

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
August 24, 2021
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 Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Arts and Culture Specialist, Catherine Cathers**

Public Speaker(s)

**Bernice Roth
Aurelio Durana
Maria Cruz
Joshua Goodman
Estelle Lockhart
Samuel Joseph
Myra Jolie**

Agenda Item H-1 [12:50 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Cultural Grant recipients and setting in place a funding mechanism contingent on the City's approved budget. (Unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval /denial vote: 7 to 0).

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Agenda Item H-1 - Resolution of the City Commission approving Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Cultural Grant recipients and setting in place a funding mechanism contingent on the City's approved budget.

Mayor Lago: We're moving on to H-1, which was time certain for 12.

City Attorney Ramos: H-1 is a resolution of the City Commission approving Fiscal Year 2021-22 Cultural Grant recipients and setting in place a funding mechanism contingent on the City's approved budget.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. My name is Catherine Cathers, Arts and Cultural Specialist for the City. And one of the responsibilities of the City's Cultural Development Board is to recommend the City Commission the annual allocation of Cultural Grant funding. On June 2, 2021, the Cultural Development Board reviewed and scored 34 applications for the allocation of City of Coral Gables Cultural Grants funding. One application was required by the Coral Gables Museum, which is funded separately, and one did not meet the minimal score required for funding recommendation. The proposed funding of the 33 applicants and their scores, including the museum, are available to the public and have been attached to this item. Just a couple of other quick comments. I would like you all to know that, and of course, our Cultural Development Board works very hard all -- reviewing and reading all of the applications. We have with us today the Chair of that board, Dr. Bernice Roth, who'll come up and share a couple comments on behalf of the board. But the culmination of all of these requests is 1,437 events that will be presented in Coral Gables. One of the eligibility criteria is that all of these programs must take place in Coral Gables. And in fact, the board doesn't even see the applications that may have something that's nearby, and we check those addresses of anything that may be of question, whether it's in the City or not. Out of those events, 381 of those events are free events for the residents. And right now, today we're coming with a request to fund that for the -- right now, it's in the budget, I believe, for \$191,228. And the expenditure by all these organizations for the programs that are specific to the City is \$16,295,253, so there's a great economic boost to what's happening here in the City. And of course, the audiences that are participating in that, and we have a lot of statistics that we could give you in that area. So, right now I would like to call up the Chair of the Board to just make a couple of comments.

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Bernice Roth: Good afternoon, everyone. I just want to say I've been working on and off with the Cultural Development Board for many years, sitting off and then going back on. The grant process has become really much more clear to the applicants. They -- when they come to our workshop, they get technical assistance, and they find out how they can score well and what isn't allowed. We want to make sure that every event is open to the public, whether it's free or not. We do not pay for anything that happens on school grounds because it's hard to let the public in, and we want to make sure that there's accessibility to all of our events. I want to point out that one of the events that we have is the Christmas caroling, that I think everybody loves. And I think when we go through the process -- we come from very different backgrounds, the committee. And it just seems as though when we finally add up our scores and draw out the highest and the lowest, the right people get the funding. The board works hard. We read 34 grants. That means 34 990s, 34 program descriptions, budgets, budgets for the program, budgets for the organization. We reserve certain funding for applicants that have budgets of over \$500,000 and are based in Coral Gables. They're our anchor organizations, and they receive general operating funding, whereas the other applicants receive programmatic funding. And so, we hope that you will accept our recommendation.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I have a few questions I wanted to ask. Do you have the list of the organizations that were chosen? I know we have -- I just want to put it on the public record.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, absolutely. And we actually had submitted a PowerPoint that it is just two slides, so the second side is all the organizations. I have the copy of that here as well, so I don't know if IT has it available today. Do you want me to hand it to you or to the City Clerk, or read them off?

Mayor Lago: No, no, no. I just don't have them in front of me, that's why. And I think it's also good just to show the public. So, my questions are in regards to the grants, and this is something that I've asked years in the past, and I've never gotten the answer. So, I'm 100 percent in favor of

cultural grants. I think they're great, but I have a few concerns. I have a few concerns how we're giving more grants to entities outside the City than in the City. That's number one. Number two, 381 out of the 1,200 or so events are free, so we are giving grants to organizations so that they can make money, so they can charge money, which is in my opinion, a barrier to entry to people in this community who want to maybe enjoy one of these events. And number three, which is the one that I've been asking for for a few years, and I asked too late, and I have my staff working on it, was I wanted to understand, do we run an audit process where we say when somebody gives -- let's say we give a \$5,000 grant, a \$1,000 grant, \$10,000, 20, 30, whatever that grant money may be, do we come back and say, "Okay" -- at the end of the year -- "let me see how that event did. How many people attended?" Do you have some sort of proof, tangible proof? Do we make that public so that people can understand that their dollars -- because these are taxpayer dollars, which again, we're giving to organizations that are not even in the City, which is a concern. I want to show people that that money is staying local. So, if we give somebody a \$10,000 grant, I want to make sure that we got \$10,000 worth of value here in the City, and that we're using that money as efficiently as possible. Because I have the utmost faith and confidence in you and in the board. They do a great job. That's not up for debate. But when we're giving somebody 10, 20, \$30,000 of taxpayer money, I want to make sure that we're reaping the benefits of it here in the City.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, absolutely. And so, every year, the -- all organizations have to submit a final report. We follow the same standards as the County and the State, as far as the whole grant process from beginning to end, and that includes a final report. Since we shifted the calendar of the program this last year, we are now asking for an interim final report that the Board has that information and can see where the organizations are at mid-year. Typically, the arts organizations start -- they kind of have a season that tends to follow the school year. We have some programs that are during the summer months, but most of them start out in the fall. And one of the benefits -- and I think I gave you some of the percentages. We actually have this year, I think 14 or 15 -- that's almost half -- that are based in Coral Gables. And I think for a community of our size that still is fairly significant. And the benefit of having outside organizations come in

is to be able to provide a greater diversity of programming for the residents. And again, we're following standards that are in other municipalities, not just ours. So, the final...

