

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item G-1**  
**April 27, 2010**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II**  
**Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.**  
**Commissioner Maria Anderson**  
**Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.**  
**Commissioner Wayne “Chip” Withers**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Patrick Salerno**  
**City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez**  
**City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman**  
**Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Director of Historic Preservation, Kara Kautz**  
**Assistant City Manager, Dona Spain**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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G-1 [Start: 9:23:47 a.m.]

Presentation of excerpts from the minutes of the Historic Preservation Board meeting of March 18, 2010 requesting the following action with regard to CASE FILE AV 2008-02.

That the City Commission adopt a Resolution authorizing Ad Valorem tax relief for the property located at 130 Miracle Mile, a local historic landmark, legally described as Lots 14 and 15, Block 3, Coral Gables Crafts Section, according to the Plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 10, at Page 40, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida. The cost of the improvements is \$1,800,000.00, which would correspond to approximately \$9,450.00 per year and \$94,500.00 over ten years. (Historic Preservation Board Vote: Unanimously approved; 8-0).

Mayor Slesnick: We have G-1; Mr. Manager, G-1

City Manager Salerno: Kara?

City Attorney Hernandez: We don't need to read this one, do we?

Mayor Slesnick: I'm sorry, excuse me?

City Attorney Hernandez: It doesn't have to be read as an ordinance or resolution by title.

Mayor Slesnick: I'm sorry, what do you do?

City Attorney Hernandez: I apologize, I thought you were asking the Manager to read the....

Mayor Slesnick: I'm not, I'm just asking for the presentation of G-1 by the City Administration.

Ms. Kautz: Good morning, I'm here to request a resolution authorizing ad valorem tax relief on behalf of the property at 130 Miracle Mile, which is a local historic landmark. This is probably a little bit different than the other ones that we've seen. The Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser lists this building construction date as 1940, however we were able to find photographic and historical documentation that places the construction at 1926. It was permitted in October of 1925 as 114-116 Coral Way, and if they want to start the presentation so you all can look at the photos while I'm talking. It's a two-story Mediterranean Revival structure designed for the Baldwin Mortgage Company. It was among the first commercial structures in the city, and Jack Baldwin who owned the Mortgage Company, helped Merrick establish the City of Coral Gables, and as you can see here, pointing out this is one of the earliest pictures that we could find showing Coral Way and the Downtown Business District, and that's the structure you see pointed out. The address changed to 130 Miracle Mile in the 1950's as much of the area changed and evolved to adapt to the trends of the time, and became more modern and more commercial.

Mayor Slesnick: Excuse me, Kara can I – what year did you say?

Ms. Kautz: It was built in 1926.

Mayor Slesnick: 1926.

Ms. Kautz: The Property Appraiser listed it as 1940, and this is a picture showing the renovations that were done in the 50's to modernize the structure, and although we found that the building was acceptable in its remodeled current state, the return of the architecture found in the original design was extremely desirable and appropriate to reflect the importance of the building; and this is how it looked before the renovation; doesn't look anything like the 1920's photo that you saw earlier. In December 2006, the Preservation Board designated the property as a landmark and granted approval for the restoration of the front facade and renovations to the existing structure; and as you'll see these are still the before pictures, you'll see the after pictures that they put the building back the way it is supposed to look. They recreated the original colonnade, the original doors, and railings, these are the restoration drawings; this is how you see it today. They recreated the original parapet and trim, the original casement windows, the original tile roof, the original pediment; they rebuilt the original skylights on the second floor, they restuccoed the whole building with an appropriate texture, new windows and doors, replacement of 28 of the existing 30 structural columns, they put in sealed beams to support the building, to make sure

that it will stand up and continue to look as beautiful as it does today. The Historic Preservation Board voted unanimously to recommend approval on this item.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I'll go ahead and make the motion, with a comment that they did an exceptional job on the property, and I can you that if everybody did that nice job on their properties on Miracle Mile around the City of Coral Gables, we'd have a better city, that's exactly what we're looking...what we want to accomplish in the City of Coral Gables. Commend them for their expertise.

Ms. Kautz: The architect's on his way, he thought you might take a little bit longer in your discussions. They did a fabulous job.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm happy to make the second, just to keep the trend going.

