

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items G-3 and I-5 are related
August 24, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Historical Resources Officer, Warren Adams

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Items G-3 and I-5 are related [4:31 p.m.]

G-3: Discussion regarding funding mechanisms for historic City assets, Fire House 4, and Phillips Park. (Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

I-5: A Resolution of the City Commission authorizing the City Manager and City Attorney to negotiate purchase and sale agreements for the sale of transfer of development rights (“TDRs”) currently available from the Coral Gables Museum Property, located at 285 Aragon Avenue, and directing that all proceeds be placed in the City’s historic building fund. (Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto I-5, Commissioner Menendez’ item.

City Attorney Ramos: A Resolution of the City Commission authorizing the City Manager and City Attorney to negotiate purchase and sale agreements for the sale of transfer of development rights (“TDRs”) currently available from the Coral Gables Museum Property, located at 285

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Agenda Items G-3 and I-5 are related – Resolution to negotiate purchase and sale agreements
For the sale of transfer of development rights (TDR’s) currently available from CG Museum Property

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Aragon Avenue, and directing that all proceeds be placed in the City 's historic building fund. I will note, this item is related to item G-3.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor and Commissioners, the idea here is to have funding for historical buildings. So, we have set up a historical building fund in which the TDR's, we plan on the TDR's from the museum, potentially also coming up would be Miracle Theater and also Fink Studio to go into that TDR fund, strictly to fund city historical buildings, and I believe our Historical Director can explain what the board said, which I think they were unanimous in their approval of this.

Historical Director Adams: Good afternoon. This site went to the Historical Preservation Board on August 17th and requesting approval of the maintenance plan which was prepared and submitted for the Police and Fire Station, and for authorization of the transfer of the unused development rights and the Historic Preservation Board approved the request and unanimously 7 to 0, and they thought it was an alternative way to make sure that the money raised from TDR's is spent on historic buildings and the...one recommendation for the City Commission which was to create a trust fund from the sale proceeds of transferable development rights from city owned historic properties for the purpose of maintenance and preservation plans for city owned historic properties and an approved maintenance plan from the Historic Preservation Board. So, they support the idea of a preservation fund, and they also support the idea that the money in that fund can be used for the repair and maintenance of city.

City Manager Iglesias: Our Finance Department has already established a historical preservation fund where their proceeds will go.

Commissioner Anderson: Actually, it's something I thought already existed, so I'm glad it's been formalized now. So great work.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to add that the Manager and I a couple of weeks ago, met with some board members from the Coral Gables Museum, Jose Valdes-Fauli, Chip Withers and the Executive Director Alvis Fuentes and they too support the legislation creating this fund and the sale of TDR's.

Mayor Lago: I think it's wonderful. Great job Commissioner, great job. They can't say that we don't support historic structures.

Commissioner Menendez: Exactly.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: All of a sudden, potentially what is it, between \$5-\$6 million.

City Manager Iglesias: Between \$5 and \$5.5 million.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, I know it has nothing to do with this, but since we are bringing up historic. I took Mr. Prescott out to breakfast, to coffee this week, and we were talking about the Gondola Building, and I know that he is working with staff in regard to a litany of different projects that he's undertaking at the Biltmore to spruce the place up. I was very happy to hear that. I was very clear. We had a very good conversation and we also talked about the location of the Gondola Building, that's an asset that I think could be – we don't really understand that building could be used for something good. Could be used for something from the Garden Club to who knows, pick a charity.

City Manager Iglesias: We've had various meetings on that issue already, deciding where it can more effectively go. As soon as we get a little more concurrence on that, we will bring it to the Commission. We have of course, the original spot, the problem is that they will be very...The other big issue is that where we put it on the golf course it becomes an impediment to golf. So, we have found one area where we feel it could be close to the Kerdyk center and used as part of the park, so Fred, our Parks Director can very effectively use that building.

Mayor Lago: And maintain it and make sure it's in good shape.

City Manager Iglesias: Maintain it and it can be seen, it can be used, so I'm working with the Historical Director on that, and we'll be taking that to the Historical Board.

Mayor Lago: And not only that, you know what it could potentially be used as also, I'm not saying storage, that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying it could potentially be used as an annex building for the paddle courts, you know for something that has to do with tennis, the Garden Club, there is a litany of different orientations.

City Manager Iglesias: I think our Parks Director can have a lot of uses for that building, it could be connected to that Kerdyk Tennis Center annex. So, we've had a number of meetings on it, and they've been spirited, not because we have a number of issues, but the question is, do we put it back where it is, or do we put it back where it can be appreciated.

Mayor Lago: I think we are very clear, and I think we've gotten the acceptance from the community that you put that building where it is right now, no one's going to use it, because no one's going to walk to that area.

Commissioner Anderson: Or if you do you need a helmet.

Mayor Lago: Let's put it – if somebody wants to enjoy it, let's actually get some use out of it, so it just doesn't sit there.

Commissioner Menendez: Let's bring life to it.

Commissioner Anderson: There is a need for a launch site, maybe that will work. We'll have to do some brainstorming on that and get some stakeholders.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, to put it somewhere where people can appreciate the building.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: If you don't use it, you don't appreciate it. I think one of the reasons why it wasn't taken care of, because it had no use at that.

Mayor Lago: Who was the sponsor of that money from the State of Florida, was it Brian Avila, or was it Demi Cabrera? Who was the sponsor from the State?