Mayor Lago: What about the issue of like, for example, 381 free events versus a total of almost 1,437 events?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yeah, these are all non-profit arts organizations. And with the non-profit arts organizations, even the ones that are ticketed, they have a very hard time even meeting the budgets with the ticketed events. So, the ticket range is -- it can be very minimal. It can be anywhere from a donation request, \$5, to some of the more larger organizations, such as Actor's Playhouse, that may have a higher ticket price for some of their programs. Because these programs cost a lot of money to put on a production, especially, you know, something like that. So, we look at all those budgets. All the budgets are presented. The final report process, we compare what their numbers were with what their projected figures were, so that is both in the budgetary sense and also their attendance figures, we compare. We say, "Okay, they estimated that they would have so many attendees. How does that compare with what the actual numbers were?" We look at all that during the final report. And if somebody doesn't submit a final report, they are not eligible for funding until they do.

Mayor Lago: Okay, I'm inclined to vote on this today in favor of the institutions that are local because I want to review -- I want to start reviewing myself the actual documents that are provided by the entities that are not local. Because I just have a concern -- and I just wanted to share that with my colleagues about -- it's a lot of money. It's \$200,000 of taxpayer money. And I just -- I don't feel 110 percent comfortable. And I want to understand how my colleagues feel. If you feel fine, I'll move forward, but I just want to understand, you know, where we stand. This is a significant amount of money that we're asking. And again, we just lost \$8 million in money this year in COVID; and the year before, we lost 12. So, I really want to be very, very, very careful about the money that we're using, even if it's not coming out of the General Fund. Just to be clear, are these monies coming out of general fund, or are they coming out of Arts in Public Places?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: These are coming out of the general fund.

Mayor Lago: That's even more -- that's even -- that even causes me to have more concern. Not about the process, not about the organizations, not about staff, not about the board, wonderful job. I just want to have an opportunity to understand when somebody gets a \$20,000 grant, I want to see what they spent that money on. I want to understand -- me as the Mayor of the City of Coral Gables -- I want to be able to say, "\$20,000, what did they spend the money on?" We did this event, and then that event -- how many people attended that event?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: So, we have all those figures...

Mayor Lago: I would love to...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And our grants range from anywhere from \$1,500 up to \$10,000 for the programming grants, and actually none of them get \$10,000, just because we have a greater request for funds, and we have funds available. The Coral Gables-based organizations have the ability to request up to \$15,000. That's it. That's the cap. Again, that usually doesn't happen because of what we have available, so just do for clarity on that.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just for -- I just want to clarify though one point, just to make sure I understood you correctly. All of the events that are seeking grant money are located in Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, absolutely.

Vice Mayor Mena: Whether or not it's a Coral Gables-based entity that is putting it on.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, that to me is more...

Mayor Lago: And I'm with you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: I'm with you. I just want to understand.

Vice Mayor Mena: Because I asked you that last year, I believe. I think I've asked you that every year to confirm that. Because again, whether -- it may be that there's either not a Coral Gables-based entity that offers the service for the type of event, or there's a number of factors, but the notion that it's not sort of Coral Gables related, if you will, unless it's a Coral Gables-based entity, I don't -- like I'm comfortable because it's a Coral Gables-based event located in Coral Gables that therefore is offered to residents of Coral Gables.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And we've been asked actually by the board to do greater outreach to continue to provide greater diversity of programming. So, in Coral Gables, we may not have a dance company, you know. So, we do outreach, you know...

Mayor Lago: For example, Seraphic Fire.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Seraphic Fire is not based...

Mayor Lago: Is not a Coral Gables -- but they do...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Is not based in Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: They do incredible work.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And they are all over the country.

Mayor Lago: What I would like to see is Seraphic Fire telling me, "Hey, listen, we're doing an event and it's for, you know, high school students, or it's for the Adult Activities Center," or it's, you know, something to that effect, and I can see where that grant money went. I can understand that that grant money went to bring in 20, you know, musicians and then put together -- or they had an event in downtown. I just want to understand it.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I think that is part of the application, isn't it?

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, it's part of the application.

Mayor Lago: I haven't seen that though.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Mayor Lago: And I haven't seen that. And to me, I don't have a problem voting on entities that are located here in Coral Gables, but I just feel a little uncomfortable right now taking a vote on organizations that -- when you take -- when you think about Seraphic Fire, you're understanding the caliber of the institution that you're dealing with. Some of these other grant recipients, I've never heard of them. Not saying they're not at the same caliber, but I just want to feel more comfortable, and I would like to sit down with you, if possible. I can vote in favor of all the Coral Gables grant monies now. I'm just asking to sit down with you so you can make me understand, you know, who these entities are, where the money's going. So, when somebody asks me a

question about a 100-something-plus thousand dollars' worth of grants that are being put, I can have a response. That's all I'm asking.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: The other aspect about the finances is that they are required to do a one-to-one match on it, so we are not ever in a position where we are completely funding any program or event. And as I pointed out, this is -- their complete budgets for all these is over 16 million. That's a lot of money.

Mayor Lago: It's a lot of money, yes.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And it's still so helpful. And also, having the endorsement and the support of the City also helps some of these smaller organizations as they're continuing to seek funding.

Commissioner Menendez: I have basic questions. Just so that I understand the bigger picture, so are these events, like you said, I think -- what was the caroling thing or the choir? So, these are events, and we are seeking entities that can help make that event happen, or these entities that have their own event that they want to bring their event to the City? So, is it both?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Correct. So, they're proposing events. We don't reach out to organizations to do events, but they come to us with their events.

Commissioner Menendez: Their events.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: Do we have a system where you have ten organizations that have events, and obviously, funds are limited, where if you're based in Coral Gables, you get extra

points in terms of when the committee reviews? They're Coral Gables-based, so they get a five-point bonus?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: So, the Coral Gables-based institutions, they have certain requirements. So, of course, they have to be based in Coral Gables. They need to have an operating budget of over \$500,000. They also need to have the arts as their main purpose for what they're doing, and then those funds are for operating expenses. So, they get bonuses by being large cultural arts organizations that are based in Coral Gables. The ones that aren't may or may not have the arts as their main focus.

