

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-1
March 11, 2025
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, 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, Alberto Parjus
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Public Speaker(s)

Doug Yoder, Chair of Waterway Advisory Board
Roberta Neway
Anthony Escarra, Representing Commissioner Regalado
Manny Portuondo
Juan Galan, Jr.
Francisco Tobias Marin
Peter Baumberger
Maria Cruz
Alfredo Izasuirre
Levi Meyer
Maxine Latremoille
Eulois Cleckley, CEO of Friends of The Underline

Agenda Item 2-1 [2:33 p.m.]

A Resolution of the Waterway Advisory Board recommending the City Commission strongly advocates for a higher clearance from Miami-Dade's

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Underline Project's updated bridge clearance of 11.1 feet to maintain safe and accessible waterway navigation; and to direct staff to conduct an independent survey to verify clearances, both under the proposed bridge and under US-1, before any final approvals are granted.

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item 2-1.

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor this is an item from the Waterway Advisory Board. I believe there is somebody here to present.

Mayor Lago: Neighbor how are you sir. Good to see you.

Mr. Yoder: My name is Doug Yoder, I'm Chairman of the Waterway Advisory Board, I live at 4800 Alhambra Circle, and I'm here to present the resolution that was unanimously adopted by the Waterway Advisory Board at the meeting of March 5th, of which, I believe you all have copies. This relates to the proposed pedestrian bridge crossing the Coral Gables Waterway as part of the Underline Project. The central part of this recommendation is acknowledging that we would all like to see a higher bridge, if possible, but that we would recommend that the city staff undertake a review of the survey data used to determine the elevation that will result from construction of the pedestrian bridge and also to verify the clearance under the US-1 existing highway bridge. We had once again, the staff of the county and the Underline there, Commissioner Regalado attended and was very helpful in terms of describing the limitations that exist in doing work within the Metrorail border. And so, I think it is fair to say some of my colleagues on the board may clarify for me that the board has acknowledged the fact that there are these limitations, whether they be the ADA limitations for access, for people with disabilities, and the clearances required by Metrorail itself. So, really the bottom line is, make sure that the mean high and mean low water data that were used in the design process are consistent with best engineering practice. Once that is done, verify that the elevation of the pedestrian bridge is as high as it can be, given the other limitations that apply. And so, I think there has been a degree of confusion perhaps, because it is, I believe standard engineering practice to use a number of years of record with respect to water elevations to develop an average, a mean, and so, on any given day, somebody can go out and look at what the actual water elevation is and on some days, it's going to exceed, in this case, the mean computed from 19 years of record and on other days it may be below that number, and in fact the chances of going out and finding its exactly what the 19-year mean is, is probably a pretty small probability. So, it is going to remain true that anybody who is boating on the waterway is going to have to be mindful of depending on what kind of boat they have, what the tide is doing at the time that they are going through that area, because it does make a difference. So, let me leave it at that. You may have other – we had a number of residents again at the meeting, we have a number of board members here and if there are questions, I'll be happy to answer. I'll just add it's important that we, that the Waterway Board got in at the end of this process instead of the beginning, because

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we know it has caused a delay and there has been consequential redesign, particularly to limit the prospects for fishing from the pedestrian bridge, which was the other issue that the board had. Our intention is to come back to you all, perhaps with some recommendations citywide for improving understanding of residents about why it is not a good idea for people to fish from bridges, and secondarily, to maybe see if there is some way administratively that our board and other advisory boards become aware of projects like this kind of in the beginning instead of in the end. So, we are going to look at those things.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Who else do we have in public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: So, we have speakers today, first speaker is Roberta Neway.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Neway, good afternoon.

Ms. Neway: Hi, I'm Roberta Neway, 1236 South Alhambra Circle, 33146. I'm one of the more than...

Commissioner Castro: Can you put the microphone.

Ms. Neway: Okay. I'm sorry. Yes. I'm one of the more than the 100,000 people living within a half mile of the Underline and I look forward to being able to walk and bike more comfortably and safely in less than two years in my neighborhood and beyond. As I hope you all know, bike safety and bike lanes rank in the top three areas needing improvement in the most recent Coral Gables Community Foundation needs assessment. Obviously, I'm not the only person eagerly awaiting the Underline. I commend the Miami-Dade County Department of Transportation and Public Works for having addressed all concerns of the Waterway Advisory Board. This bridge, the proposed bridge, is higher than the other bridges that currently exist in this area and will continue to exist for decades and decades and decades. Furthermore, in no way will this bridge impact on the health, safety, maintenance, and sustainability of our waterways. The Underline has been designed for all of us, for those with money and for those without, for children learning to ride a bike and for seniors who may ride slowly or ride an adult tricycle. It has been designed for people who are avid walkers and for those with mobility issues. People will use this linear park not only for recreation, but also for commuting for daily life and maybe most importantly for becoming more a part of their communities. We'll all benefit from the safe, comfortable, and convenient path throughout the city. It will and is helping Miami-Dade become stronger and more resilient. I hope all of you understand and believe in the beauty and the promise of the Underline. Please vote no on this needless resolution and let the Underline move forward. Thank you for your time.

