

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-14
July 11, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-14 [4:10 p.m.]

Discussion regarding valet parking on Miracle Mile
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: F-14.

Commissioner Fernandez: As I've been driving down Miracle Mile on weekends, it seems like one of the largest issues that we're having is our valet parking folks are taking up the parking spaces that are supposed to be for drop off for vehicles. This weekend there was actually cars lined up on Miracle Mile, because they were using up those spaces. I had a resident who had reached out to me about this, that's the reason I started driving down there, and I was told that the valet parkers are asking people for \$40 to park their car in those spots. If they don't have cash, they can Venmo them. So very industrious, absolutely. So, I had asked Director Kinney if he can be here to see how we're monitoring these parking spaces, and he had asked the Chief to be here as well and see how we can prevent this from happening. I've also heard of others who are taking up regular parking spaces.

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Mayor Lago: Mr. Director, you've been talking about this.

Parking Director Kinney: And historically...

Mayor Lago: Before we go onto this. How long have we been talking about this? How many years?

Parking Director Kinney: Well, I can honestly say it's been an issue for 17 years that I've been here. We occasionally do sting operations to kind of bring them back in line. I don't think we've done one since the pandemic.

Mayor Lago: But we have the second part of this. We brought up several meetings ago, we have the issue of the valet, now you have the issue of the Uber-Eats, they're also taking spaces. If you look at entire blocks on Miracle Mile, there's no parking. I'm excited, like I've said before, let somebody take this battle on, because we haven't been able to figure this out, and if we don't have somebody like they do in Cuba at every single corner, like...on the corner ratting people out there's no way to resolve this that I have seen in ten years, and now Uber-Eats is only exacerbating the problem. I had a conversation with a representative from Uber. I pleaded and begged; I know that the Police Chief is doing the same thing. I don't know what else to do to try to resolve this issue.

Parking Director Kinney: There are some things that the Commission has done.

Mayor Lago: I know we have but we failed.

Parking Director Kinney: Well, I'm not ready to throw in the towel yet. One of the things is the Chief's new downtown patrol group, I think is going to be helpful. The other is, we also have been speaking with Uber and Doordash and what we've been trying to convince them or work with them on is the concept of geo-fencing, and we have made some progress on that, and we know that geo-fencing can work. For example, with our scooters. Once you pull into an area where you're not allowed to ride the scooter, the scooter dies, you can't go anyplace. So, we have started a conversation with Uber-Eats and Doordash about geo-fencing specific areas like Miracle Mile so that if one of the delivery folks is sitting on Miracle Mile, they don't get the call, they don't get the job. So, unless you're in an area where you're supposed to be, you're not going to get any work. So, the folks that sit – they intentionally sit right in front of Starbucks because they know they'll get the job quicker. So, if they're sitting there and its geo-fenced, they just sit there all day because they're never going to get a call. So that's the direction we're going. Before I went on vacation, we had a meeting with them and then Matt has had some meetings with them since then. So, we do think there's a possibility that this is going to be fruitful and there are probably two or three locations in the city that we would geo-fence to basically prohibit them from staging in those areas. But the other thing is, historically Police and Parking Enforcement have done stings and I do think that Chief and I probably will talk about doing another one probably when we get closer to fall when traffic starts to pick up again.

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Commissioner Menendez: What kind of agreement do we have with the valet people, what kind of permitting licensing do we have with the companies like Uber. Do they have to get certain city approvals to operate and the valet. What kind of agreement there is, because I figure at some point, we can look into adding some language into the agreement that says that if your employees are doing X, we can just cancel the contract on the spot and with the licensing as well, some language with regards to the operations.

Parking Director Kinney: You mentioned two different things. The Uber and Lift, we don't really have licensing agreements with them, but the centralized valet is absolutely a contract with the city, but we also have strong enforcement tools. The first fine is \$150, the second fine is \$250, the third fine is \$500, and as we go through that process, we do have the ability to cancel the contract. Kind of the unfortunate post-pandemic truth for us is, right now we really only have one valet company operating in the city that has any significant size and when you're talking about our CBD and our centralized valet, we're talking about seven or eight different valet stands. So, maybe as things move along, there's more larger companies available, but we do have some enforcement tools and they have a contract with us. So, if they're in breach of contract we could potentially cancel the contract.

Commissioner Menendez: At some point you have to weigh the advantages and disadvantages and on paper huge advantage, but if these disadvantages are growing and then they are impeding what we're trying to accomplish then it's out of balance.

Parking Director Kinney: The issue that Commissioner Fernandez raised is an important one for us, because they're supposed to move the cars within 15 minutes once somebody drops a car off. If there are three cars sitting at the ramp, it really is hard to do business.

Commissioner Menendez: Without a doubt.

Police Chief: You don't have to apologize to me. I'm with you on all of it. Commissioners and Mayor, what we usually do when we do sweeps and I know some of you realize when we go downtown, we enforce all traffic laws, including the pedestrian crossings, things like that. We are in the alleyways; the alleyway parking tickets are...

Parking Director Kinney: \$125.00

Police Chief: \$125. So, if you illegally park on the front of Miracle Mile, you'll get \$36 bucks. If you park in the back alley its \$125, and that's specifically trying to keep those areas open. We have been focusing on it. One of the other violations that we should get called on right away, so we can keep an eye on it is if a valet parker takes a car from the right-of-way there is a fine associated with that, and usually what happens is, they'll come up, the person will stop in the right-of-way of traffic and the valet parker comes out and takes the car from them. That is a violation.

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They have to pull into that area. I believe the cost of the ticket to the owner of the company doesn't supplant the Venmo charge that the person that they are giving somebody to leave their car up front. So that's really what we kind of see. Its hard for us sometimes to have our usual bike patrol people doing it, which is why we started this task force many, many years ago, is that we put a Code Enforcement Officer, a Parking Officer, an Internal Affairs person in a car and we went around did a lot of sweeps, and a Fire Prevention person, looking at people that overcapacity, but also the parking. The valets get to know exactly who's riding around, so we are addressing. I think we really substantially have stopped the scooters stopping and if they pull in between grabbing food and going, not parking and driving on there. The other issue is, by law, if an Uber person is dropping off a person, they can stop and drop them off on the roadway. It is not a state statute violation for us to do that. So, if they stop, they put on their four-ways, they let somebody out, and they continue to move. Now, waiting for them is a different story and that's where we kind of get to move them around. There have been targeted enforcement areas down there that we've done on a regular basis. We kind of get them into the alley. We tend to see that in the afternoon, only because the tractor-trailer type delivery trucks are not on Miracle Mile. They have to come in through the back and once again trying to move them around, but then the Uber drivers, the cars working in the alleyways, we do not let them stay there. Its going to be an ongoing problem, because there is a supply and demand issue, as we all know. I had my lunch sent over today on a bicycle. So, we understand that. To Mr. Kinney's point, the geo verification has worked. We have met with Uber. We can put together when we can report back, I would say, when we get out of the summertime, but when we get closer into the fall, the nighttime picks up. That has been a concerted effort on our part to do that enforcement. We can get back to you on that. The other real issue where we have a bunch of issues is one of the parking lots where we have a designated spot for pickup on Giralda and the scooters will be all over the place, when they see us coming, they pretty much circle around the block when they can get out of the way. Its going to be an ongoing maintenance and enforcement issue on our side.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Are there any further comments in regard to this issue? Something that we've been dealing with on the Mile for countless years, only getting worse. Anything else? Perfect. Then we'll move onto Boards and Committee items.