

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
December 12, 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
Asset Manager, Zeida Sardinas

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Tom Wells

Agenda Item F-1 [Start: 12:39 p.m.]

Update on Granada Diner/Burger Bob's and Le Parc Café
(Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

Mayor Lago: Moving unto F-1, City Commission items.

Commissioner Menendez: I have F-1 as an update to the Granada Diner, also known as Burger Bob's and Le Parc Café. I'd like staff to give us an update. I'd also, I think I have at least one resident that would like to speak and I know we have that protocol that the sponsor can make a motion to allow the public to speak. So, I'd like to make a motion to open this one up to the public.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

City Clerk Urquia: All in favor.

All: Aye.
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City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Mr. Manager, who – oh, there you go.

City Manager Iglesias: If we can start with the Granada Diner and I will let our Asset Manager move onto Le Parc Café. As I mentioned in the prior item, construction started yesterday. We do have \$1.257 million, and the Commission today approved the contingency, so we are moving forward. We can certainly provide the schedule on the internet and work through that with our Communications Department.

Commissioner Menendez: Obviously, we started talking about this some time ago, and residents want to see the whole project completed, there's a lot of interest. So, if you could – I know there's a schedule, but is there a sense as to when the residents can expect it to be done.

City Manager Iglesias: Around September of next year.

Commissioner Menendez: September next year. And with regards to, obviously, now that we have broken ground, there's going to be a push to secure whoever is going to be managing the facility. How is the structure going to be?

City Manager Iglesias: We will be working, now that the project has started, we have until September, or before that, to come up with that. We will be moving quickly to try to negotiate something as the Commission has authorized and will be coming back first quarter of next year with negotiations. I'm assuming, depending on how they proceed.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, if I may, on your item, I'd like to make a request.

Commissioner Menendez: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Zeida, do you have the opportunity to provide on the website a schedule, a construction schedule.

Asset Manager Sardinias: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: We will be putting that on.

Mayor Lago: This is not my item, but this is what I do for a living every day, so I think if you want to have people understand a little bit more about the efforts, the budget, the money, the schedule, the timeline. What I would recommend with the support of the Commission is, put together a schedule that the contractor has to put together. It should be stapled to his contract, I know it is, his AI contract, and provide a copy of that, and then on a monthly basis provide an update in regards to all items that have been ordered, what is a critical path moving forward, what are we doing, so people understand if we finish in October, we finish God willing in August, why was it delayed. No one's going to complain if it's done early, but why was it delayed a month, what was

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the reasoning behind that. I want to make sure that everybody understands the schedule, it gets put up, so that everybody can review it and it becomes memorialized and we provide an update for the community to understand really what's going on in regard to the project.

Commissioner Menendez: And once its put on the website, could Communications or someone send a link to all of us, so that we can sort of amplify that message, because I know a lot of people, we have our social media platforms and I think that helps spread the message.

Mayor Lago: How about we do one better. How about we send an e-mail to all 51,000 residents. I know we don't have everybody, but we say, Burger Bobs have commenced after a long-awaited moment, here's some conceptual drawings in regard to what was approved. This is when it's going to be delivered, go to the following link to see the schedule, and we're now under demolition and just provide the information, provide the conceptals, we're finishing in September. You can even provide a video of this conversation that we had here on the floor, through the Manager's direction, obviously, and send it out to everyone so that everybody is aware that we sent this out and they have the link in their own hands. You don't have to depend on the Commission's social media, even though we'll put it out again and we'll send it out, but I think it should be sent out by the city, in my opinion.

Commissioner Castro: On that schedule, I think there has to be a disclosure that says its subject to change, so that people, you never know, not all projects really run on time, so not to create false expectations.

Commissioner Menendez: And if we could switch over, I guess to Le Parc, how that's going. What was finally done?

Asset Manager Sardinas: So, the city undertook efforts there for a period of time, obtaining product from a specific supplier. That supplier has now signed a temporary agreement for 90 days, and they started the Monday after Thanksgiving. So, they are going to be there for 90 days. We are evaluating, I think it's been what, 10, 12 days they've been open, and so we are going to be evaluating them over the next 90 days. The contract has the ability for us to renew them for another 90 days, so that we can do further evaluation. We'll see from there where we go.

Commissioner Menendez: If it all works out, what's the ultimate goal with this particular operator?

