

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-2
April 26, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Mario Garcia-Serra, representing the project

Agenda Item I-2 [Start: 12:17:38 p.m.]

Status Report on Mediterranean Village Development Agreement

Mayor Cason: Alright. We are going to move onto I-2.

City Attorney Leen: Thank you Mr. Mayor.

Commissioner Keon: Mr. Mayor before Jessica and Matt leave. I wanted to just congratulate Jessica on her article that is in this month's League of Cities magazine, there is an article that Jessica wrote on biking in the City of Coral Gables, that's a great article. So congratulations, it's nice to see that you are in the League on these things, and to thank them so much for their work with us on the sea rise level series that we did. You were just great. You were great. Thank you.

Mayor Cason: City Attorney,

City Attorney Leen: Thank you Mr. Mayor. Item I-2 is a status report on the Mediterranean Village Development Agreement. The City Manager and I had both met with each of you individually and I know that it has been a priority of the City to get the Development Agreement resolved in a way that doesn't renegotiate the deal and that's fair and that recognizes what's been adopted and it's also respectful of Mediterranean Village and Agave. So, I'm happy to report to you that we do have a signed agreement by Agave, the City will sign it shortly, so we have to go through a formal execution process, but it will be executed shortly. We do have an agreement. I think that's great, and I just want to thank Agave, who is all here and put a lot of time into this to meet the Commission's, in a sense, deadline to get this done by today and we appreciate the Commission's attention to this and obviously requiring that we go forward to get this done. So, I don't know if they'd like to speak, or if any Commissioner's would like to speak, but I am happy to report that we have a signed agreement.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Good afternoon Mr. Mayor and Commissioners, Mario Garcia-Serra with offices at 600 Brickell Avenue, representing Agave Ponce LLC. Joined today by the project team, many of you know most of them already Eddie Avilla of course, Peggy Orlando is going to be our condo attorney, Jose Antonio Perez....General Counsel for Agave Ponce; and you remember Mr. Carlos Beckman, who now is going to be leading the construction of the project, who will be sort of the lead point person for construction of the project, and he just started literally on the job last week, and will now be calling Miami/Coral Gables home. So, as Craig mentioned to you, we haven't had much sleep in the last 24 hours, but we have finalized development agreement, which has been signed by us and we have to finalize some exhibits, but really they are all rather technical in nature, the exhibits would have to be finalized, and it took some effort on both sides, but we got there. We also have some of the changes which we had discussed at the last meeting, including the block of improvements between Miracle Mile and Andalusia, which needs to be completed before streetscape improvements before the end of this year, and I think overall it's an improvement that's very good as far as its enforcement provisions that make sense and is reasonable for both sides and will be part of what we need to get the project done.

Mayor Cason: Can you just tell us a little bit on the construction phase, when are we going to see digging?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Well there should be some demolition already taking place soon. There is the archway, you know from the previous project, which I know Commissioner Lago was very involved with on letting the construction actually under the last project, but that should be demolished sometime soon, we are waiting for the permit right now. And then we are expected to start side work in June/July.

Mayor Cason: The Century Bank Building, is that going to go?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: That – I don't think we have a timetable. That will ultimately of course be demolished; I don't think we have a date yet by when it's going to be demolished. So right now the tenants are still there, a few tenants, but there are some there on sort of month-to-month leases.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, if I may. I had one quick question. Thank you by the way for working so diligently. I want to commend the developer and his staff for getting this done. I know that we've been back and forth, so I commend you for that. My question is based on the residents who live adjacent to the proposed development. I had a meeting with them last week and they are super excited about the project, so are many of the commercial units on Segovia. I know several of the owners that have offices, the office buildings on Segovia. Did I say that correctly?- its Segovia?- it's not Segovia, its Sevilla.

Commissioner Keon: Sevilla.

Commissioner Lago: Sevilla, I apologize. I have Segovia on my mind for some reason. The question from the residents in the rear of the proposed development, adjacent to the hospital was, when are the proposed upgrades to the lighting, sidewalks, entrance features, when is that planned?- when is that going to commence?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Well, what we are going to do first is a sort of scoping effort with the neighbors to make sure that the improvements that we are proposing are what they want. We've already hired...which is a very well regard planning firm, and design firm that all of you know. They are going to put together a schedule as to those neighborhood meetings and workshops and outreach to them, so part of that we'll have a final design. We'll probably end up presenting it to the Commission before saying it is the final design. And then also in conjunction with the City Manager, we are going to be setting up a schedule at that point on construction and what can be done earlier, what can be done later.

Commissioner Lago: Will that proposed construction for the neighborhood improvements be completed prior to the commencement of the foundation of the project?- or that will be in line with the foundation?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: That's something that's yet to be determined. There could be some – the legal obligation we have right now is to finish things before TCO, but we also have an obligation to settle on a schedule with the Manager by which things that we could do early in the process are not going to disrupt construction and so forth, can be done.

Commissioner Lago: And I'll tell you why. This is just several things, my involvement in the project for many, many years being with a firm that started a lot of the entrance features over ten years ago, before I was even in public office. The residents are excited, but they are a little bit concerned, because they've already been through this situation on a previous occasion ten years ago, and the site has been empty. No fault to you guys, but again, they are just concerned. And they are very careful; they don't fault you or the developer for that matter. But they want to make sure that, number one, the if the improvements are made before the development is constructed that it's not 110 percent completed in regards to the road aspects, because you'll ruin it with the in and out of the proposed construction firm that's going to be used to build it, that's number one. Number two, they are also fearful of the fact that they may be in a situation where they may never see those improvements; and again, those are things that once they see some progress, I think they'll be more at ease, but I just want to make sure and I want to put on the record that I want you to continue your outreach to them, because they would really appreciate some sort of scheduling so they can see some sort of progression on the life of the project.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: We are very conscious, number one; of making them part of the process and reaching out to them, so they know something is going on. I will admit we've probably been remiss in the last few months and not being more proactive in that sort of effort with them and both upper levels of City staff and elected officials, and in deed we know that we are coming to a site that already has a history; and regardless of who was at fault for it, or whatever it is, what exist today and what those neighbors feel about then we have to make it clear that this is going to be an improvement to the neighborhood. They are going to love the fact that the project is there and we want them to start having that feeling early. We do that and talking to them and figuring out what they want and when we can get it to them as soon as possible.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Thank you very much. Have a good day.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you for all of your work in working with us to right-size this project and it's going to be a great project for the City of Coral Gables. We really are looking forward to it. Thank you.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: As always, have a good day.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

[End: 12:25:21 p.m.]