

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-8
August 29, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Economic Development Director, Javier Betancourt

Public Speaker(s)

Taciana Amador, Executive Director of the B.I.D.

Agenda Item I-8 [5:29:01 p.m.]

A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to approve and execute a one-time grant in the amount not to exceed \$125,000 to the B.I.D.'s Giralda Committee to be utilized by the B.I.D. as the Committee's fiscal agent, on an incremental and reimbursable basis for marketing activities pre-approved by the City.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A resolution authorizing the City Manager to approve and execute a one-time grant to the B.I.D. of \$125,000 to be utilized by the B.I.D. as the Committee's fiscal agent on an incremental and reimbursable basis for marketing activities pre-approved by the City.

Mr. Betancourt: Good afternoon Mr. Mayor, Madam Vice Mayor, Commissioners, for the record Javier Betancourt, Economic Development Director for the City. This item is a simple item to support the marketing activities of the merchants on Giralda Plaza that's restaurant row. As you all know, they have struggled through the streetscape construction, but now that the street is

becoming completed with an anticipated grand opening date of September 15th. The merchants are gathering under the auspices of a Giralda Committee under the B.I.D. to start planning for the activation of the Plaza through events, through cooperative advertising and other marketing activities. They have requested the City's support in helping to fund some of those items in their initial year. We of course want to support our merchants considering what they've suffered through and so we negotiated this package with them. This would be a reimbursable grant that would be paid out over the fiscal year for pre-approved activities, again of this Giralda Committee with the B.I.D. acting as fiscal agent, and this would supplement, not replace dollars that the B.I.D. already spends on additional marketing activities.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me ask you a question. Is it my misperception that the B.I.D. has been neglectful or negligent regarding Giralda?

Mr. Betancourt: I wouldn't say that. I'm sure there are differing opinions, but Giralda has been, I would say, very tough to activate, because the street has been closed for many months, and so it's been difficult to activate the street with such things as "Giralda Under the Stars", which the B.I.D. had done in previous years. It's just been honestly very challenging to come up with marketing strategies for supporting the street. Outside of advertising and other marketing activities that we had been engaged in and the B.I.D. has been engaged in and some of those we have been doing together, but in terms of having events on the street to really attract people, it's been challenging just due to the nature of the construction. I would compare that to Miracle Mile, which because it remained open to traffic and we also had that plaza by Barnes and Noble, we were able to do many more activations, many of those again in concert with the B.I.D. to attract people to the Mile, but Giralda has been a particular challenge. The Business Improvement District is here, Taciana Amador, Executive Director of the B.I.D. if she would like to comment or if you'd like to ask her that directly.

Vice Mayor Keon: I have a couple of questions about it too. Is this advertising dollars or is it actually to – is it event dollars, like a staging of an event?

Mr. Betancourt: Combination.

Vice Mayor Keon: And, who do they submit the plan for this program to?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Thank you Vice Mayor for the questions. We would like the authority to spend up to \$125,000 provided in increments, depending on project specific for Giralda, whether it is advertising, or whether it is events and we would want the Economic Development Department to manage that. I will say its \$125,000, because I believe Economic Development put the challenge out to the B.I.D. that if they were in for 25 that we would

increase the amount. We are all excited that Giralda is looking spectacular, the crystalline lights are being hung, it is September 15th, it's not looking tentatively, this is happening. We are doing it with the Giralda stakeholders and we are partnering with the B.I.D. and we are very excited. We don't want to give a check though, a full check for the amount, we want to have the ability to be proper stewards of the money to have it go through the Economic Development Department and to fund it on project specific for Giralda, it's not downtown-wide and it is a one year experience, it is not something that should ever be perceived as an ongoing or annual basis.

Vice Mayor Keon: So it's not renewable, it's up to \$125,000. The program has to be submitted to Economic Development, approved by them and then the dollars are...

Mr. Betancourt: Provided on a reimbursable basis once it's invoiced.

Vice Mayor Keon: Once it's invoiced.

Mr. Betancourt: Again, those marketing activities are going to be determined by the merchants themselves on the street, which compose the Giralda Committee of the B.I.D.; and just as an example, they are already planning for September 15th the grand opening celebration, they have a number of entertainment musicians, we'll call them, for that event and some other activities. That's already been determined, we've approved that, we are excited about that. They are having discussions as we speak about what other activities they would like to promote, whether its events, advertising, etc.

Vice Mayor Keon: Do you have any ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the advertising of the B.I.D.? When I look at the amount of money and what they collect, I think almost a third, is that right?- almost a third of the dollars that you have actually going to pay salaries, is that right? What is your annual budget?

Ms. Amador: I believe I actually had sent you the report, but the operating expenses represent 30 percent of our budget.

Vice Mayor Keon: Operating is – that's salaries?

Ms. Amador: No, no. Its rent, its all of our overhead; salaries we only have a staff of three. Our total budget is approximately around \$900,000.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right – and about \$300,000...so its rent and salaries.

Ms. Amador: Its rent, salaries, yes – everything operates our office.