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Brian Avila.

Mayor Lago: I mention that because I want to say again, put it on the record, even though he's probably very busy today, Senator Avila really delivered on that, so I want to give credit where credit is due.

City Manager Iglesias: And now we will have a historical fund that we can use to fund these kinds of historical projects.

Commissioner Anderson: The needs are clearly great. We have this, we have the Water Tower.

Mayor Lago: Oh, yes. The Water Tower needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Anderson: Really needs to be addressed.

Commissioner Menendez: With regards to the other facilities, like we mentioned where the museum is located, that building, the Miracle Theater, those are places that have use and people go in and appreciate those historical assets of ours. So, if we can find a way to make the Gondola Building activated so that people can use it, the more they use it, the more they appreciate it. So, I think we are going down the right path.

Commissioner Anderson: It's the whole point of having...

City Manager Iglesias: I'd also like to bring up one important point and since 2005 we've spent \$45.2 million dollars on historical work, so the city has been very active on the historical side.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, no doubt. You'd like to move it?

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor before you vote on it, we do have a member of the public requesting to speak.

Mayor Lago: Yes, go ahead.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll make the motion.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll second.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz.

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, Ms. Cruz, I thought you left.

Ms. Cruz: I picked up my granddaughter, put gas in my car, and came back.

Commissioner Anderson: We've got to get you an electric car.

Commissioner Menendez: We were that long, huh.

Ms. Cruz: I haven't had lunch, but nobody treated me.

Commissioner Menendez: I have soup in my office, if you want.

Commissioner Anderson: I have a banana.

Ms. Cruz: Alright. G-3 and I-5, right, that's what we are discussing? – or we are discussing I-5 only?

Mayor Lago: I-5.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. Since the people that make decisions are not always here and we make decisions one day and then there is an election and other people come in, and they do not know the history and then they try to do things different. I am concerned about selling the TDR's and putting it into a fund that no offense to you, and no offense to you, that could be considered to draw from to fix a park. I mean, no offense with parks. You know my granddaughters like to go to parks, but I think there is a difference between historic building and parks, and we do have money put aside for parks and every so often we get more money for parks one way or the other, but I think that when we talk historic, we should limit that to historic buildings, not leave a little up in space that somebody can say, oh you know, the Betsy Adams Park is now three years old, now its historic, let's spend some money.

Mayor Lago: That's impossible.

Ms. Cruz: But you know what I'm doing. I'm giving examples. Historic buildings are historic buildings. The Water Tower, the Museum, those are historic buildings, parks we do it other ways.

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City Manager Iglesias: Let me clarify. We are not changing the historical ordinance at all, so it must remain for historic buildings.

Ms. Cruz: Okay, but – okay.

City Manager Iglesias: We are not changing historical, there is no change to historical.

Commissioner Menendez: The current legislation.

City Manager Iglesias: The current legislation stays.

Commissioner Menendez: The monies stay with historic.

City Manager Iglesias: Stay with historic, no change.

City Attorney Ramos: And Ms. Cruz, you should know that the Historic Preservation Board approved this, and the reason is, because the museum has already been restored by the city, so the typical requirement that the building that's being sold the TDR's from be restored, that's already happened, and we are actually putting in the roof now.

Ms. Cruz: The pictures that they sent the other day, that has been fixed already at the museum?

City Attorney Ramos: The museum...

Ms. Cruz: There were some pictures that were really bad.

Mayor Lago: Well, they had an issue with the leak in the roof.

Ms. Cruz: Okay.

Mayor Lago: What else?

City Attorney Ramos: The roof is being replaced now.

Ms. Cruz: The floors.

City Attorney Ramos: I'm not talking about the interior. I'm talking about the exterior structure of the building to keep its historic integrity, that's already been done.

Ms. Cruz: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: In 2011, the construction cost for the museum was \$6.5 million dollars, of which \$2.2 million came from donations; \$460,000 came from county issued GOB Bonds; and

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365 came from general Capital Improvement funding; \$3.5 million was a loan for the city, the debt service so far has been \$1.4 million, so the total construction cost of that project was \$7.9 million, and the city's contribution was \$5.2 million.

Ms. Cruz: But there is still some stuff that needs to be done.

City Manager Iglesias: I think there needs to be some maintenance, we just half a million dollars on the roof last year.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. So that's G-3, no, that's I-5.

Mayor Lago: Can we take a vote, can we finish.

Ms. Cruz: What confused me was that G-3 talks about historic buildings, Fire House 4 and Phillips Park, you see what I'm saying?

Commissioner Menendez: When we get to G-3...

City Manager Iglesias: That's a separate...

Ms. Cruz: But we are discussing both at the same time.

Commissioner Menendez: In all reality when we get to G-3, the conversation will most likely stay with the Fire House and Phillips Park, because the issue of historic is being addressed in I-5.

Ms. Cruz: [Inaudible]

Commissioner Menendez: Its just a matter of the way it was written.

City Manager Iglesias: G-3 is budgetary issues, the other one is historical funding.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. Okay. I understand, but you understand the confusion, right.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes. I still offer the soup, if you want it.

Ms. Cruz: I still read.

Mayor Lago: Alright. So, I need a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: Motion.

Commissioner Anderson: I think we already did it.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

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Commissioner Menendez: Oh, I did it.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

(Vice Mayor Mena: Absent)