Commissioner Menendez: So, if...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: They don't meet that -- the operating expense -- budget criteria, so yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: So, if you have two entities, same size, same experience, same type of programming competing for the last dollars, the one in Coral Gables will get added bonus points in terms of scoring?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: No.

Commissioner Menendez: Perhaps they should?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: We could incorporate that if you'd like.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, I think that might...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: If that would be...

Commissioner Menendez: Help resolve a little bit the issue of giving credit to those that are here. So, I know that happens in other areas, so I think it's something to consider.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, I agree.

Commissioner Menendez: At least it might help resolve some of the concerns. The other is, is there -- because I -- in my former life, I worked with organizations, and I got involved with the federal grants. And a lot of times, the concerns with funding of -- you know, giving out grants was organizations would use a large percentage of grant money for administrative expenses, salaries, instead of actually using that money for the work that needed to be done. Do we monitor it? Do we have a cap? You can use only X number for administrative? The rest has to go towards -- otherwise, you know, the concern is, sometimes you get money and they're just -- the top people are paying themselves for whatever it is that they do.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Correct, yeah, I see. We do have eligible costs and ineligible costs, and that's one of the things that the board members look at when they're reviewing the grants. They -- part of their budget is broken down into line items, including admin costs, including artist expenses. I would say the majority of those go under the artist expense or marketing funds. So, those tend to be the main areas. It's a handful of things that they can put it towards, but they can put it towards marketing, of course, artists expenses, and they can put it towards admin costs, but that's generally not what we see. We see it going towards...

Commissioner Menendez: But I...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: The artists costs.

Commissioner Menendez: What I suggest to make -- you know, something to take into consideration going forward, just as the bonus points for Coral Gables-based organizations, even if it's 5 points, 10 points, depends on your scoring system, but also have in writing the maximum

percentage that they can use for admin. Because it's just -- you know, it's just not here in Coral Gables. It's just the history across the country of organizations tapping into taxpayer funds and the funds at the end of the day don't get used for what the purpose was for. And my only other question is -- well, you -- I think you answered it when you said they're bringing in their own programming. And I'm sure there are some -- I think you alluded to this -- some organizations that provide an expertise or an area that is sort of you can't find anywhere else. Is that you know...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: That Coral Gables perhaps does not offer, no organization in Coral Gables, perhaps. Is that -- we -- do you come across that on occasion?

Ms. Roth: Yes.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yeah, so we're trying to -- and the Board has asked us to do greater outreach for that as well to diversify not only the offerings, the types of media that are presented in the arts, the artist themselves, so the board has been very encouraging of doing that.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay, thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: Just one brief question. I noticed in the cultural programs that are listed that are not Coral Gables-based, there's -- for instance, the Merrick Festival. If we take up the cultural programs that are not Coral Gables-based at the next meeting, will that impact these programs going forward, such as the Merrick Festival?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Actually, the Merrick Festival is -- their organization is based in Coral Gables. The -- it will not because this will be triggered actually at the time of the budget, so...

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: That's when we'll have it, access to the funding.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: So, today, we're coming to you with the projects and the organizations themselves, and the proposed funding.

Mayor Lago: And again, I want to make -- be very, very clear. I want to reiterate this again. Our team does a wonderful job. Our volunteers on these boards do a wonderful job. I just want to make sure when I'm voting on something that's six figures that I'm just very clear. I'm ready to vote. I can't make the motion. I'm ready to vote on Coral Gables-based...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: I would like to make...

Mayor Lago: Oh, there's -- I think there may be...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Can I make one more comment?

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And I think it's important. It's part of that final report process, and also, in recognition of the board members. Throughout the year, of course, all the board members and myself are encouraged to attend as many of those programs as possible so that there is first-hand knowledge and they come back, and they report. It's usually part of the board meeting where the different board members comment on things that they've seen and give feedback to the

other board members. We also, as part of the requirement, need to give, of course, recognition to Coral Gables, so they are required to put the Coral Gables logo -- and not the seal -- it's the Coral Gables logo on all of their marketing and promotional materials, and we look for that as part of the final report.

Mayor Lago: My last question, before we -- I think there's some public comment that wants to speak. Are there any other cities doing this what we're doing here today?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes.

Mayor Lago: To this scale, to this magnitude?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: I would need to look at the numbers.

Mayor Lago: Okay, that's something that I would...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: I don't know the numbers.

Mayor Lago: If you could find out for me. I know the County does some cultural grants, but I'd like to see where we compare to other cities.

Vice Mayor Mena: What percentage of these are recurring? So, in other words, events that we had last year.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, many of them are.

Vice Mayor Mena: But like if you had to ballpark, 50 percent, 80 percent?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yeah, it's probably -- Bernice, you probably have an idea too. I would say at least 80. It's probably around 80. It could be higher.

Vice Mayor Mena: But we have a sense of quality of event and whether or not we were satisfied with it in years past, et cetera, from...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, absolutely.

Vice Mayor Mena: Or at least those.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: We have a sense of that, right?

Mayor Lago: You want to do some public comment?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, go ahead.

Mayor Lago: No, no, I just wanted to make sure you were done.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no, yes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: The first speaker is Mr. Aurelio Durana.

Aurelio Durana: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners. Aurelio Durana, 322 Alesio Avenue. As I have stated previously, I have one granddaughter at Carver Middle School, one grandson at Sunset Elementary, who's on his way to Carver, hopefully, and my children attended Carver Middle

School as well. I think it's a glaring omission that Little Carver PTA submitted an application for \$1,500 for the International Taste of Carver that they hold every year. And that application was the only one denied. Little Carver is in Coral Gables. They have been taking it on the chin due to the settlement agreement between the City and Wawa's predecessors. We -- I find it very troubling that it was the City Manager's appointee to the Cultural Affairs Board who ranked the Carver -- the Little Carver proposal at 54 or 57 points only as has been reported. I hope it's not a matter of animus against the PTA for being engaged in litigation against the City of Coral Gables to safeguard the interest of the students at Carver. Please do the right thing. Restore or grant them the little amount that they're asking for as a gesture of peace, perhaps.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question for Mr. Durana.