Vice Mayor Keon: So that's like your admin, which 30 percent is high for admin for anybody. What you have left are you able to really advertise effectively?- are you really able to do things effectively that are repeated often enough or in a realm that has the ability to generate interest and actually affect what happens on that street or to bring traffic to the street?

Ms. Amador: Well we feel that – one, the budget that you are seeing are the preliminary numbers that you are seeing kind of touch upon different elements, it's not just advertising. There is a PR component; there is a storytelling component, because it's more than just ads. You need the advertising to try to get the word out, because there is a method behind trying to build engagement, whether it's on social media, on print media, on radio media, making the awareness that the street is open and complete, but there is also the what goes hand-in-hand is the storytelling or the community outreach of trying to get attention for the plaza year-round, not just on a one-time.

Vice Mayor Keon: What does that mean? I don't know what storytelling means? I know what it is like you sit down and tell kids a story.

Ms. Amador: Its modern day PR.

Vice Mayor Keon: It's what?

Ms. Amador: Its modern day PR. It's more than just about writing a press release and putting it out there in the media and to have it be picked up by...

Vice Mayor Keon: Isn't that advertising?

Ms. Amador: No. Public relations isn't advertising, it's a form of marketing, but it's completely – it's basically getting a reporter to write a story about the plaza and in this day and age...

Vice Mayor Keon: But, that doesn't cost any money, does it?

Ms. Amador: To engage an agency to do the release that has the media connections actually does cost some dollars.

Vice Mayor Keon: We don't have any – we don't the relationships to do that?

Mr. Betancourt: We have some. Our efforts are citywide and I think our resources are limited, so to draw attention specifically to Giralda they felt it's important for them to have kind of some

dollars set aside for Giralda specific PR initiatives. That's not to say that we wouldn't assist and we wouldn't also work with the media and drawing some attention, but it's not 100 percent of what we do, it's a very small percentage of what we do. So, to really be effective and make Giralda a place that people know and love and visit you really need to put some dollars behind that effort.

Vice Mayor Keon: Is that enough dollars? I'm asking you....

Mr. Betancourt: I think it's enough dollars, I would say it's a good start and obviously with more money you could do more, but I think it's a good amount to have the combination of events, so people could experience the plaza firsthand and then you support that with ongoing references both in free media PR, articles, you name it, social media and other forms of media. I think it's a good amount. I think certainly would have wanted more.

Commissioner Mena: I think it's important to support them as they are coming out of this construction, you know I think it's important that Giralda in particular be successful, because it will hopefully earn us a little patience on what remains on Miracle Mile when people see how successful Giralda is, I think that's really important. I love the fact that it puts the dollars in the Giralda Committee's hands as to what they want to do on their street with their restaurants to activate it; and I wanted to mention, I know the kickoff is in a couple of weeks, Taci, I'm frankly a little worried, because I haven't seen a single promotional item about it myself, and so that's in two weeks, and this really needs to be a very successful kickoff, I think, if it's going to be a kickoff, but it goes to show you if we were making the decisions on how to do this that would be our call, but that's what they want to do, right?- that the Giralda Committee has decided that's the day they want to do it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If we wanted to do it we would probably have a professional firm to promote it and a firm that's in the business of promoting this type of thing, because its important enough what are you planning to do.

Ms. Amador: For the actual celebration?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, to promote it, not the actual celebration, but to promote it.

Ms. Amador: In the regard to the celebration, the media schedule has already been put in place, we have partnered with the Miami-Herald, so you are going to start seeing ads as early as this week on the front page of the Herald itself, on the weekend section we've partnered with the Miami New Times, there will be a direct mail campaign that will be sent out to residents, I want to say around 50,000 households in the local Coral Gables and Miami area. All of that will

already start hitting this week. We partner with WLRN, also do some on-air commercials and in addition, there is a very big paid and digital social media push with our event partners to put the event out. There is quite a few thousand RSVP's already on the event Bright Link that's hosting the event, the event itself page, so there is a well-rounded media strategy as well as a communications strategy to talk about...

Commissioner Mena: Are you guys working with the Chamber at all to help promote it.

Ms. Amador: Are we working with the Chamber?

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Ms. Amador: Well we of course would like to partner with them to see if they can send it out to their channels as well.

Commissioner Mena: Yes, but I...a dozen e-mails a day and I haven't seen one, so we really need to get the word out, but I'm glad to hear you are doing all those things to help promote.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Motion?

Commissioner Lago: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Vice Mayor Keon: I'll second it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: All those in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Opposed – likewise – unanimous.

Commissioner Quesada: Is the Giralda Committee unified on what they want to do?

Mr. Betancourt: I would say no. I would say the last meeting I went they all had very different ideas...

Commissioner Quesada: Not surprising...

Mr. Betancourt:...that would be the challenge is them trying to develop consensus on where to spend limited resources and you have some newer businesses on the street mixed in with some older ones, some that cater to a younger generation, some that cater to older ones and they have just frankly different demographics and different ideas as to how to reach these demographics.

Commissioner Quesada: OK. Thank you guys.

[End: 5:41:50 p.m.]