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Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. The representative from Commissioner Regalado's office will please join us. And before he does that as he's walking up, I'd like to also thank her on behalf of the City of Coral Gables for being so proactive, along with the entire team from Miami-Dade County. Thank you so much for being here. Every phone call, every email, every site visit, every late-night phone call in regard to this issue, if it wasn't Commissioner Regalado, it was Tony Escarra or your entire team, Irene, thank you so much, always answering the call, trying to find a resolution, trying to meet halfway, so I appreciate that. Send our best to the Commissioner and thank her.

Mr. Escarra: Thank you very much for those kind words. Anthony Escarra, 111 N.W. 1st Street, on behalf of Commissioner Regalado. She would like to apologize for not being able to be here today. Unfortunately, we have committee meetings while you have your board meeting, but she did send me to let you know that we have been working to address the concerns of the community. We took off the fishing pier, we brought up the bridge from the originally stated height. It is going to be higher than the bridge that it is next to. For the foreseeable future there is no plan to change the bridge that it's next to and we don't know even if the slope that would be required to raise it could be accomplished by FDOT if it was changed, right. That is not to be antagonistic, it's just to present facts as they are. We appreciate you always, the board and your staff being available to discuss this issue with us. We've been open and I hope that you appreciate our efforts in these endeavors. If you have any questions for me, I'm more than willing to answer them.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. I do have one question for you. Eventually the FDOT bridge might not be during your lifetime or my lifetime, will need to be replaced. Is there a way that we can add comments for the FDOT to consider incorporating the Underline bridge at a future point in time when the FDOT bridge is replaced if indeed its higher than the Underline bridge.

Mr. Escarra: I'm sorry, what was the question.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It was long. Let's say for instance, FDOT bridge is replaced in the future, and it's replaced at a higher height than this Underline bridge. Can we include a comment, so it doesn't get missed in the future for the FDOT to just make a wider bridge, so the highest bridge is the FDOT bridge?

Mr. Escarra: I think it's possible, but if it is possible we would be more than willing to do that, right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Just put a comment because I won't be around, you may not be around when this comes, but at least if it's a box to check for them, they may not miss it that way.

Mr. Escarra: Yes. That's a phenomenal idea. Absolutely. I don't see why that would be a problem. Now, I don't know if there's going to be funds available to make it wider or not, you know how that is.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Oh, I know, but at least...

Mr. Escarra: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The box is there to be checked.

Mr. Escarra: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Alright. Thank you.

Mr. Escarra: More than willing.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Escarra: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: We'll come back to her.

City Clerk Urquia: Manny Portuondo.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, sir.

Mr. Portuondo: First of all, my name is Manny Portuondo, 820 Jeronimo Drive. I want to thank Mayor, Vice Mayor, all the Commissioners for their dedicated time to this issue. I know I've been pestering you and you've taken time out of your busy day to speak to me and the 16 waterway homeowners and boaters that are concerned about this issue. By the way, Commissioner Anderson, Vice Mayor Anderson, I do think that's a good idea, it's a good safeguard, like an insurance policy what you suggest, and I thought that was very smart. Thank you for that. Again, at issue is a low bridge or another low bridge over the Coral Gables Waterway, and the impact that that will have for future generations. We're not just talking about something that's removable, it's going to be there like all these other low bridges for 50, 60, 70, 80 years, who knows, and to assert that that will never be changed, I think would be a little bit arrogant because no one really knows when those bridges are going to be changed on the perspective of climate change. We have sea level rise. Anyone who navigates the waterway will know when the King Tide comes, it's not like it used to be ten years ago. You can't get out of the waterway. You can't pass under the US-1 bridge. No one wants to oppose the Underline. I know that we may give that impression because we're putting an obstacle to the continuation of the Underline, but I for sure am not opposed to the

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Underline. I think it's a wonderful project. I'm big into green spaces. I know every neighbor that I've spoken to, and I have taken the time to speak to my 600 supporters, the vast majority of them would like to see an Underline happen and hopefully on time and so forth. But we are concerned because we do live on the Coral Gables Waterway. We are boaters, we are kayakers, we are paddleboarders and we want to ensure, not just for us, for future generations a safe and navigable waterway, and even though and I do appreciate the Underline and Miami-Dade and Raquel Regalado spoke the other day and also Anthony and her made some time for me to speak as well with them directly and I do appreciate that they are trying to do their best. I just don't think they are doing as best as they can; and as best as they can, it is really taking a look at all of the different design options and pathways that make this currently and determining what is the safest way for bikers, pedestrians, and those folks with handicaps to cross over the Coral Gable waterway. I think if they were to look at their design intent and look at options on that design intent, they would find additional options that would allow for a higher bridge, and one of those options being, there already exists an ADA compliant safest path, the closest path for hundreds of walkers, joggers and folks today. There are also lift options that can be considered for the bridge, just like a crossover bridge over US-1 has lift options. We are targeting the highest bridge possible. From a practical perspective, if you were to look and navigate the waterway, you would look south of US-1, you would see that the Coral Gables bridge is designed by George Merrick, at 14 feet in height, high water mark. That doesn't mean that this bridge has to be 14 feet. Maybe there are obstacles, maybe there are challenges don't allow us to get to 14 feet, but that should be a target – does it land at 12, at 12 ½, 13, I'm not sure, I'm not an engineer, but going back to what Chairman of the Waterway Committee advised and also I know some of the members are going to speak today, if you are a boater or kayak and paddleboarder, you know that the mean high water mark is sitting at around 5 ½, 6 feet, not 7 feet. So, I urge you, this is a matter of a lot of importance to people that actually live in the waterway, use the waterway. This is a big decision that has impact for 50, 60, 70, 80 years. Please consider those that live underneath the line, not just those that are above the line. Thank you much for your time.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Juan Galan, Jr.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, sir.