Mr. Durana: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: You said it's in Coral Gables, the Little Carver.

Mr. Durana: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: I have good news for you. Out of my office budget, I'm providing the \$1,500.

Mr. Durana: Thank you, thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Well deserved.

Mr. Durana: Thank you, Commissioner Menendez. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Quick question. Can we answer the gentleman's comments? I'd like to learn a little bit of more background in regards to why Little Carver was not chosen as a potential recipient of a grant. They are in the Gables.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, I'll initiate it. Just because it is by the points system, so they didn't meet the points. You know, there are different criteria throughout. What the board does -- and we work with the Clerk's Office and we're very grateful for their assistance -- we drop the highest score and the lowest score and then average the rest of them out. So, if they don't meet the 80 points, then they are not recommended for funding.

Mayor Lago: So, Mr. Durana made a comment about our City Manager's appointee that -- so his school was dropped.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Her score would have been dropped.

Mayor Lago: Yes, so that score was dropped.

Vice Mayor Mena: The lowest score was dropped.

Mayor Lago: So, yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Whatever the lowest score was.

Mayor Lago: I want to -- yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes.

Mayor Lago: So, I'm just trying to understand. Was it they didn't like the theme of the proposal? Or you mentioned something about we don't choose -- we don't look -- we're not interested in -- or not that we're not interested, but our protocols do not allow for us to consider projects that are supposed to be done on school grounds. Is there a reason why that...?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Typically, and one of our ineligible costs -- this didn't come up as part of the review. We did let this one move forward. For background it's -- like I said, it's not related to this necessarily. But we do not fund school -- like afterschool programs, classes, camps, things like that are not part of the eligible costs for this particular grant. And in this situation, there was discussion about accessibility, so I believe that they tended to score low as far as partnerships. And we had talked to them. I had spoken with them beforehand about different ways that they could perhaps partner with other businesses or organizations throughout the community. I think they tended to score a little low in that area, and then just the perception of how accessible it really would be outside of the students and parents which is...

Vice Mayor Mena: You're saying it's a school event. It's not...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Saying it's a school event, not necessarily open to the public.

Mayor Lago: That criteria -- is that criteria...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: That it be accessible and open to the public, yes.

Mayor Lago: That criteria that, you know, we frown upon engaging with schools for one reason or another, is that like clearly stated in the documents that are given to these entities who are considering engaging in our grant process?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: For the classes and workshops, yes.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: The aspect of it being open and accessible...

Mayor Lago: But in this case, we...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: To the public, absolutely.

Mayor Lago: And in this case, we allowed them to move forward. We allowed them to move forward and...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Because it wasn't a class, and it wasn't a workshop. We had concerns about the accessibility and how accessible -- so, for example, years ago, there was an organization that did something on the campus of the University of Miami. They held it on a Thursday afternoon at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I went to it because I didn't think, you know -- I thought there might be some issues with the accountability with the grant. And we ended up saying, "No, this was not acceptable." So, we definitely look at those aspects of it; how open and accessible is it to the rest of the public rather than just this internal group that's affiliated with whatever organization it may be.

Vice Mayor Mena: Did you look at the marketing in that respect? In other words, who were they marketing the event to.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, that's part of the application as well. They give us their marketing plan and outreach plan, and that's another area where the board members have the ability to enter scores.

Mayor Lago: But we do accept educational institutions like UM to be engaged.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, so it's not the school itself. It's the accessibility and outreach and the inclusion.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's who are you marketing it to. Is it a school event or is it a community event?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And if it's a camp or -- you know, we don't do any -- which that's why I said that part of it really didn't come into it. We also are not funding festivals anymore and -- but this was -- you know, it was a little on the edge for that, but we allowed it to move forward for the Board to discuss and make their own judgements.

Mayor Lago: Can you do me a favor? Can we make it as clear as possible for the future that we clearly provide guidance -- I mean, at the beginning, not at the budget, not at the workshops. So, somebody who's going to engage in the grant process, when they go online and they're considering -- I want it to an area that says very clearly, if you do not fit this criteria, you cannot submit for a grant, or you will not be -- you can submit for a grant, but you will not be considered. Because people take time...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: People, you know -- then they call, and they say, "Listen, why weren't we considered?" And then you have individuals, like Mr. Durana, that says that we -- you know, we have an axe to grind based on a pending litigation that, again, has more to do with the County than it does with the City, so there is no axe to grind in regards to Wawa. And you've seen how generous one of our Commissioners is with a very limited, limited budget, that he's giving up almost one-third of his office budget for this great institution. So, I just want to be very clear so that no one is confused and thinks that we're out here having an axe to grind with anybody. But I'm ready to move forward on this. I'm ready to support all Coral Gables-based organizations. I would like to sit down with you and go over last year's audits and understand where we stand so that I can vote

on organizations that may not be local, even though they're having their events here in the City. Because one of the big concerns that I have is the 381 free events versus a total of 1,437 total events. I know that events cost money to put together, but I just want to understand -- okay, we gave this entity a \$3,000 grant, the event cost \$25,000. Obviously, there's a reason why the event is not free because they couldn't get the rest of the grants and they raised money.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yeah. I do have a break down. And if you want it at this time, this is of the different -- this was a tool that we gave to the board members as well, where it lists all the organizations, what their operating costs are, which isn't...

Mayor Lago: I don't think I can...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And it is the grant budget and their expense budget and how much they asked for, the number of events, the number of free events. So -- and I have copies of those if you'd want them at this time.

Mayor Lago: I can't digest it right now. It's a lot of information.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: I understand.

Mayor Lago: I'd like to sit down with staff and go over it.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Okay.

Mayor Lago: And just to make -- just to get a better understanding before I vote on that portion of the grant application.

Commissioner Fors: For the record...

City Clerk Urquia: We have more.

Commissioner Fors: I don't have...

