done this before. We've spent several years with coming up with streetlights that they brought into our community that are now being replaced. They do wear out. We need to move forward on this in a positive way. If we have to have streetlight districts, we can do that. There are lots and lots of different options for all of us to deal with this in a positive way that continues to represent Coral Gables and the brand that we're selling. Remember this, the New York Times just stated that Coral Gables is now more

expensive than Beverly Hills. So, why don't we, just like Beverly Hills which has historic streetlights that they maintain keep up with our neighbors. Anyway, thank you. Thank you. We're happy to answer any questions and work with you in any way. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Castro: I'm on the same page as you guys. What you guys want is what I want. With all due respect and after speaking to the City Attorney, you can't hear me. With all due respect and after speaking to the City Attorney, there is no legal basis for proposing to talk to the Public Service Commission. I don't think it's worth hindering our relationship with FPL and what I would suggest is setting up a meeting with the City Manager, Mayor Slesnick, through the City Manager, I'm sorry, with Mayor Slesnick, with Mr. Maxwell and FPL and see if maybe you guys can negotiate, let's give it that one last attempt to try to negotiate something with FPL. Maybe you guys could, if not then, we're going to have to really think about if we can afford to spend that amount of money and finding another vendor, and then doing other cabling and the...as well.

Mr. Maxwell: Commissioner Castro, we're happy to meet with anybody to begin to move this issue forward and I think a meeting with FPL and the Manager would be appropriate. We don't know what kind of money we're talking about. So, I don't even want to put that on the table, because it's an unknown and just like with the annexation where people started throwing out a bunch of money that wasn't real, that sum of money defeated exactly the motion that this Commission brought forward to the residents on an annexation. So, I'd really rather not deal with that at this time, if you don't mind, because money is not the issue, because this is a) affordable, b) its workable, and there are lots and lots of known solutions to it, and we're happy to do that and if that doesn't seem to bring a resolution, we would continue to encourage you to adopt this resolution. You can delay it for a little while, we can do something, but it needs to move forward, and it needs to move forward in the way of which we can all benefit. Remember, public utilities are just that. They are here to serve the public. They have served us before. They have delivered these streetlights before, and I don't see any reason why we can't do this in the future. So, thank you.

Mayor Lago: Let's hear from FPL briefly.

Mayor Slesnick: Mayor, I don't hear well, so I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: So, let's hear from FPL briefly, but I was going to basically make the same request in regards to having the both of you meet with FPL and its leadership, in an effort, along with our attorneys, in an effort to find a path moving forward, and if we're not able to, then we'll have to address the issue front and center, but I think it's worth going and having a sit down conversation, similar to what we did for multiple years, hopefully it won't last multiple years, but in regards to the transmission lines, where we were able to find some sort of common ground. Addis, good morning, thank you for being here with us.

Addis Corella: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Mr. Manager, members of the Commission, my name is Addis Corella with Florida Power and Light External Affairs, with offices located at 4200 West Flagler Street. I hear myself super loud. Anyway, if you just give me a minute and indulge me. So, as a little girl, I grew up in Coral Way and 32nd Avenue, and to get to most places we always had to go through Coral Gables and it was my lifelong dream to live in Coral Gables, and I told my mother and father, one day we are going to live there, and I have been a resident for many, many years in Coral Gables, so I understand the emotions involved and the frustrations that you may feel, the residents and the board, right, in making these decisions. However, putting that aside, and again, as a resident, I love this city, I always tell all of you how much I enjoy living here and I couldn't see myself living anywhere else, and you can hold my word to that. But putting those emotions aside, I think it's important to know that, yes, we had these silver lights that the city selected 30 years ago, and I want to point out the only city that has used those silver poles has been Coral Gables. Moving forward in 2018, that contract for those silver lights expired and the city had four years to renew that contract and in the four years they were told, the prior administration was told, you can select whatever lights you want, if the ones that we offer now are not available. The city, I guess thought about it, I can't speak for them, but they had four years to figure out if they wanted to continue with another vendor that did provide those lights or if they wanted to do anything else. They decided to move forward with our program, which now, at that time had turned in 2017, we discontinued those old programs and had the new LT1 agreement, which is the LED program; and under that program there was a catalogue of offerings with a select number of poles and fixtures and lights and all of that. So, the city were the ones that selected those lights and I'm not putting blame on the city. Please don't take this as disrespect, but what I'm trying to explain is that at that time some lights were selected and there was a contract that was signed and was brought to the Commission and approved. So, I understand the emotions. I understand the wishes, right. Now we have to deal with the facts that we have in front of us and it's that we have a contract which we have put into effect and installed 70-something of those lights, we have a balance of them. So, I think that decisions – and we can sit with the board members at any time and I'm more than happy and you guys know it. I have taken this to the highest levels of our company. We've had meetings with the Manager and our VP's. I'm more than happy to set up another one. I have no problem with that. I just would like to put on the record that at this point there is a contract in place, and we have to either move forward or you are welcome still to get out of that contract. There is just a cost associated with that, which removing our infrastructure, our lights, all of that and you can go with whatever vendor you like and put whatever poles and height and fixtures you so choose to. So, I just want to put that on the record. Again, I think we have a great partnership with the City of Coral Gables. As a resident, I love this city. I don't want to see – I want to see it continue moving in the direction that its going, but wearing my other hat, I do have to tell you there are decisions that need to be made.