Mr. Galan: Didn't think I was going to be here, because usually a morning meeting, but it's in the afternoon. I sent our attorney an email that certified that at the last meeting of the Waterway Advisory Board, when I brought up the issue of safety with regards to mixing cyclists and pedestrians, the Metro-Dade County, Commissioner Regalado, Mr. Yulis, Ted ___ from the Underline, they both said not to worry that the city indemnify because the Metro-Dade County is responsible as is the Underline that has a liability policy. And while I was very happy with that,

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very happy to send it to our attorney so that...the attorneys for the city would know that any accidents, you point the finger at somebody else for liability, responsibility. It bothered me a little bit to think that that's how I should feel. I don't feel that way. I feel that the situation should be done in the safest way possible. Maybe because of my computer background, I was doing computers since 66, before most of the people here were even in grade school and my datamining capabilities, I did the research that it seems like others have not done. Traffic safety council, as you know, because I've shared it with you, definitely recommends an independent cycling pathway, no mixing with anybody else. I happen to have sent an email to the USDOT, I didn't really expect an answer, but low and behold, the lady who is in charge of bicycle and pedestrian safety for the United States Department of Transportation under the Federal Highway Administration, sent me an email which I've shared with you that says, the US doesn't have similar rules to Europe, but when practical you should keep them separate. And what bothers me the most is that we, many times suggest that the Underline that the Ponce de Leon sidewalk which was measured to be 7-foot wide, with a proper guardrail and with speed bumps by the...you make sure that the cars going by were slower could easily be used, to be a lot cheaper for the Underline to do that than to build a bridge for pedestrians and cyclists. And frankly, up until the very last minute of the last meeting, they have been denying that as an appropriate path, but at the last meeting one of the senior people from the county said, well you know, they are not comfortable going into the bridge because there are cyclists and pedestrians, they can just use the sidewalk on Ponce de Leon. So, if that's the case, that's what the Underline should do and I do not believe, and I'm sorry to say this, but I do not believe that proper research was done and everybody will tell you, and if you've been to Europe, you know it, cyclists and pedestrians and wheelchairs get kept separated. So, I don't understand that. And the last item I would say to you as Commissioners is, use your boards wisely. It was absolute chance that we learned about it and as you well know, not only should the Waterway Advisory Board been involved with the Underline project, but I'm hoping that the Landscaping Advisory Board has been involved and also hoping that the Parks and Recreation Board has been involved, because guess what, I'm not an arborist, but I drove from 95 down to Dixie, when I look at the shrubbery on the right side, which is the new Underline, I'm not sure that it fits here or it doesn't. I'm not an expert, but somebody who should look at it and make sure that the Underline is compatible with what we want in Coral Gables. Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Francisco Tobias Marin.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, sir.

Mr. Marin: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, for letting me voice my opinion as a resident and an owner of a house in the waterway today. I only moved to this town in 2020, so I'm not an expert on this history, but the waterway and the architectural standards of Coral Gables are the hallmarks of this city and the reason why we moved here. I also ride a bicycle.