Mayor Slesnick: It's been moved by Mr. Kerdyk, second by Ms. Anderson, and I see the President of the B.I.D., Brad's out there nodding yes to second your comments. When the architect gets here, we would be glad to have you introduce him to us.

Ms. Kautz: Sure, its Burton Hersh, he's on the Board of Architects.

Mayor Slesnick: Any other comments. It is a wonderful restoration of the look of the building, and I – now how much of the original building is actually part of this?

Ms. Kautz: They did have to go back and recreate portions of it; the colonnade obviously had been filled in over the years, so they had to open it back up again, they had to push the front façade back to make the Colonnade a little bit deeper, but the original structure is still there and still evident. So they did a lot more recreation work than restoration work, but we are extremely satisfied.

Mayor Slesnick: And I would like to comment for those people that own commercial property, maybe historic or downtown Coral Gables, or who own residential property, this is one of several that we've looked at that you get tax credits. I want to strive this point home, so this isn't just a dull vote of the Commission, that this is encouraging, those of you who own historic properties to get them designated, and as you do improvements you get tax credits for a ten year period on the amount of the improvement, right?- am I misstating that?

Ms. Kautz: You're right.

Mayor Slesnick: OK – on the amount of the improvement. So the city continues to be able to collect taxes on the original value of the building, but as an owner that has put work into it, you are going to get to be able to go for ten years without paying taxes on the new improvements. So it's really a win-win for everybody, and I urge that people consider that when – and this is the second commercial property we've done in the last few months.

Ms. Kautz: Yes, the second recent one.

Mayor Slesnick: Yes. Any other discussion? We have a motion and a second.

Mr. Clerk

**Commissioner Anderson: Yes**

**Commissioner Cabrera: Yes**

**Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes**

**Commissioner Withers: No**

**Mayor Slesnick: Yes**

**(Vote: 4-1)**

Commissioner Cabrera: I have one question. In reading the minutes I saw that former Mayor Thomson or Mayor Thomson, had made a commentary about memorializing the original property owner, it was Baldwin....

Ms. Kautz: Um huh (Yes)

Commissioner Cabrera:...Is that in the works?

Ms. Kautz: The architect – it's not a requirement by us or by the Board; the architect, they are looking at putting...

Commissioner Cabrera: A plaque.

Ms. Kautz:...a little plaque, says what the building was. We are not requiring them to put the Baldwin Mortgage signage back up that was on the building, but some sort of indicator that yes, that's what it was.

Commissioner Cabrera: Is that something that the Commission would be willing to conceptually support?

Commissioner Withers: Is that Jack Baldwin the Baldwin Insurance?

Ms. Kautz: Um huh (yes).

Commissioner Cabrera: So those that voted in the affirmative would be supportive of that.

Ms. Kautz: Sure, we would do that. Thank you.

Commissioner Withers: I'm sorry, you're finished?

Commissioner Cabrera: No. I was just going to say that was a very nice commentary by Mayor Thomson, so I thought that was – she caught a real good detail for her.

Commissioner Withers: Can I just ask a philosophy, it has nothing to do with my vote. If the Charade Restaurant was rebuilt, in its same look and feel, would you support that for tax relief?

Ms. Kautz: For ad valorem tax abatement – no. Reconstruction, complete reconstruction is not eligible.

Commissioner Withers: So how much of a building has to be there in order for it to get tax?

Ms. Kautz: There is no set number percentagewise.

Commissioner Withers: So why wouldn't you support the – if it's exactly the same as it was? If you recreated that building exactly the way it was, kind of like this building was nothing like it was, it a brand new building, it just looks like the old building. What sets that apart from the Charade Restaurant?

Ms. Kautz: Generally it's for restoration work and restoration work generally indicates that there is something there to work with.

Commissioner Withers: I'm just trying to find out how far back do you go? Is it one wall?- is it a pillar? I have a real problem just because a building looks like it used to, that it gets ad valorem tax relief, and that's an issue in my mind. I think your group needs to come up with some standard because some people are going to say, I have a wall, that's what I have, you know, come on, give me the tax relief. You see where I'm coming from?

Ms. Kautz: I do, I do, and that's something we can look at, to see if there is a way to build in a qualifier.