Mayor Lago: So, Addis, if I may, and I appreciate your comments, and they are well taken. We haven't had a seat at the table just yet. I know outside of the previous Manager, and our current Manager, with the individuals that are here with us today. Two individuals that are well intentioned that have years of experience here in the City of Coral Gables on many different fronts. I'm always, like you, willing to take one more bite at the apple to see if we can find a resolution. There are a lot of things that can be discussed, and I want to make sure because there was a statement made before that those poles were historical. My understanding was that those poles were not historical. The poles that are historical and are in question are the White Way Lights that we've done a great job bringing them back to their original splendor, but these poles are not historical.

Ms. Corella: Right. So, it's my understanding and actually I had a great conversation with Mayor Slesnick, and he did enlighten me that those poles were replicated as part of being historical, but they are fiberglass poles that were very deteriorated and since they were out of contract that's why the decisions were made that were made.

Mayor Lago: I don't have an issue. I don't have an issue going one more time to the table and bringing representatives from the city. The Manager wants to join, the City Attorney wants to join, everyone can be there, and we can have a conversation and look at it from a different angle. From an angle of historic preservation, from an angle of our previous Mayor. It's always an opportunity and its always an opportunity to take one last crack at it. If not, we have to come back and make a tough decision in regard to how we move from here.

City Manager Rojas: If I may Mayor. I would like to put on the record what the cost is of us not pursuing the existing contract. I don't know if you have the answer to that or maybe Hermes can give us the answer. I want to make sure that my figures are correct as far as what the cost of the city, if we were to not continue with the existing contract.

Ms. Corella: So, the total – you are mentioning if you don't move forward.

City Manager Rojas: The South and North Greenway lights.

Ms. Corella: Right. The North Greenway Streetlight Agreement, if you don't finish installing the 13 lights, is that the number you think.

City Manager Rojas: That's correct.

Ms. Corella: Okay. I don't have that number with me.

City Manager Rojas: My figures are that us taking the lights off and so on, and Hermes, please correct me if I'm wrong, its about a \$2.5 million dollar project, plus the \$620,000, I guess fine or whatever you want to call it for breaking the contract.

City Attorney Suarez: Mr. Manager, I don't think that we've taken any legal positions or conceded any legal positions, so I would prefer that we not commit to any figures, because like I said, we have not taken any legal positions with respect to that contract, and I would not want to.

Mayor Lago: I don't think we should be talking about that right now. My point is this, look, if you want to talk about something, you want to talk about anything in this conversation and not the cost, we've talked about before and there's been some massive numbers that have been thrown out here in previous meetings that we've talked about, that's not really the issue here today. What I'm more concerned, not only the price, bthe price is extremely exorbitant. We have members of the community, we have boards that are representing us, resolutions stating that they think that we are headed in the wrong direction. I want to exhaust every opportunity and have a conversation to see what we can do moving forward. I do not want to go before the Commission at the state level and have this conversation at that board. I do not. I want to have it here, exhaust every option, and then we can sit down and move forward if we have to move forward in a different direction, we will, but the cost is not only the issue, its also the maintenance. It's the maintenance moving forward that we would assume responsibility and I don't want to scare anybody, I don't want to go in that direction, but if there's a hurricane, if there's an issue here in regard to power in this community, FPL has the wherewithal to address these issues across the board. We don't have bucket trucks; we're not prepared to address electrical issues across the city of this magnitude. So, I would like to see, if I may, is have this conversation with these two gentlemen who have worked incredibly hard along with yourselves and get the leadership of FPL. I've sat down with them before when we were negotiating undergrounding. I met with the President on multiple occasions, the previous President. I haven't had the pleasure of meeting with the new individual, but maybe this is a good opportunity to have a conversation and come together and say, look, the city is one of the first cities in the State of Florida that's moving forward with the process of undergrounding, we've kicked off a great relationship, continue a great relationship after some time that we had some issues in regards to overhead lines that were not in the best position, but I think we are in a much better position today than we were. So maybe now is the time to take advantage of the goodwill and have a candid conversation and see if we can find an issue. Maybe its our rate, maybe we look at it in a different way, maybe we skin the cat in a different way, or maybe we are not giving an option and that we present the fact that there's no other options, this is what we have, and this Commission has to make a tough decision moving forward. I think that's what we're discussing here today. We are not discussing cost, we're not discussing maintenance, its just about having one more bite at the apple and then move forward with this issue. Either we say yes, or we say no.