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I ride my bicycle to work in Brickell every day. So, I love both the waterway and the Underline. I'd really love it to be finished. That being said, I'm also an engineer and I know that when we build, we build for 50 to 80 years, so I don't think the argument is how long it's going to take for route 1 bridge that was built way too low to have to be changed because that's not how we construct. We construct for 50 years to 100 years out and we need to construct well. So, all I ask is, I think we need to continue to respect, as we do all around Coral Gables, the architectural standards of Coral Gables and in bridges, the Merrick Bridge is built 14 feet above the mean high tide, that's architectural standards and that's what is used in France, in England, in most place where they really value the waterways. The waterway of Coral Gables is incredibly valuable. So, three main reasons that I ask to really try to stick to the 14 feet above the mean high tide; maintain safe and navigable waterway, I don't think is safe today with that bridge on Route 1 especially; allow for larger fire and police boats to access north of Route 1. God forbid if we ever have a tragedy fire or things that are happening in California, we are going to want to be able to go in with the fire boats inside the bridge north of Route 1 and today you can't. And lastly, make certain bridges in the face of rising sea levels, as we said before, we are designing 50 years out, sea levels are rising, conditions are changing, so let's do it properly. That's all for me. I know it's been a long day for you all. It's very similar to what the other people said here. Thank you. That's all.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Lucy Lopez.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Ms. Lopez: Good afternoon, my name is Lucy Lopez, owner at 5005 Orduna Drive. I'm a proud and long-time resident of Coral Gables and I wanted to start by saying thank you to our Mayor, our Vice Mayor, and the Commission for being receptive to our concerns, along with Commissioner Regalado and her team. We purchased our property in 2021, and it's been a lifelong dream of ours to own a home on the Coral Gables Waterway. With the support of the Mayor, I was able to bring the International Coastal Cleanup to our waterway and to our community. Through the volunteer cleanup, which Rhonda and Vince participate in every single year, we were able to pick up thousands of pounds every year from our waterway and from the surrounding low-lying area, as well as our mangroves and everything that has to do with Coral Gables water. I'm very passionate about the water, and I'm here to voice my opinion on another low bridge above the waterway. I'm an extremely involved resident in our community and I have a business that owns and operates only in the City of Coral Gables. I'm at Development Services nearly every single day and I didn't learn about this bridge or this development until the day that the reply was due because I received a text message from my neighbor. While we fully support the Underline and I'm all in for beautifying our community, we don't want any further restrictions on our waterway. This will significantly impact on our property values if another low bridge is installed.

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The planning for this bridge seems to have taken everything into account on the street, but didn't take much into account with the issues below the Underline. This is a navigable waterway. I am of the opinion to take the bridges highest possible with the most current data for the mean high water mark, not outdated data that is close to 20 years old. The truth is that the bridge should not be compared to the US-1 bridge that will need to be updated in the near future and the point is, I just like to voice this opinion and to please take the bridge as high as possible. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Peter Baumberger.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, sir.

Mr. Baumberger: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. Peter Baumberger, 545 Vilabella Avenue. I too would like to thank you all and the Underline representatives and the Miami-Dade County representatives for hearing us all out and talking this all out. On Monday morning, I sent you all a history of the Underline's response to the complaints about another low bridge and I really want to recap what's happened here, because I think it's important. Let's start with the initial plans and the bridge dimensions on the US Coast Guard website. Again, we learned about the bridge dimensions when the Coast Guard provided the public notice issued during Christmas week. That takes you to the website where you have the original plans. The original plans call for a bridge that is 3.3 feet higher than the US-1 bridge, okay. A bridge again, 70 years old, that was built too low even for its time. That's what led to all the public outcry. There was a petition, the waterfront board had meetings. Many of us reached out to you all, many of us reached out to the Underline. What was the Underline's response? – Well, I sent you all an email from Ms. Hegedus, who has been great with communication. Anytime I call her, she answers, she's been wonderful. And she sent me an email that says, the Underline forwarded me your email and I would like to provide some answers. She goes on to say, during the last two weeks we have determined that we can elevate the bridge by an additional point 73 feet, point 73, which is just over a half foot. Once we add the additional point 73, the lowest member of the new bridge will be four feet higher than the US-1 bridge. Okay. Not quite high enough, but progress, you know, progress. Then we attended a City Commission meeting in February. We were told they are working on getting the bridge higher, working on some calculations, working on progress. We are going to have a webinar and talk about where things are going to end. A proposed PowerPoint was circulated, dated February 5th, and on page 11, it again mentioned four feet high, and I said, oh, okay, that's what they were talking about in January. Anyway, we would go to the webinar. What happens at the webinar? – the bridge height gets reduced by like a half foot. We attended the webinar and were told it's now going to be 3.7 feet high. That's only four inches higher than the original plan, so all this public outcry, all this analysis and discussion and webinars and we go up four inches. Come on. And to make matters worse, at the webinar there was discussion that the 3.7

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feet higher than US-1, the clearance at mean low tide or mean high tide will be 11 feet. How is that possible? That's based upon a false assumption that the clearance is 7.5 feet at mean high tide. It is not close to that. I sent you all a photograph of the measuring stick that's been at US-1 forever. It shows the high watermark at just under 5 ½ feet. So, the representation that the bridge will have 11-foot clearance is wrong. That's further evidence of a rushed process. Again, we are talking about a permanent structure. Keep in mind that construction is not a perfect art, so if you say 3.7 feet, what's it really going to be? I'm in the middle of a construction project right now and I know that firsthand. So, we need to make sure that this bridge is as high as it possibly can be. I want to echo the comments, but I want to say this, I think at 5 feet, that's only a foot and-a-half, its less than a foot and-a-half, that's where you get the 11-foot clearance, because I think it's more like 5.5, maybe 6, at a King Tide its less than 5, but we are talking about the mean high tide. Okay. I believe that we all believe that's far away from satisfying most folks here and if it can't go up any higher than the four inches that it's been increased, then let's take a look at some other designs. This is too important to mess up. It's a permanent structure. Let's get this right. Thank you all.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Once again, we are here to rush something. Forget about what the people involved want, forget about how it's going to affect them. We do have a Waterway Advisory Board, but I guess we do not need to listen to them, because who cares what they think. Well, the bottom line is, this Commission should be looking after our residents, our property owners, not necessarily what Miami-Dade County wants. Miami-Dade County, as you know, looks after Miami-Dade County. There have been issues where they, you know we want something and they don't want it, we need to be clear that there's no rush. I agree with the previous people that said, "You know what's the rush. Let's do it right, so ten years from now, fifteen years from now we do not have to say, oops, we should have done it better.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Alfredo Izasuirre.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Mr. Izasuirre: Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, thank you for your time. I'm going to address you very briefly, well under the three minutes that I'm given, so no worries. I addressed you all before last time, I said my thoughts. I think everybody else here, all the residents, have also said their thoughts. I think you've heard scientific evidence, engineering evidence and I'm not here to say any of that or discuss any of that, I don't have any of that. It's time for you all to make a decision now. You've heard all the arguments, you've heard the residents asking, you've heard the