Mayor Lago: You have more? You have more, right?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Sorry, there's more public...

Mr. Durana: One last comment if I may.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mr. Durana: I think you definitely made clear guidelines: who can apply, points for what, if you're in Coral Gables, if you're not in Coral Gables, definitely. So, your comments are...

Mayor Lago: That's what we have requested.

Mr. Durana: Well taken, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next is Ms. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Good afternoon. I'm not easy to confuse, but I'm very confused. I'm looking at the chart. And on the top, it says Coral Gables Based. The Lowe Museum is not Coral Gables-based. Carver Elementary is not -- I'm looking at the chart that was published.

Vice Mayor Mena: The Lowe Museum is on the University of Miami campus, isn't it?

Ms. Cruz: Excuse me. The chart says Coral Gables Based, and then it says, Cultural Events (sic).

Vice Mayor Mena: Right. I'm asking -- you said the Lowe Museum is not Coral Gables...

Ms. Cruz: According to this chart, it's not.

Vice Mayor Mena: Got you.

Ms. Cruz: And Carver Elementary is not. And there are other things here that I do not know, but there could be others that are not. I just heard that the lowest score was the City Manager's appointee. No, there was a lower score. The City Manager's appointee gave 55; somebody gave it 49.

Vice Mayor Mena: Doesn't that cut against the theory...

Ms. Cruz: Wait a second -- well...

Vice Mayor Mena: That it was the City Manager...

Ms. Cruz: The problem that I have is that the rule seems to be a little -- you know, it -- we're giving rules based on what we're asking and not necessarily what the documents show. That's my issue. And you know I'm a stickler for, if you tell me, I can follow. But if I cannot follow the rules...

Vice Mayor Mena: that was that the highest and lowest score were dropped from...

Ms. Cruz: Okay, the lowest score was a 49.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Ms. Cruz: But it was not the City -- she was asked was the lowest score the City -- and she never said no.

Vice Mayor Mena: The lowest score was dropped.

Ms. Cruz: Okay, alright. Now...

Vice Mayor Mena: For all of them, by the way.

Ms. Cruz: Now, if you look at this chart, you will see something is wrong. You know, I've scored things before. You know I was a teacher. Okay, when you have scores 96, 91, 87, 75, and then you have a 55 and a 49, something doesn't seem to be right.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's exactly why the system is structured to drop the highest and the lowest.

Mayor Lago: Highest and the lowest.

Ms. Cruz: But the lower -- but there's another one that was very low is what I'm saying to you. That's one question. The other question is, having been a schoolteacher at a school where the community was very involved, and having had at least one of my daughters go to Carver Elementary, that -- where that school is located is a community school. Community participates in their events. It is not just for students. So, this deal of, you know, it has to be a community event, it is a community event, okay. It really bothers me -- and Mayor, when you say the community-based, you can't vote on that because there are community-based that are not on the community-based chart, okay.

Mayor Lago: Well, can we get a response to that? One second. Why is the Lowe Museum not included there?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: These are the two categories of grants.

Mayor Lago: Got you.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: So, the Coral Gables-based organizations are the ones that meet the threshold of that \$500,000 Operating Budget, are based in Coral Gables, and have the arts as their main programming.

Mayor Lago: So, the Lowe...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: So, the cultural programs are the specific programs. They may or may not be based in Coral Gables.

Ms. Cruz: What I'm saying to you, Mayor, is that when you said you're inclined to vote for the community-based, the Coral Gables-based, you can't do that because there are Coral Gables-based in other places.

Mayor Lago: Well, I could easily just ask our great staff, very competent staff, to tell me which one...

Ms. Cruz: We need to know where they're based.

Mayor Lago: Which one of the ones that are based and not based, and we could move forward.

Ms. Cruz: Correct, okay.

Mayor Lago: That's an easy...

Vice Mayor Mena: But let's be clear that every single event is located in Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. No, no, I agree with that, but so is the Carver event, okay, so that...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, we talked about that.

Ms. Cruz: Wouldn't disqualify them. Okay, I am very impressed, Commissioner Menendez, that you came through, but it really sticks in my -- here that we had 190 -- over \$191,000, and this little PTA is putting together a community event -- because that's a community school, okay -- for their kids in an area that normally doesn't get a lot of stuff. And asked for a piddly \$1,500 out of 191 and they couldn't do it. Okay, to me, that's an insult, okay. I feel like -- you know what, we talk about we want to help the kids. You know, in the recent past, we sold cookbooks to raise money for Coral Gables Senior. We spent more money in the printing than we did in -- what we got in results. And now, \$1,500 for a small elementary school, and you know what, we use every excuse that we can finagle to make sure that they couldn't get it. Something is wrong. And I'm sorry, but if I were grading this and I saw people with 55 and 49, and the rest 70 something and up, something is wrong.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just so I'm clear, you believe that the members of the committee that reviewed this were intentionally out to submarine the...

Ms. Cruz: No, no. I believe...

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm trying to understand.

Ms. Cruz: That sometimes -- no, I believe when you're grading -- and if he graded grants before, he understands. There are some people that do not understand. It's not meant to hurt, but you know, if you -- for example, if you evaluate teachers, some people will grade them very hard, some people -- it depends on what you're looking for. If you don't know what you're looking for and you're very subjective, you know what, a food festival, you know, who's going to go try the food? You know what I'm saying? And that may cause you to give them a zero in that section and that brings it down. I'm not accusing anybody of doing wrong. I'm saying it's very confusing. If I had written a grant for this, I probably would not have gotten any money because as I see, you know, it depends on this, it depends on that. Where does it say that? Even the listing doesn't make sense. Okay, that's what I'm saying. It's very confusing.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Cruz: You're welcome.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk/

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir. We have several speakers on Zoom. The first one is Mr. Joshua Goodman.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Goodman, the floor is yours.