Ms. Corella: We've heard you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. By the way, you've been amazing, you've been amazing, we've had multiple conversations, even on the weekend, to talk about how we can address these issues, and I appreciate you keeping me informed abreast of issues.

Ms. Corella: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Through the Mayor, if I may. For the meeting that's being proposed, and I know we've already mentioned the City Attorney's office, but the fact that there is a contract that's part of this arrangement, I ask that you have assigned, whoever it is that's worked on that agreement to be in attendance, because there'll be legal issues that will need to be discussed most likely. Also, I think its important prior to the meeting for all the parties, everyone's going to be involved, whatever questions or information you want brought to that meeting, communicate it through the Manager's office so that that information is made available at that meeting, instead of saying, well, we're going to have to look back and send it to you. Its better to just have everything on the table and see if we can come up with some clarity.

Ms. Corella: Mr. Manager, will you be coordinating the meeting?

City Manager Rojas: I'm sorry.

Ms. Corella: You will be coordinating the meeting.

City Manager Rojas: I will coordinate the meeting or the Deputy City Manager.

Ms. Corella: Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you. Again, I want to thank all of you for working so hard on this. I mean its like the last issue that we had, getting around the table a lot of times helps solve these problems. In addition to the matters that were brought up, I also think you need when the board meets to use the resources that we have at the City Attorney's office to understand Public Service Commission process and the pros and cons of getting involved in that. I think its an area you don't want to tread in, because it becomes very complicated. I think we'll do better working together even if we have a resolution and have a memorandum of understanding between FPL to reach that goal. I think we are better of working with our partners here within our city. So, thank you for all your efforts to bring this forward.

Mayor Lago: Mayor.

Mayor Slesnick: Since it came up about North and South Greenway, let me just add a personal reflection. For those of you who don't remember, if you go back 40 years there were no streetlights on North and South Greenway – none. North and South Greenway was like a country road without lights, and it was the citizens of North and South Greenway, and I can say I helped to lead that effort, who came to the City Commission to light North and South Greenway with the same silver poles and golden globes that we had seen up and down Granada and along Alhambra. And that happened. It was a public exercise and cooperation between the city, this is before I was on the Commission. It was a cooperative effort between the city and the citizens of North and South Greenway and FPL, and we circled the golf course, which is, as you know, one of your main public areas right now, its like the Central Park of Coral Gables, which is good and for the residents sometimes challenging, but it was a beautiful circle around the golf course around your public area of a golden necklace, which we worked very hard to get. My point is that there are some lessons to be learned here. Number one, the contract that's being referred to, no one, nobody that I know knew about this contract, and I understand that's within the purview of the city to make contracts with FPL, but when it involves something so public and so visible as the streetlights, I think that in the future you may want to think about involving public comment as to something that's going to affect the view of their neighborhood, the scenery of their neighborhood, the livability of their neighborhood; and then secondly, the installation. I think FPL and the city need to learn a lesson from that. I came out of my house one day and Ginger Jochem came by and said, oh, I see you are getting new streetlights. I said, what are you talking about. She said, oh, they are installing these new black lights over on South Greenway. I immediately went over there; nobody had told us that our streetlights were being changed. Nobody. Nothing. That was how we found out about it, and that's how everybody on North and South Greenway found out about it is when the trucks pulled up and started ripping out the silver lights. So, I think there are a lot of lessons to be learned here on cooperative efforts between citizens, the city, and FPL and I think that Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor and Commissioners, that your conversation here today shows that you share that spirit with us, and I thank you for that.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mayor. I appreciate you. Have a wonderful day. Thank you so much.