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Underline say, its higher than the US-1 bridge, that's all they come with. It's your time now to decide if you are going to put the Underline's feet to the fire and protect the residents of Coral Gables, everyone north of the waterway, as well as south of the waterway. As Mr. Portuondo said, he has 600 signatures, that's also individuals south of the US-1 bridge. Why? – because they are concerned and don't want this to happen on their side of the waterway. I ask you don't rush to judgement and protect the citizens and residents of Coral Gables. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Levi Meyer.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Mr. Meyer: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. I'll try to keep mine shorter than at least the longest person that spoke by at least 3.3 seconds. So, my name is Levi Meyer, and I am a resident of the City of Coral Gables. I live at 600 Jeronimo Drive, on the Coral Gables Waterway and I sit on the Coral Gables Waterway Advisory Board. A quick recap. The Underline or the Coast Guard initially sent out a notice stating that they'll be a new bridge crossing the waterway. It's the first time in any notice there was a mention of the waterway and that was during December of this past year. Very quickly, they agreed that they made a misstatement and that it would be 3.3 feet higher. We then requested some more information, the county then said they can make it 3.9 feet higher. They then came to the Commission meeting; they sat in Ms. Anderson's office as well and said it would be four feet higher. They then came to this same room one month ago today, with a lot of unclarity and said, we are working on the bridge, we are going to make it higher, we have some changes, we'll present those in a town hall meeting. In the town hall meeting, somehow, they went from 4 feet to 3.7 feet, but at least did the justice of getting rid of the fishing pier. The data that they quoted, as you've heard, goes back 19, almost 20 years, when we are seeing a rapid elevation in sea level rise. We should be looking back maybe 19 months, not 19 years to irrelevant data. They are quoting 11.1 feet using this data, which anybody with a paddleboard and if you don't have one, you are welcome to come to my house and I'll take you out on a paddleboard during high tide, we'll know that it's not 7 ½ foot clearance at US-1. US-1 was built too low. If you look at the flood zone map, it sits in the flood zone. If anybody would like to see photos of what happens in storm surge in the City of Coral Gables on the waterway during a major hurricane, you will know that US-1 will indefinitely be under water and while it may not happen in the next five years, US-1 is going to end up being raised. I like the Vice Mayor's suggestion that we should tie this Underline bridge to any future renovations of the US-1 bridge, but the fact of the matter is, you guys asked us one month ago to come back, you asked for the county to meet with the Waterway Advisory Board, we have a Waterway Advisory Board for a reason. This board unanimously said, we feel like we're hitting a roadblock with the county in which they are saying this is the best that they can do, but I am unaware of any independent study

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that the city has done with reference to the clearance and waterway navigability to verify their information to look at alternative bridge designs, as have been proposed by Mr. Portuondo or Mr. Galan, not that I know that those are correct, but I just don't know that we've done the proper research and it does appear to me that we are rushing a decision because of a budgetary restraint of the Underline and that is not really the concern of the citizens of this city nor does it mirror the vision of Merrick when they were selling the City of Coral Gables with the slogan, Miami's Riviera 40 feet of water frontage, sorry, 40 miles of water frontage. So, again, I come to you and say that as a member of the board, as a resident more specifically that this is not just a bunch of rich boaters, this affects everybody, this affects our children. These rich boaters are the guardians of the waterway, the guardians of Merrick's vision for the City of Coral Gables and that you need to listen to the advisory board that you the city has appointed. I'm unconvinced that they've explored all options, and I think it should behoove the city not to run their own independent studies, to have engineers – the Underline and the county show up with engineers and lawyers, I haven't seen any of that from the city. So, I'm requesting from the city that they conduct their own independent study that they really ensure that the county and the Underline are providing the best bridge that they can to our residents and to our city, and then I look forward to standing here at this same podium and encouraging you to approve a bridge, because we all want the Underline to happen. I'm looking forward to taking my children on the Underline, but let's make sure it's done right, because it's going to be here for 100 years. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I think we have one more.