Commissioner Withers: I think you have to, because this sends a sign to people, that hey, we build a building like it looks like it used to in old, I want my tax...I think it's just opening a door and its going to cause issues in the future, I think.

Ms. Kautz: OK I understand. I'll look into it. Thank you.

City Attorney Hernandez: Commissioner, you raised a very interesting question, because you will recall that when the Charade, when it burned down, we did draft some special legislation to provide certain relief for property owners that rebuild historic buildings in the same fashion. If you want to, we'll pull that ordinance and review whether or not there was some sort of incentive by way of tax relief granted, because I'm not a hundred percent certain, but I think it was discussed at length during, immediately following that fire.

Commissioner Withers: Yes, and it also had to do when the Colonnade was rebuilt and they saved the rotunda. It had to do when they saved the old soda shop on Ponce de Leon Boulevard when....and I don't know if they were entitled to ad valorem tax relief at that time. So I just think...

Mayor Slesnick: Well the Colonnade, I think that preceded the tax relief.

Commissioner Withers: It did, it did, but in a situation like that that's a multi-million...

Mayor Slesnick: And remember a lot of things were traded to save the building, they didn't get the tax relief, but they did get...

Commissioner Withers: No, no, what I'm saying is, if that came to us and it was a five million dollar renovation project at the Colonnade, and they said we want tax relief, we're saving the old rotunda here, would be willing to give them five million dollars ad valorem tax relief.

Mayor Slesnick: Maybe.

Commissioner Withers: Well that's what I'm saying; we're talking some big numbers as downtown develops, and it's a beautiful building, but is it really historic? You know, they had a wall left or they had a courtyard left, but it's just a replica of what it was. So are we giving them ad valorem tax relief?- because the architectural components or because it really historic, and I would argue it's not historic.

City Attorney Hernandez: Also remember bear in mind that's it's a ten year relief also.

Commissioner Withers: I understand. Its \$100,000 for the City of Coral Gables to...

Commissioner Anderson: I see your point; I understand what you are saying.

Mayor Slesnick: I don't totally disagree with you, that's why I asked the question about how much of the building is remaining.

Commissioner Withers: Not much.

Mayor Slesnick: Part of the building not the façade, you're right; the façade is a recreation.

Commissioner Withers: But just because four walls are standing, it looked like other four walls, and there is no architectural elements.

Mayor Slesnick: Maybe look at it this way, which is maybe more of a Chip Withers way to look at it anyway than me, and that is because we were able to tap in to this historic designation and procedure, and it was only because the guts of the building remain, we were able to encourage a redo of a building on Miracle Mile that otherwise might not have been done because there have

been very few – and so therefore, I’m admitting that maybe it’s somewhat of a perversion of preservation...

Commissioner Withers: Absolutely it is.

Mayor Slesnick:...but it worked on behalf of the city to...

Commissioner Withers: Well I would submit to you that I would rather award those people for an architectural look and feel than a historic look and feel.

Mayor Slesnick: But there is no procedure for that.

Commissioner Withers: Well that’s what I’m saying. If we want to encourage buildings to be rebuilt in their original grandeur, maybe not do it through a....

Mayor Slesnick: The only thing is that this is through State Statute.

Commissioner Withers: Listen, I don’t mean to take up the Commission’s time.

Mayor Slesnick: Well you are not taking up the time, but you know what?- maybe we should be the ones who propose a State Statute that allows things like that. Someone’s got to propose it; maybe we should do it through our Legislative Delegation.

Commissioner Withers: That was it.

Mayor Slesnick: Is there any more large supposedly historic buildings downtown that, you were talking about the five million dollars.

Commissioner Withers: Honestly driving down this, you know when I went and saw it, I said wow, I had no idea this building even looked like that. To me it was just a Mediterranean Revival, ’50’s, Miracle Mile Boys Town clothes store, you know, that I remember. It wasn’t the majestic look that it looked like, and it looks pretty cool now. Wouldn’t it be cool if all the shops on Miracle Mile looked like that?- I mean, it would be absolutely phenomenal.

Commissioner Anderson: The Arcade.

Commissioner Withers: The Arcade – it would be really cool to restore that look.