Joshua Goodman: Hello. I'm a member of the Carver PTA's Advocacy Committee, and also, a Gables resident. First, Commissioner Menendez, a very kind gesture on the part of you to donate part of your office budget for this activity. It's not necessary, but it is very much appreciated, so thank you. I'm not here to question the Board's decision as unfortunate as it is, or to jump to any conclusions. But I did want to provide you Commissioners with some helpful context from the perspective of the PTA as you consider the resolution before you. The first important point. The Carver PTA submitted this request for funding for its annual Taste of Carver event at the urging

of the City's own School Community Relations Committee. Okay, this was the first time the PTA applied for a cultural grant from the City, and we're proud being the first school to have ever done so. I'm sure the Board will attest we worked extremely hard on our 41-page proposal, and we did so because we believe that cultural programming needs to take into account families and children. It's important to note, as others have said, that three board members rated our application a very high average of 91.3 points. That is higher than all but two of the 34 applicants. But then of course, there were two members who gave us very low scores, 49 and 55. So, as a result, we were pushed below the minimum 80-point threshold. As a result, as you all know, we were the only applicant that did not receive any funding, even as 76 percent of the funds went to organizations located outside the City. And as Ms. Cruz just pointed out, we asked for the minimum that you could request, \$1,500. This event didn't depend on the City's grant. It won't depend on the City's grant. It would have just leveraged the potential of a great event to reach many people in the community. Let me tell you about the event itself. It's called Taste of Carver, and as we described it in our 41-page application, it celebrates the diverse population that makes up our community, highlighting food, art, and entertainment from cultures around the world. Our main target audience is the families in the local community with school-aged children. I also want to emphasize that at the last meeting where this decision was made, one board member very wisely suggested that new organizations come forward to support inclusive programming that involve the McFarlane community. Well, Carver is an integral part of that community, and our PTA has multiple initiatives underway to strengthen those historic ties. So, I hope in the future that the City will consider us worthy of funding because I know that with your support we can do even more. And I just wanted to address one point that the board chairwoman's comment that events on school grounds don't receive funding because it's hard to allow the public in. I would just point out that we were never -- I was informed that we were never once told this during the extensive application process. We learned -- I learned about this just today. And we emphasized in our application just how much -- excuse me, I think we were told, but we were told it was not an insurmountable obstacle and it was just part of the criteria. And our application specifically stressed how this would be an event open to the community, anyone can attend. So, my question would be, is this a hard fast rule that disqualifies a candidate as the board woman's comments seem to suggest? Or

is it just part of the scoring system? I would point out that the event is open to the community, anyone can attend. But even putting that aside, we're a school of 520 Carver students. When you add up everyone's siblings, parents, grandparents, cousins we're talking about an event that has the potential to reach thousands of people. And I would think that there are many events around the community that, you know, would envy such an outreach. So, I just wanted to leave that information for your consideration. Again, I'm not here to question the decision or jump to speculation, but I do think this is important context that was left out of the discussion. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Goodman.

City Clerk Urquia: The next speaker, we don't have a name for, but it does say Carver Elementary PTA.

Estelle Lockhart: Hi, good morning. I am Estelle Lockhart. I'm the Vice President of Advocacy and Community Relations. Just to piggyback on what Joshua Goodman said, applying for this grant was definitely out of our normal realm of grant writing. However, like Joshua said, we were encouraged to apply, so we did. And it was very clear -- I was the one who attended the scoring, so answered the questions that the committee had. And it was very clear from the questions that there was confusion on the committee. It was very clear from those two people in particular who scored low -- you know, it kind of seemed like a curveball for them on the committee. It definitely wasn't a curveball for the chairperson because we had met with her extensively, you have to. If you're a new applicant, you have to go through special meetings, you have to do an orientation. I mean, you don't just apply for this grant. We had to go through several one-on-one back and forth editing our application, so we did. We did all of that. So, the scoring to me, it didn't surprise me because there was definitely confusion by two of the members. You could tell from their questioning as to, you know, we're the first school who's ever applied for this. So, it was definitely out of their realm of comfort. Just to tell you a little bit about some of the exciting things that happened when we were back on campus two years ago and we had this event that wowed the School and Community Relations Committee. You know, we're a magnet school for Italian and

for Spanish. And so, we had a pizza food truck. We had a million-dollar Italian car -- sportscar at our campus for people to go look at, in addition to so many other things. And of course, we were the first school for African Americans in all of Dade County, started in 1898, so we highlighted black excellence as well. So, to me, it was just a little of a bit of a disappointment because so many of the families that go to our school, they're not going to go to the Miracle Theater, you know. They come to our school. So anyway, I just wanted to give some context to that and just thank you to the Cultural Arts Committee for considering our application and for working with us so diligently on our application. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Mr. Samuel Joseph.

Samuel Joseph: Good afternoon. How are you, Mayor? The Commissioners and all those watching, it's good to be here with you. First and foremost, let me say that I, along with the rest of the School Community Relations Committee, did recommend that the Carver PTSA apply for a grant for this wonderful, wonderful event. It's beyond being an unbelievable Coral Gables event. It was truly a community-wide event. I actually attended personally and was so moved by the efforts of Ms. Fairclough, her entire staff, the way it really brought the partnership between Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the City to bear and coming together to do something incredible, which was calling the entire community -- and I'm glad Ms. Garcia mentioned it. George Washington Carver Elementary is a community school, so it is accessible to not only the people who go there, but the entire community as a whole. And they did, they opened up their doors to everyone, which is not a common practice for our school district but provided a world-class event. It moved me. They covered my culture, Haiti, and had stations for almost every country in the world represented with foods, examples of culture, examples of what made us different and what makes us the same, and you really left that event thinking, "Wow. Coral Gables could pull this off. Amazing." So, I'm glad they took our recommendation and they applied. I see -- let me just put this into context. I sit on the Florida Association of Museums Board. I have reviewed grants for Miami-Dade County, the State, and federally. I understand the process very well. And as your staff mentioned, you are mirroring a process that's happening all over the country. But like every