City Clerk Urquia: Maxine Latremoille.

Ms. Latremoille: Thank you so much for having me here. I too, am a resident of the Coral Gables Waterway, I'm at 5535 Orduna Drive, actually neighbors with Lucy Lopez. I have three small kids, and they use the waterway daily, as do a lot of the neighborhood kids that are in our area. I want to emphasize, and I will be brief as well, I want to emphasize that this is a navigable waterway. So, ingress and egress from up and down the waterway is essential and as someone who's now lived there almost 12 years, it is clear to see that the water levels that I experienced at high tide when I moved there are very different than the water levels that we are seeing now. So, the two things that I request are, I'm looking at are, number one, I don't think the residents of the waterway were given adequate notice and input into this process; and number two, I'd like to see more research not only taking account historical water levels, but taking into account potential future water levels given the trends that we've been seeing over the past, we can say 19 months, we can say the last five years, but projecting forward. That's it.

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City Clerk Urquia: That's it, sir.

Mayor Lago: I'd like to ask the director to please join us please.

Mr. Cleckley: Good afternoon, Eulois Cleckley, CEO of Friends of The Underline, former Director and CEO of the Department of Transportation and Public Works for Miami-Dade County. Thank you, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners. I'm here representing the Underline and as many of the speakers have mentioned, the Underline is a fantastic project. We all understand the importance from a safety perspective that the Underline brings to pedestrians as well as cyclists. We all know the issues with respect to pedestrians and bicyclists dying on our roadways where Miami-Dade County is one of the highest in terms of the number of fatal crashes due to people losing their lives or getting seriously injured that are pedestrians or cyclists and the Underline's core tenant is safety first, and so, everything that's been designed to date has been a primary focus on ensuring that all users of all ages and all abilities can use the Underline in an effective manner. The way that the county has designed this bridge is not only the maximum height possible, but it also meets all of the federal, state, and local design criteria and requirements and we feel fully confident that if this were to get solved, and consistent with the process of where we are now that it will meet the intent of the Underline providing specific and reliable safety. Just a couple of facts here. So, the true issue with low clearance bridges has nothing to do with this Underline pedestrian or bicycle bridge. It has to do with the mitigating factor of the low clearance for US-1. The expectation I'm thinking that US-1 is going to be raised anytime soon is a falsehood, so we should not allow that to be the driving factor as we move forward. The Underline bridge will be designed and will be higher than Ponce de Leon as well as US-1; 3.7 feet greater clearance than US-1 and about 2.8 feet greater clearance than Ponce de Leon. The team has truly taken into consideration the design specifications around having safe, navigable sheared bike and pedestrian access across the waterway and it's been designed to that specification. More importantly, if we are talking about raising this specific bridge, there is a significant concern with respect to ADA. This bridge has been designed with a five percent slope with maximum as it relates to ADA requirements, and if this were to be actually designed to the 14 feet level that has been contemplated or mentioned before, this slope that we're talking about is between 7 to 8 percent, which is extremely dangerous, not only for pedestrians, not only for individuals that are wheelchair bound, but also for cyclists as well, and it's something that is infeasible to design something at that level. So, with all that consideration and facts, we believe, and we appreciate the county's efforts to really take into consideration and make design changes. The original design, of course included a water balcony, not a fishing pier, a water balcony which was intended to allow people to actually have a view of the waterway. As a result of all the feedback that the design ended up changing and that amenity has gone away and again, the bridge has been designed to the maximum height possible to provide safe bicycle access. So today, what is being asked of you is actually to spend additional money to go out and do an independent survey, to come back with the same information that the design

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already has, that will go into designing a piece of infrastructure at the highest height possible. So quite frankly, its additional resources that are being asked of you that is not necessary and again, we have some of the best engineers that the county has procured to be able to move forward in an effect manner to deliver this bridge in concert with the community's needs and the desire of the Underline to make sure it will be a safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. So, I'll stop there. But if there are any specific questions, I'm here to answer those, but thank you for the time. I appreciate it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, my friend. I do have a few questions for you. Thank you, as always. First and foremost, thank you for always meeting with me at the job site, if it's regarding the Underline, if it's regarding this bridge, I really appreciate that. You never said no, and we've done multiple trips. You've always been present along with the entire team. I know this is the second time, but again, I appreciate the fact that when we call on your guys, you always show up with all due respect. Commissioner Regalado and her team, your office, it's amazing. It's to be commended for real. While we disagree on a few things, obviously on the bridge height, being the main issue, I don't live on the water, not saying I don't wish I lived on the water, I don't have a boat on the water. When I go on the water, I usually borrow my buddy's boat which is the best thing, if you ever want to go on a boat to borrow somebody else's, that's the joke. Let them pay for the gas and I'll bring the sandwiches, but my point is that I want to move this forward, because I want to move the Underline. I started working on the Underline with Meg almost ten years ago and I've seen the progress that other municipalities have had up and down US-1, Miami, and now you have obviously South Miami is moving forward by Dadeland. This is going to be a gamechanger. I need to know that as we move forward that we are doing the best we can. The last thing I want to find out is later, we couldn't put the bridge a foot higher. How do I, not being a bridge engineer, not being my bread and butter, how do I not go in the route that this gentleman just said right now and say, let's hire an outside consultant, we'll wait two months and then we'll come back, and we'll do it. That's not what I want to do, but I have faith that you are telling me the truth. I have to trust what the county is telling me and what Commissioner Regalado is telling me, but I need to understand how do we build the confidence in the people who are here that when we leave this room, they say listen, we did the best that we could, we raised it by X amount of feet or inches and we got to something that again, doesn't make everybody happy, but at least build some sort of consensus so we can move forward. Give me some guidance.