Asset Manager Sardinas: The ultimate goal would be to have an operator there that has sufficient experience and an ability to be able to function and be able to provide us with the service that we want to provide, the excellent service that we want to provide to the Country Club members and to the community.

Commissioner Menendez: There will be a point in time where it no longer will be a 90-day, 90-day evaluation.

City Manager Iglesias: That is right, Commissioner. If everything works out in this trial period, then we will be coming back to the Commission for a long-term contract.

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Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: For a normal contract.

Commissioner Menendez: Fully operational at the moment, because I've gone a few times.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes, they are, they are, right now.

Commissioner Menendez: Every business is looking for employees. I think I noticed that they were looking to hire.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes. Yes. That is something, like I said, we temporarily staff them with some overflow employees that Parks had and so on and so forth, and they have brought some employees on board and obviously they are looking for more to solidify the operations. It was a very quick transition, so they are planning and putting everything together, but as far as we can tell everything is working out, so far so good.

Commissioner Menendez: Any of my colleagues have any.

Commissioner Fernandez: What's the new schedule?

Asset Manager Sardinas: So, we allowed for extended hours now. They are trying out the extended hours, so they will be open through 7 o'clock at night and that is something that we are trying, and they are open on Mondays. It is a seven day-a-week schedule, which is what we originally had conceived for service there. So, we're trying that right now.

Commissioner Menendez: Are they participating in helping with some catering for like some events, things that the city does at the Country Club?

Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes. One of the ideas was that we would be able to use them for small events that would be breakfast related or lunch related that could be done within the ballrooms or at the Country Club, to be able to do that.

Commissioner Menendez: I appreciate it. Anybody else.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Glad we're doing it. I'm glad the schedule is going to be available for everybody.

Commissioner Menendez: Appreciate it. Mr. City Clerk, we have speakers.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir. First speaker is Maria Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I just have two questions. The demolition just finished, is that what I heard? – demolition just finished.

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City Manager Iglesias: Their contractor started work on Monday.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. So, demolition just finished is what I'm asking.

City Manager Iglesias: I said the contractor started work on Monday. They are working on the demolition. They just started work yesterday.

Ms. Cruz: They just started demolition now?

City Manager Iglesias: They started construction operations yesterday.

Ms. Cruz: I'm asking demolition, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: That's...

Ms. Cruz: I'm not a construction person. I'm not an engineer. I'm not an architect. I want to know because people are asking. This process has taken months, if not years. People wanted to know, and I'm going to go and look at minutes also, because I believe we had been told that the demolition was done, and this is why I'm asking, because people are asking. So, the demolition is now in process?

City Manager Iglesias: Partial demolition has been done. They are mobilizing and they are continuing with their phases of work, because remember we had – that building has two parts: it's the Pro Shop and Burger Bob's.

Ms. Cruz: I'm asking Burger Bob's.

City Manager Iglesias: Burger Bob's – they started yesterday, they mobilized, and they are working on the construction process.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Ms. Cruz, I toured the back of the facility, so in order to be able to get a four-inch pipe where it needs to go, there is additional demolition that would have to be done. We'll be bringing this back in January with an update, so we can have further details, but I have not driven by there yesterday to be able to see exactly how far they got.

Ms. Cruz: I thank you, but since I'm not an architect or an engineer and I do not have a building business, and I have nothing to do with that, I'm just a regular educator. I like to hear answers when I ask that I can understand and that's why I asked again, because I believe, and I'm going to go check my minutes again. I believe that we had been told that the demolition was done before today, okay, so I'll be back.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you. Any other.

City Clerk Urquia: Tom Wells.
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Mr. Wells: Yes. My name is Tom Wells. I'm a 30-year resident of Coral Gables, the North Gables, and my business is in North Gables. I'm asking the Commission to do two things. One is, expedite the reopening of Burger Bobs and publish the construction schedule. Per section 9.13 of the Construction Contract, the construction schedule should have been posted, prepared and the notice proceed number two, it wasn't attached to the agreement initially. It will also be updated monthly, so on that website if you cannot only put the construction schedule, which will address Mrs. Cruz' request, but also the monthly updates so the residents can see what's going on and this can be a transparent process. That would be very helpful.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Wells, if I may. If you play back and I'd love for the Clerk to give you a copy. I know that you wanted a copy of the transcript. I asked Zeida, on a monthly basis to provide an update on the website in regard to the schedule.