process, it needs to be reviewed every once in a while. And certainly, when you're getting new people that are coming in all the time, including boards and staff and Commissions and community, you need to do training. And so, reviewing the grant program I think is perfectly appropriate, as you said, Mayor, to make sure about the ROIs. But let me tell you as a person who's worked in culture and has devoted his life to museums and culture, the cultural capital that could be lost by not looking at the potential of programming, like even the Carver school program, to me, we actually lose in this investment in terms of return on our investment. As a staff member mentioned to you, a couple hundred thousand dollars from the City is going to produce \$16 million of benefit throughout the county. And a good portion of that -- because the City is so smart and it's happening in our borders -- will go directly to our City. If you look at state-wide and nationally what culture brings to the table, there is no other game in town that brings the capital necessary, not stadiums, not teams. Museums, theaters, and programs bring in people. We're a tourism-based economy. And so, we need to make sure that we're investing in the things that bring us back investment. So, I hope we won't be short and spite ourselves by not funding all institutions. These are all non-profit institutions that have to match -- in most cases -- 100 to 1 what's coming into them. And last, I'll leave you with this. I think it also hurts us in our major cultural institutions. Institutions like the wonderful Coral Gables Museum cannot get the funding they need out in the state or nationally because we're not in a high-risk area, and we don't partner with at-risk schools. Now, had we worked with Carver, which is by the way, a Title I school that opens up its campus to the entire community, that would have opened up opportunities for folks to see that Coral Gables, the city of means, is looking at ways to truly not only build the capital that we need, but also the human capital that we need to make us a world-class city. I would be happy to talk with you, staff, and others, and certainly put you into the Florida Association of Museums and the American Association of Museums or the Attractions Association. But I think we need to make sure we do this right. We have a process; it's good, does need a little tweaking so that we don't spite ourselves, but definitely, let's do this right.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. I appreciate that.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Ms. Myra Jolie.

Mayor Lago: Is this the last speaker?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Can we close the speakers after her?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Jolie, the floor is yours, please.

Myra Jolie: Okay. If we remember when we were running for Coral Gables Commissioner, most of the candidates that were pitching for a vote promised Carver Elementary the moon and back, promised that we're going to be sensible when we move a tree out of the sidewalk and we're going to give a sanctuary burial to that tree. But right now, think about what the words that have been out of it, out of us, this bigger body of the Coral Gables (INAUDIBLE) people. We're talking about accessibility. We're telling Carver Elementary that they didn't qualify for \$1,500 that -- by the way, Commissioner Menendez, I think you should take the money back because this is not a matter of giving a crumb or a little pitiful \$1,500 to Carver Elementary. We should give -- each one of you should give \$1,500 on top of that to Carver. Because we owe Carver something more than just an apology. And right now, we're talking about there is no accessibility. Of course, there is no accessibility. If there wasn't accessibility for it, we're going to make it even more difficult with the Wawa. There is no outreach. Of course, there is no outreach. Whoever, from Coral Gables is going to cross to the other side of US 1 to go to Carver? There is no inclusion. Of course, there is no inclusion because there is not even one black kid in Carver Elementary. We have the audacity to call ourselves that we are so eager to make sure we are entertaining the Gables, a community and inclusion and getting together with the Carver Elementary, the same school that we are burying under a tank of gasoline. People let's be more clear and transparent. It doesn't take

science to see that what we are doing is we are punishing Carver. That's what we are doing. We are punishing the PTA people for being outspoken and being in the way of the greatest developer -- development, which is Wawa. Why do I come to that conclusion? Because I've been to different little events having to do with Carver or with the PTA. And whoever said, "I don't think this is an axe to grind," maybe it has an axe to grind. Because if there is nothing to do with that, nobody have to come and make a disclaimer that nobody has anything to do with Little Carver. And talking about cultural based -- or Coral Gables-based, that is just a matter of working with words. And whenever it's convenient, I will call it "Coral Gables-based." And whenever I want to bring my pet peeve -- my pet project, I will call it "Cultural based." And since we are on the subject, I have a fashion show that I want some funding for. It's called Fashion Night at Brickell. I'm going to submit one page saying I need money. And since we have enough money -- because otherwise, all of these people coming to our board asking for money for their projects, they wouldn't -- they don't go to Liberty City to get it.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Jolie.

Ms. Jolie: They come to Coral Gables because we have the money for it...

Mayor Lago: Ms. Jolie.

Ms. Jolie: And it's money that belongs to nobody, so let's just give it away.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Thank you, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Ms. Jolie: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, we're done?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Okay, no more speakers? Alright. I'm going to take a lunch break at 2 o'clock. I want to finalize this now and deal with Item F-8, if possible, which goes along with the Firehouse 4, so let's bring this in for a landing. What do you want to do?

Vice Mayor Mena: I'll just tell you my opinion. I would approve all of them because they're Coral Gables-based events.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: I have faith in the work that the people on this board that we appointed, who are all extremely qualified and dedicated a lot of time to -- did a good job applying the protocol that was in place. If we want to discuss the protocol going forward, I'm open to that. I like the idea of, going forward, having a bonus for a Coral Gables-based entity. I think that's great. The last thing I would say -- and I don't know how easy or difficult this would be to do. Can we take all the funds, allocate \$1,500 to Carver, and make a pro rata reduction to all of the other applicants, which I suspect will result in each of them losing 25 bucks or something, and give them the \$1,500 and move on?

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is that possible?

Commissioner Anderson: That would be a great solution.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Mayor Lago: I don't have an issue with that.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's my motion.

Mayor Lago: I think it's perfectly fine. My issue with the non -- I hate to use resident or business in the City because I wanted to take a moment just to sit down and go over it because we never go over it. We never review the grants. We have a very competent team of people who give a lot of their time for free, and we're very, very grateful. But I just want to go over it because I was very clear since the beginning that we're going to turn every rock over to find money here in this community. Because I don't want to hear later -- be very clear, okay -- that there's no funds for a sidewalk and there's no funds for this, or for a park...

Vice Mayor Mena: right.

