

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-6
November 14, 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

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-6

Presentation regarding illegal dumping and code concerns in North Gables
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto F-6, illegal dumping in North Gables. We have a handful of areas where I get phone calls from residents and business owners. We have some photos I wanted to show you. Okay. Let's pause here for a second. I probably get called in from this location probably a dozen times. This is a spot at 11 Sedonia. No, I'm sorry, not Sedonia, I apologize, that's another area. That is in front of an empty lot. It's a beautiful location, probably about a block away from Bouchure. Sometimes when I have a little bit of extra time, I'll swing by there, before a meeting or after a meeting and I'll check that out. That is a major area of illegal dumping and it's all week, by the way. Their pickup days are usually Fridays from what I remember. There is garbage there seven days a week, seven days a week, and the residents in front in the back, continuously send me messages. We've got to figure something out. Mr. Manager, I'd like to see maybe we can put maybe a camera there, put one of those temporary cameras.

City Manager Iglesias: That's Salzedo Mayor.

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Mayor Lago: Yes. I have the address here. Give me one second. Bear with me. It's right there on Salzedo on the empty lot. I'm sorry, 232 Samora.

City Manager Iglesias: 232 Samora.

Mayor Lago: Yes. I'll just show you a few more. I don't want to take up everybody's time. I know it's been a long day. Mr. Clerk, can we go to the next one. These are just examples of what we're seeing here in North Gables. I intentionally left some of the addresses out here. Gabby did a great job putting this together. This is what we're seeing in North Gables. That location constantly illegal dumping. Corner of Galiano and Phoenicia, no dumping sign. I mean it's every day. This is in front of our friends there at Crystal Academy.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Great area, it's just garbage. Why don't we do something there, Mr. Manager, if it's the will of the Commission. I think it's perfect.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And it says no dumping.

Mayor Lago: Why don't we get rid of that no dumping sign and let's plant an oak tree there and plant something, this is the same location, another day when I went by there.

Vice Mayor Anderson: They'll still dump next to the oak tree.

Mayor Lago: I know, but we'll put some shrubs, and we'll try to fill it with some Green Island Fichus or something that's not going to cost any money and it will grow quick, plus that area is horrific. These are pictures that I took myself. I don't know where the addresses are. I apologize. I think this is 1014 East Ponce de Leon. The size of that pile – this is a weekly pile. Look at the next one, same pile.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Is this illegal dumping or dumping by the buildings?

Mayor Lago: That I don't know. I don't know. But this is literally every single week, and the residents call me. They say listen, we don't know who it is. It's happening constantly.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Put some cameras on this.

Mayor Lago: That's what I was thinking about asking the Manager to do. I think the one on Samora is critical. This is adjacent to Crystal also. Every single week there's furniture there.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, every week.

Mayor Lago: And that has to illegal dumping, because its just so much furniture that's thrown out there and it's the entire week.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: We've got to get these folks, like we caught some others, get their vehicle tags.

Mayor Lago: So, why don't we put up some cameras and I know that we have caught some people, Mr. Manager. I'd like to see if we can do more potentially try to see how we can resolve this. This is all in North Gables.

Commissioner Castro: This is close to the Women's Club and the Women's Club usually goes out and cleans up this whole area.

Mayor Lago: That's 11 Sedonia.

Commissioner Menendez: Do you have any ideas as to why that particular, other than access to 8th Street, Douglas.

Mayor Lago: You hit it. You hit it. At night you drive there, it's incredibly dark, it's incredibly dark at night. You park there, no one's going to notice, you just dump everything out. You act like you're moving that couch for a friend or something, and they just dump it there and they take off. Again, I hate to go back to what I do, but garbage, garbage disposal right now in the construction industry is so expensive, the Manager will tell you. We used to do dumpsters for \$200. They're \$600, \$700 now for a dumpster. So, what do they do? – A lot of people who get hired to do it, and I don't want to disparage any profession, but certain people who do demolition work, its happening a lot in Homestead. ___ McGee is the Commissioner and Senator is constantly in a battle in regard to illegal dumping. They'll go to empty lots, and they'll just fill the empty lots with entire dump trucks that come in and dump. This is literally right there on a main street. That's 235 Calabria. Can you imagine waking up to that and seeing that. So, I'm bringing it to your attention because I drive in this area a lot and I get a lot of residents that call me, and I don't know what to do, and what is the next step in regard to enforcement. I'd like to see some action in regard to this, because I think it's important for the residents who live in this area who have to deal with this, and I think it's a good opportunity to address it. So, if you have any ideas, if you think we can add more cameras. I know we have certain cameras there and they've caught people dumping illegally. The question is what can we do with that information? I don't think we have much we can do, correct?