Mr. Wells: May I continue.

Mayor Lago: Yes. And then I also would like for the Manager just really quickly, you're going to give a few points and I want them to be addressed. Can you address the question that the gentleman made about the NTP and the second phase where the schedule is provided.

City Manager Iglesias: We provided a notice to proceed one, to try to negotiate quickly, because equipment is very difficult to obtain now and then we should notice to proceed two, to officially start the work last week and they started, they mobilized on Monday.

Mayor Lago: Have they provided a schedule?

City Manager Iglesias: They provided a schedule. We're looking at the deliveries of the equipment before we're ready to put that on.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Wells: And the reason why I want that process to be transparent, because John Bell Construction executed that contract on September 1st. We're December 11th now, so this process has taken three months just to initiate renovations. In addition, I would like to request the Commission to have a Town Hall meeting to understand the terms, operation, menu items, and pricing for Burger Bobs. Le Parc had an agreement that the city proposed that is attached to a prior resolution of the city, and what they had was, they had an agreement that allowed the city to terminate them on convenience and six months' notice. That means that it's a six-month agreement, and so, for Rita Tennison or any operator of the restaurant, in order to build a business, in order to hire employees, they need to be open for more than six months.

City Manager Iglesias: May I say something. Let's be clear. You represent that person, so Mayor, I've got a problem here and we have a person that's representing the person that we may be negotiating with dictating terms to what we do. I think this is a problem.

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Mayor Lago: I think you have to understand also, as an attorney, we made a statement that was very clear in support, as a Commission, of having this fine person run the establishment, but you're also representing her as her attorney. So, I understand, but I don't want to negotiate. I think that's up to the Manager and the City Attorney to negotiate the terms of the contract once we get to that point. I think right now we really need to focus on getting the construction started. It's taken a long time and make sure that we finish on time and deliver something which is world-class for the residents in the neighborhood.

Mr. Wells: I don't want to interrupt any of you guys, and so, if you can let me proceed that would be great. And so, to continue, so my wife represents Rita Tenneson. I don't have anything to do with that agreement, and our law firm doesn't, she does. Just to correct the point that you interrupted me on. But it will be important – I'm not asking for my thoughts on it, I'm asking for the residents to provide the City Manager with their thoughts on what the economic terms should be. For example, there's been discussions about if there should be Grub-Hub or Uber-Eats there. That's a residential area that's very, very busy, and I don't know if we really want to do that to increase revenue for the city for all the local residents. So, you probably want the local resident input before you make that decision. In addition, for the concession agreement with Le Parc, the city took all the revenue, 100 percent of the revenue from the operator, and returned a portion of it, seven business days following the next month. It's difficult to pay for operating expenses, employees, perishable goods, if you don't have any of the revenue and you are waiting for the city to return it. So again, if you'd like this to be an amenity like you talked about at the March 2022 meeting, it would be important to remember, as Vice Mayor Anderson also talked about, it's not important to make every opportunity a golden egg for the city. This is a need for the city and as a resident of the city, I would like this to be provided by the city for the residents. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Manager, you wanted to respond to his comment at the end.

City Manager Iglesias: Le Park, the prior operator of Le Park, was paid every two weeks. It started off at one week. They asked that they could not work, excuse me, with one month, they said they could not work with that, so we would pay them every two weeks.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for that clarification.

Commissioner Menendez: And I just want before we move onto whatever the next item is obviously. A discussion with the Commission with Zeida, and basically the administration regarding Burger Bob is to capture or recapture or maintain that neighborhood diner experience. Le Parc has its menu, its different location, different atmosphere, and I know inflation has bumped up prices, but we've had the discussion, do everything possible to maintain that charm. I want the folks that used to go to Burger Bobs, which were plenty of people, to be able to come back, we all do, come back and feel they are back at home, and make it very reasonable and friendly. It has to be a win for, obviously, the operator and everything else, but let's truly do our best to capture that spirit.

City Manager Iglesias: And Commissioner, we're looking at both menus, because we want to make sure that they are not competitive, and certainly they are across the street from each other, and so,
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that's one of the things that we've discussed to make sure that there's synergy and it's not a parasitic type of issue where one is taking from the other.

Mayor Lago: Anything else Commissioner.

Commissioner Menendez: No, thank you, Mayor.