

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-5
May 11, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.

Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-5 [Start: 12:39 p.m.]

Briefing on the conceptual “Youth Zone” initiative involving traffic in areas with high youth activity. (Sponsored by Commissioner Fors)

Mayor Lago: G-5.

Commissioner Fors: Very briefly. I’ll just repeat something I said before the new Commissioners joined us, just for the benefit of them having a briefing on one of the things I’ve been working on, and specifically because I know that to get it done is ambitious and I will need everybody’s help up here. I’m fairly confident based on the subject matter that everybody up here will support it, and that is the vision and the plan of creating what I like to call “Youth Zones,” it could end up being called another name. But in a nutshell what I envision is traffic zones similar to school zones that have special rules and special themes and special visual queues that really cause drivers to exercise more care when passing through that area, except that while we find school zones around schools, these zones would be designed for other areas with high volume youth activity that don’t

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necessary have a school around them. I've been already preliminarily discussing it with staff. I hope to have a concept package ready for your review and start thinking about it from a conceptual level by either the first or second meeting in June, and I welcome any additional ideas regarding this concept. We will have an opportunity to discuss it once we see more or less in material form what it might look like, but it's something I'm very excited about. I think to get it done we will need, not only of course the cooperation of the county, but the support of the entire Commission, not just the support, but the help. So, I hope I can count on everybody to do that. No need to make any decision today, obviously, but look forward to seeing that and hearing more about that in the future.

Commissioner Menendez: I'd like to comment, if I may. As you know, my years of coaching at the Youth Center over 25 years and part of that board and Chairperson of the Parks and Rec. Actually, in the 1990s when the city was tearing down the old Youth Center on 400 Anastasia, and built the beautiful structure that we have now, the new facilities. Safety for the kids around the Youth Center was a big topic, especially going from the Youth Center to the library and library back. They were even talking about merging the two properties just so it's safe travels for kids. Unfortunately, the city didn't find solutions back then, but I think as the cut-through traffic increased unfortunately, and thanks to the efforts of the city's administration, the Commission, we are currently always opening new parks, neighborhood parks, I think it's much needed. I commend you for bringing this item or this issue to the forefront and once it's in a form of a resolution, I would love to co-sponsor and offer whatever experience that I have having dealt with the youth sports and youth activities my whole life, so whatever you need from me as a Commissioner, I'm here to help.

Commissioner Fors: I appreciate that. And by the way, I should say that the Youth Center area was sort of the area that inspired me to really think about it, since it has so many non-school locations that are high youth activity volume. And then Mayor Lago was copied on an e-mail from a resident who was discussing, I think reduced speed limits around our neighborhood parks and that's when I started thinking, you know, why not try to do it everywhere, where there is a park.

Mayor Lago: And that's funny, because we were talking about that back and forth, and I think that we shouldn't implement a neighborhood park without having this type of legislation in place, because when you look at these parks, everyone walks, these are neighborhood parks, they walk to, they don't park there, which is another issue we need to deal with, because we are missing some disabled parking spaces, but we'll talk about that another day. I know Commissioner Anderson wanted to have that discussion, but people are walking to these neighborhoods, through these neighborhoods to get to these parks. For example, on Alhambra, right next to where I live, there has to be some sort of traffic calming initiatives right in front of these parks or at least surrounding

these parks, especially with the number of young children and families that are using these parks nowadays.

Commissioner Anderson: I absolutely concur with you. I walk around that Youth Center practically on a daily basis with walking my dogs, and I've made lots of observations about the amount of speed and the disregard that drivers have for the safety of our youth. So, I'm looking forward to this moving forward and I think you pretty much have unanimous support on this, so you should feel good.

Commissioner Fors: I thought I might. The question is what is it going to take to get it done. What's the final product going to look like, but we'll work on that in a collaborative manner?

Commissioner Menendez: The good thing is that there is a will and like you said, Commissioner Anderson, I think there is full support, and when you have the full support of the Commission, we can do wonders for our community.

Mayor Lago: So, with that being said, Commissioner Anderson, you have G-6 and G-7. Do you mind, if we put those on hold for a second to introduce our County Commissioner Raquel Regalado?

Commissioner Anderson: Not at all.