City Manager Iglesias: Its limited Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Limited.

City Manager Iglesias: Unfortunately, it's limited.

Vice Mayor Anderson: But our cameras around the border the city, can track where they are going? Get one on the spot and then get another one which way they came from...

City Manager Iglesias: Its very limited because we don't see them there. Cameras aren't really...
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Vice Mayor Anderson: Depends on the quantity, once you reach a certain amount of tonnage. You catch them enough times, you add it up, and it gets into a felony or a misdemeanor level, depends on the tonnage. I remember looking at it. Don't quiz me on the tonnage.

Commissioner Castro: When we catch the person or the people, what's the consequence?

Vice Mayor Anderson: You would have to take a look at the actual state statute.

City Attorney Suarez: And as you can imagine the challenges that, in terms of these kinds of charges, there are priorities that the state actually pursues, as you can imagine, and sometimes illegal dumping is not the highest on the priorities of charges.

Commissioner Menendez: Just to change the perspective of illegal dumping. We have our own laws regarding littering.

City Attorney Suarez: We do have a code provision, if that's what you mean, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Because technically – its easier to cite them with a financial hit, its probably easier than doing something that the state regulates.

City Attorney Suarez: The challenge is that our code, when we cite for code violations, we can then if the fine is not paid, then we can have a lien against the property when it's a property related fine or violation I should say. In this case, you fine somebody who's just driving a vehicle and dumps something, and you issue a Code Enforcement citation, it could be a fine, but would it be enough and oftentimes the fines are not significant enough for them to...

Commissioner Menendez: Back in the day, I don't know about now, back in the day a person would be driving through throw stuff out the window and a cop would pull you over for littering. That be state law?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes. That would be state law, yes. The problem is when we're dealing with people from outside the city its enforcement. Then you also have the aggravation of being arrested if it's an arrestable amount. That creates a certain amount of deterrence.

Commissioner Fernandez: Raise the fine for illegal dumping?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Again, we can't enforce it. We need the state.

Commissioner Fernandez: Agreed. We may not be able to enforce it until that one case which then becomes a story and word starts spreading, because if your risk of being caught illegal dumping is \$2,500, you're going to think twice before you do it in Coral Gables.

Commissioner Castro: And if you use the cameras you are going to think twice still.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll give you an example. The county has a fine for parking a semi-truck on your lawn. The first fine is \$500. Second is \$2,500. The third is \$5,000. So, it makes you think twice before you do it again.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, whether it should be statutory change at the state level or some other level, perhaps a discussion we can have with the City Attorney and explore what can be done.

Mayor Lago: What I would like for you to do, if possible the Commission is, take some time when you have a moment, try to go on a Wednesday or a Thursday or go on a Friday because that's when they are picking up, go on a Wednesday or Thursday, so you can see this area, especially the areas that I talked to you about. You can see the amount of garbage that's out there. A lot of times we're flying from point A to point B, and we don't really pay attention to certain things, but when you really start driving up and down the street, you really start recognizing that there's a lot of illegal dumping going on. This is just bringing it to your attention again, so we can have a conversation about potentially adding more cameras, especially if we can do Sedonia, it would be great. Add an oak tree there, do some landscaping, that's it. That area is stopped from illegal dumping. If we could do that, I'd really appreciate that.

City Manager Iglesias: And the problem is code enforcement violation to a property versus somebody, it's a vehicle, or somebody that doesn't live here, the enforcement is a problem.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Moving onto F-7.