Commissioner Anderson: I support it and I continue to support this, but I think in the future what I’ll be looking at is something along the lines Commission Withers is proposing, because I’d rather see parts of this application, I’d rather see a building done in a good fashion, it could be, and I have to admit it, I’m really an open modernist on that, just as long as it’s done well. This one’s fine, this one’s good, I’m supporting it, but I would like to see some parameters put on and what do we do?- do we grant this one?- don’t we grant this?- and I think we need to put some

limits and put some stuff around it. I'd also like to see at some point in the future rewards for just good architecture.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I missed a portion of this, I apologize, but the fact is that in normality if you were going to build a building, assuming it was from scratch, you are probably not going to build a building in that magnitude because it's so expensive to put together as opposed to putting up four walls and making a few nice architectural design elements to it, but to put it into this context, you know, it takes a lot more money...

Commissioner Withers: No doubt.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk:...and I think there should be a reward for doing something like that.

Commissioner Withers: Bill, I agree with you a thousand percent; my point is I don't know if the reward should come through some historical preservation designation as...when they did on Ponce de Leon Boulevard where we saved the old soda shop, I don't know if you were on the Commission, its right up from the bridge here on Riviera Drive on the north side of Ponce. In order to save the soda shop we allowed a zero lot line for the two properties to mesh instead of the setback, and that was a huge benefit to the developer, and that was saving a historic structure. If we want to encourage beautification and this kind of architecture, all I'm saying is I think another vehicle might be in play here as opposed to calling it for the sake of historic preservation, because it's really not historic preservation.

Commissioner Anderson: I agree, and I think in this case that's the only vehicle they had, and I commend them for it, but I support that, because I do think there are other ways that we can reward them when it's not actually a total historic designation.

Commissioner Withers: If we want to put an ordinance on the books that says, you build a building like it was in the 1920's, we'll give you....I'm a lot more in favor of that than saying it's a historic structure.

Commissioner Anderson: I agree.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Well there is another question too.

Commissioner Withers: Here we go.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And the other question is, does this have any transfer development rights?

Commissioner Withers: I don't know. I don't know.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: For being a historic structure?- tell me that. Does that get that benefit too? You want to come up and tell me that situation.

Commissioner Anderson: I think there are creative ways to reward.

Mayor Slesnick: It might have some, but I don't know what the extent of it will be, because it's in an overlay zone and it's not a high-rise, it's a six story....

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Well I think she is shaking her head yes.

Mayor Slesnick: Yes, it does, but what I'm saying it's limited.

Ms. Kautz: [Inaudible – off mike]....

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And do you know how many transfer development rights that structure has?

Ms. Kautz: No.

Mayor Slesnick: Up to the point that they can build.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: 3.0 FAR.

Mayor Slesnick: Up to the point that they can build which is...

Commissioner Withers: So they just got transferred development rights?

Mayor Slesnick: No, no, no, not because of our vote here.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: It's a 5,000 square foot structure, you can go 15,000 square feet; how big is the structure?- 7,000-8,000 square feet now? They have 7,000 square feet of TDR's, basically. So there is addition....

Mayor Slesnick: My only request would be when we come back for second reading on this, if we believe that we are doing the right thing for this particular building, we express it in a very firm way because the County Commission will be considering this and reviewing our records.

Commissioner Anderson: Look, as far through the next vote I will support it because that's the vehicle and I think....

Ms. Spain: I want to say that this is a resolution, so this is it.

Commissioner Anderson: OK.

Commissioner Withers: That's why I waited for the item to be cleared before I had my discussion.

Commissioner Cabrera: Well I think the job was an outstanding attempt, I mean, we can't replicate the past, you can only do so much with it, so I think – based upon what I read I was most impressed; and again I want to thank Mayor Thomson for coming up with the idea of memorializing some of the history associated with this property.

Mayor Slesnick: Which we did by the way for the Freedman's down the Mile, so we've done that before. Mr. Hersh if you'd stand to be recognized, we've offered all kinds of compliments to this project and to the architect. We appreciate what you've done for Miracle Mile. Thank you.

(Note: The Commission applauded Mr. Hersh)

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you for your continuing service to the city in other ways too.

Commissioner Cabrera: Incidentally I just learned the other day that Burton Hersh will be the next Chairman of the Business Improvement District of Coral Gables. So an early congratulations to you.

[End: 9:42:30 a.m.]