Mayor Lago: Or for an upgrade to a facility because we can't -- no, we don't have any money in the park. We don't have any money in the park for your kids when they want something on a certain park to do it. We don't have the funds for that because we spent it on culture, which is very important, very important, but I want to be very careful. I'll vote in favor of this, but I don't want to hear later that there's no money, because I have certain things that I want to get done. For example, what's more important, cultural grants or delivering on a sidewalk for Ponce Middle who doesn't have a sidewalk for the kids to walk to get Starbucks? You tell me. This is -- now we're going to talk about this. So, what's more important? Cultural grants or a sidewalk for Ponce Middle, where the ACM was with me, and staff was with me? But we don't have the money for that right now, and that's an important project. I hate to pin entities together, but those are the things that we hear. So, that's why I've asked the budget, and I mentioned it again to the City Manager yesterday, along -- in front of the City Attorney. I want to see a reduction in budgets per department, not on capital projects. I want to see a reduction in every budget, including my budget, if I have to give, which is \$5,000. So, if I have to lower it by 2 or 3 percent, I'll lower it by 2 or 3 percent. I don't have a problem. But we need to find money because I know what's going to happen in the budget, and I keep saying it every meeting. We're going to get to the budget cycle, and they're going to say, "We don't have the money to do the projects that are important." So, yes,

it's important to do the culture. I agree. But I don't want to hear later that you can't do a sidewalk, or you can't upgrade a park, which is in dire need of activation for our kids or a water -- excuse me, a fountain can't be fixed, or we can't pressure clean, or we can't do this, or we can't do that because we've run out of money. Okay? I want to put that on the record.

Vice Mayor Mena: I agree with you.

Mayor Lago: I'm going to support this 110 percent, 110 percent. But when we come looking for money, I want to make sure -- this gave money from the general fund. This didn't come from Art in Public Places. Let's be clear on that. I need somebody to make a motion on this issue.

Vice Mayor Mena: I would just -- listen, I would just say, I agree with you. I think that there's always places in the budget that you can cut from, and I think for anything in the budget, you can say, is it more important than the Ponce crosswalk? I'm with you on that. You know, that's a fair point. And I think if we want to look at the cultural grants as a budget item overall, we should absolutely look at that for the next budget cycle because there's lots of places in the budget where you can trim fat, and that's part of the exercise of reviewing the budget, right?

Mayor Lago: Yeah. And one of the things that I'm going to be bringing before this Commission -- I already had a conversation with the Manager and the ACM -- is I will be bringing the beautiful marble crosswalks on Ponce. They are constantly being in repair. It's a \$200,000 line item. I'm going to have them removed from the budget.

Vice Mayor Mena: I agree with you.

Mayor Lago: Gone, gone. Yes, it's going to be paving. It's not going to be as beautiful as it was, but if you drive by there, it's a tripping hazard in front of Hillstone's. It's a nightmare. It's a nightmare and we just keep spending money, hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, not only to repair, but that -- it's a high trafficked area. The amount of load that -- those pavers were not meant

to handle that amount of traffic and it's becoming a problem. I know we're deviating from the conversation, but I want to show you examples of where there's hundreds of thousands of dollars that we need to save money so, at the end of day, we can do projects that the residents are desperately in need of.

Vice Mayor Mena: Alright, listen, and if you want to have a discussion about as a budget item, cultural grants, I think that's a fair -- absolutely fair discussion and we should have it. My thing is, I don't necessarily want to draw the line at Coral Gables-based entity versus non-Coral Gables-based entity because just many of those events that are put on by non-Coral Gables-based entities are wonderful events that...

Mayor Lago: Incredible.

Vice Mayor Mena: People in the City love and have supported for years, not just a year, or not just this year, but over the years, over and over again. So, I think you have to look at the event itself and whether or not that event is worth supporting or not, which I think is what this board undertook to do. Now, if we want to tell them, "Hey listen, we had allocated this much money, and from a budgetary perspective, we're cutting that in half. Now figure out how to allocate that sum." That's a discussion we can have.

Mayor Lago: And I'm with you. And I want to have the discussion. It's just I've been asking for years on an audit base to sit down and go over these items, and now it's coming to head as a result of what happened with Carver and as a result of basically shedding a little light in regards to the amount of money that we're spending. And when, you know, things are a little looser, when there's no issues with budgets and there's no issues with COVID, you know, things slip through the cracks. But now, as you know, we're trying to find money to add more to our pension obligation. We're trying to find -- we're trying to fund fire stations. We're trying to fund a litany of things that we're all working together in unison pushing forward, but these are things that we need to address. So, I'm ready to vote on this. I think the Vice Mayor made a motion. I don't want to speak for you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Will anybody second that motion?

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: And we added -- and we're clearly adding the funding for Carver, correct?

Vice Mayor Mena: From the overall pool of funds.

Commissioner Anderson: Pool.

Vice Mayor Mena: Not from the very generous Commissioner Menendez's office budget.

Mayor Lago: Yes. So, he can keep it so he can buy paper and water for his office.

Commissioner Menendez: And just to mention...

Vice Mayor Mena: He's going to put that towards the Ponce crosswalk.

Mayor Lago: No. I just don't want him to come and have to steal paper and office -- paper and supplies from my office so, you know.

Commissioner Menendez: I already did that.

Commissioner Anderson: How are you going to watch him?

Commissioner Menendez: I had my assistant do that while we were talking. Later on, in communication with the City Attorney, I want to bring back an item, an old resolution that limits the Commission on its ability to make donations, like the Carver situation, from their office budget. I think today was clearly -- as clear as day that there's a need and we should not be shackled in our attempt to do good and to help out. So, we'll be bringing back a quick item that we need to address so that we can do the right thing going forward.

Mayor Lago: And I support you on that.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Because, by the way, our office budget -- so everybody's aware -- is \$5,000. No one's getting rich here.

City Attorney Ramos: Commissioner, given the current vote, do you want to bring that today or in September, so we can look through it carefully?

Commissioner Menendez: If your staff can find the wording or if we just remove whatever is there, I think the timing's right today.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: And it won't -- I'm sure we're not going to have a lengthy discussion.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: The Vice Mayor convinced me. He's a good litigator.

Commissioner Anderson: Good job.