Commissioner Fernandez: I also wanted to thank Mayor Slesnick and Mr. Maxwell for their leadership on this. I know we had asked that both boards have a joint meeting to discuss this issue, so it was important to hear back. I agree with the comments that have been shared by my colleagues regarding this being a priority, but also being sure that we are able to work cohesively with FPL and I wanted to thank Addis for the work that she's been putting in. It's great to have a government relations person who is local to this city and understands the needs of Coral Gables. The one suggestion that I had to the City Attorney about was the potential of having our city's lobbyist speak to other municipalities around the state who may be interested in something similar and may be its not just Coral Gables that's interested in a different type of light pole or a different type size

and color of light pole. I think that the size is also something that's affecting our ability to have the proper lighting. So, I just wanted to throw that out there. Maybe we can discuss that further after we have that meeting between Mr. Maxwell and Mayor Slesnick and FPL and make a decision at that point, but I think this is an issue that's important to all of us and we want to make sure that Coral Gables still stands out.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before moving forward, I have members of the public requesting to speak on this.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker is Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Some time ago, not so long ago, under the previous administration, if I remember correctly, I realized that our light poles were being changed. I contacted Public Works. What we thought were beautiful light poles and beautiful light fixtures were being changed to this ugly, commercial-looking black poles that are so tall that the light really doesn't do much for us. We discussed it at Commission meeting, Florida Power and Light was here, and we were told that we had no choice because our lights were not in the catalogue. Some of us argued the point. I believe at the end of that meeting, the discussion was, slow down what you're doing to see what we are going to do next. I did not see that this was coming up today, so I didn't look for the minutes, but if I remember correctly, everything was supposed to slow down, not continue changing it until we decided what we wanted to do. Well, now we have to deal with the fact that they've continued doing it and now we are going to have to replace what has been done if we want to do it our way. Something's wrong. I know that we're known – Coral Gables is known for fighting for what the residents want. I mean we've even fought for things that we didn't want, but the Commission wanted them, we've lost, and we've had to spend money, but you know what, we do what we think is right and I'm not sure that I know many people in our area, and I know that other people that live there and they don't see the same things that we see, but San Amaro and Campasano, we had the silver lights, the silver light poles, and we wanted those and Hermes told me there was no option and Florida Power and Light told us, they are not in the catalogue, there is nothing we can do. Well, I'm sorry, we do not want those ugly black lights. I'm sorry, we do not want them. There has to be a solution. We even discussed that day about maybe covering the poles, making them not so high. I mean there were lots of discussions that day, but obviously we dropped the ball and Florida Power and Light understood that to mean, let's keep doing what we're doing. Wrong. That's not what we wanted and that's not what we want today.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, is going to be on Zoom, Karelia Carbonell.

Mayor Lago: Karelia, good afternoon.

Ms. Carbonell: Hello everyone. This is Karelia, good afternoon. I wanted to say a few words on this item, and I basically have followed it from the very beginning about our White Way Lights and I want to make sure that we all understand, there are several varieties of White Way Lights all going back to George Merrick and really, they identify with the founding of Coral Gables. As far as the White Way Lights that we're discussing, which are replicas, they are called Arcadian. They are the Arcadian-style White Way Lights versus our decorative White Way Lights, which we've been restoring. There are several White Way Lights styles, but within the White Way Light family there are the Arcadian-style, which is, if you go to the Country Club, in front of the Country Club there are two Arcadian lights that were restored between the city and HPBCG a few years ago, and they are the original, they were brought back. Those are the lights that were around the city, that style of lights which are the Arcadian lights, and they are a part of the Greenways and of course all the way down several avenues. Those lights are the bedrock of Coral Gables. They actually are mentioned in the city plans. So, for Coral Gables to, number one, change them without consulting the historic, the neighbors, in the historic district of the Greenways. Again, I'm not following exactly where the other streets are now, but specifically to the Greenways, who proves as a city that is historic, that has a historic city plan that has the White Way Lights as part of the city plan, that was founded by George Merrick, we are celebrating our centennial anniversary and we are having a conversation about should we or shouldn't we. Shouldn't we bring them back or should we. First of all, they should never have been changed. If they needed fixing or needed replacing, I understand about the vendor, but you know there are other vendors out there and I am sure there could have been an agreement with FPL. So, please keep in mind that the two Arcadian White Way Lights in front of the Country Club of Coral Gables, those are the lights that were part of the original eight miles of White Way Lights that George Merrick developed. So, as these meetings are going to happen, please keep that in mind and I believe that a decision should be historical versus financial, because of the fact that we are a historic city, and unfortunately sometimes those things do cost more, but that is our brand, and so, I'd like to really emphasize that. I'll be happy to share whatever you all need as far as the history of them, but I believe, Mayor Don Slesnick, and of course Mr. Maxwell have done a wonderful job in explaining back in the 70s, early 80s, these lights were replicated because many were lost, but again, that's where I think we should all be thinking about, which is our historical and cultural heritage. Thank you for listening. Take care.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Alright. So, I think we have...moving forward. Thank you again for being here. I look forward to hearing from you in the next meeting. Thank you very much.