Mr. Cleckley: Sure. So, hopefully people see the willingness, not only that the Underline has, but also the county and the county staff have, to include Commissioner Regalado to ensure that we're sharing information. We definitely understand this is a part of the process with the Coast Guard that the distribution of the notice was, I would say, not the best time and it was inaccurate, and they've attested to that. Again, the process will take shape moving forward in the following ways: one, there will be an additional comment period as the application for the bridge permit will be

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resubmitted to the Coast Guard, so there's another opportunity to provide public comment and essentially review. Secondly, I would say that all of the information that the county has collected has come from DERM, which again, it was mentioned earlier that we are taking 19-year-old data as a starting point, that's not the case. It's an average of measurements over a 19-year period of time... We have full confidence in that, and I would say that DERM is probably one of the most renowned county agencies around making sure we are managing storm water and all of our secondary canals and the like. I think the last piece is that we have committed to ensure as we move forward with finalizing the design as well as construction that we will consistently provide updates and construction updates to the Waterway Board and to the community to make sure that we're living up to the design requirements that we stated in the public meetings.

Mayor Lago: I'm sorry, I didn't want to interrupt you.

Mr. Cleckley: So, I think those three aspects hopefully you can get confidence is that we definitely understand the nature of the process where the notice was a little ambiguous. However, what we're saying is that we are here, we have always been considered partners with the City of Coral Gables and all the municipalities along the corridor, and we'll continue to share information as we move forward with finalizing design and implementing the bridge.

Mayor Lago: So, what you're telling me, telling us, is that this is the highest it could be.

Mr. Cleckley: This is the highest it can be that makes it ADA compatible, which is a key component of this. If we raise this bridge, you are now all of a sudden creating an unsafe and impassible crossing for people that are wheelchair bound or ADA population. You are also creating a significant safety issue with respect to bicyclists once you go beyond that 5 percent slope and that goes directly against the whole mission and vision of the Underline which is to actually create infrastructure that's safe for bicycles and pedestrians. So yes, we have designed this to the maximum height possible.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There is no answer that's going to solve all the problems here today. If there was more space between the waterway in Riviera Drive, we would have more options to hire, make the slope longer, and that's why I brought in the FDOT bridge as something that needs to be addressed as far as bringing the comments to them that we need better accessibility for, not only for boaters, but for individuals with disabilities, because it's not just individuals in wheelchairs, it's also individuals that use walkers and have difficulty walking every single day and the steeper you make that slope. I know I have experienced that with my husband and with my sister and with other folks, that it's difficult in a parking garage and has a slope surface to be able to get to the elevator, so you try to let them off on the flat surface so that they don't have to deal with steep

grades. So there is no easy answer here, but there is the balance between two different situations where you are getting this bridge as high as possible and we are still not solving the problem with the FDOT bridge, because it's still going to serve as an impediment even if we make this 14 feet tall, the FDOT bridge is still going to be the major impediment underneath, getting underneath this waterway, and yes, it is low. I've been down there on a kayak, and you can practically reach up and touch the bridge. Why was it built that low? – I can only imagine it was a matter of dollars and sense and not thinking about the navigability of the water in the future. That's what I think it was about. A lot of things were built that way 40, 50, 60 years ago. It was only after the ADA was enacted in the early 1990s, 1991, 1992, as part of the Civil Rights Act that things and vision started to change in the country one area at a time. I'm happy you're making this bridge to make this area more accessible. I wish I could make it higher. I don't think I can. I don't think we can without creating impediments, not only for folks in wheelchairs, but a dangerous situation for folks that are walking, people that are on bicycles, anybody on anything with a wheel. So, thank you for taking the time. So, for the Waterway Advisory Board don't forget, you have to look at the kayak launch too and I'm reminding you all, the county in particular, this is a conversation that's been going on for like three years plus.

Mayor Lago: And don't forget the parking that comes along with that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The parking because the last conversation I had with you all, the city is going to provide some parking along Ponce. We need to follow up on all this. We have to figure out where we can put the parking, are they going to allow us to put it as close as possible for folks to be able to get, not only to the Underline, but to a kayak launch, hopefully at some point that's made available for the public use of the waterway, because after all that's what we're trying to do is make access to the waterway in a public area.

Mayor Lago: So, Mr. Director, I have a question for you in regard to the county. So, the county is moving forward, what is the county's position? – they're done.

Mr. Cleckley: [Inaudible – mic disconnected]

Vice Mayor Anderson: Maybe the electrical connection gave up on you.

Mayor Lago: I want to get this on the record, because at the end of the day there's this misconception that the city has power to effectuate change here and I want to get it on the record that this train left the station, it's moving forward. Thank you. Best team in the business. Look at that, it's like changing tires at the Indi 500.

Mr. Cleckley: Nascar here.

Mayor Lago: Nascar – well said.

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Mr. Cleckley: So actually, I'm going to call up Irene, do you want to come up and address that. I have the response to that.

Mayor Lago: Is the response that the train has left the station.

Mr. Cleckley: I will let the project manager from the county answer to that. The question is where we are in the process.

Mayor Lago: The county is moving forward.

Ms. Hegedus: The county is moving forward. There has been a tremendous amount of work since all of this started. You asked the question, is this the best that we can do. Hastily, the answer was yes. After the meeting I said, I want you to confirm that this is the best that we can possibly do. With respect to the Waterway Advisory Board, they had concerns. We went back again to the drawing table, and we said we needed to figure it out how to raise this. If you remember, the bridge used to have side-by-side bicycles and pedestrian path, but for us to be able to raise the bridge we needed to get it away from the Metrorail safety zone, that means that the bridge had to be comprised. That's when they had requested the elimination of the water balcony which we did – check, complied. The second one was the creation of a shared-use path. Our leading agency is not the Federal Highway Administration, it's the Federal Transit Administration and it's yes, ideally, as the Underline standards and plans are, you have separated bicycle and pedestrian path. However, in the event that you don't have enough space, or you have root impediments, and the list goes on, you are able to create shared-use path, and these are perfectly safe, demonstrated and accepted standard practices by the MUDCD and there's all kinds of language on this. The minimum width of a shared-use path is ten feet, we are providing 14 feet, so we are even going over and beyond those standards. The bridge height – so this is the maximum height we can bring it. At the beginning there were some discrepancies on the heights that we were providing and when we went back into the numbers that we had, we realized that we were using NGVD, which is the old data provided by FDOT under documents and we changed those numbers to the NAVD ADA which is the normal standard for vertical height. Having said that, that is the reason why the revision and the height have come. So, as it is today, we are providing a maximum slope of five feet, five percent and we have raised the end result is a bridge that is 11 feet 1 inch above mean high-water line and 13.3 ¼ feet above low mean high-water line. Now, they asked us, why don't you use high water line and low water line. That is not the standard practice for any surveying and elevation data and it's not all data. It's just the average, like Eulois have said, is the average of the high or low tide measure a luna cycle over a period of 18.6 years. So, as the tides and...rises, those averages changes, and then the mean will change, correct. So, yes, long answer to your question, is this the best we can do? – yes. Where are we in the process? – We resubmitted to the US Coast Guard, in fact, we looked at what it will cost to bring it to an arbitrary 14 feet above mean high-water line knowing that your controlling structures will not change, either the City of Coral Gables

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doesn't have any plans to replace Ponce de Leon and FDOT doesn't have any plans to replace DOT. So, for the sake of the argument we looked at 14 feet above the mean high-water line. That will create a 7.28 slope. In fact, when we asked our engineers whether they would sign and seal those drawings, the answer was absolutely not. We will not take on the liability of the safety issues that have a slope of that magnitude for a bicyclist approaching Riviera Drive and not being able to stop. Not to mention that we have a pedestrian crossing at US-1. So, it's not at Ponce, it is at US-1. So, we have submitted the plans last Friday to the US Coast Guard. They will be announcing it or noticing in the newspaper. We already have resolved and provided all the information from the FTA, the...the fisheries information, so that's where are.

Mayor Lago: So, when do you think we'll expect to start construction?

Ms. Hegedus: Well, we were supposed to start construction on June 28th of this year. You have delayed the process now for about two months.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question. For the longest time, I mean every meeting we've had and even in agenda review, one of my focuses is the ADA requirement. Like everything else in this country, federal guidelines limit or tell you what you can't do. No one's given me an answer, specific numbers, show me the rule, how it applies, how the ADA perhaps caps how high the bridge can go.

Ms. Hegedus: So, the ADA doesn't cap how high the bridge can go. The five percent rule, you can Google it and go to ADA.

Commissioner Menendez: No, no, that's why you're here.

Ms. Hegedus: The five percent is the highest distance that you can have before having any landings and railings. We have absolutely no condition anywhere where we recommend having a landing, especially when you have cyclists, so can you imagine just over the bridge and the land, it's just simply unsafe. You will require the longest distance. You can increase past five percent, but you will require those landings and those railings, and that is not something that we are willing to do. Not only is it not safe, but it's not the standard for the project.

Commissioner Menendez: So definitely the ADA has an impact on the way it's designed.

Ms. Hegedus: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. The other thing is with regards to – I think the low bridge, depending on when they were built, the waterways back in the Merrick days were for gondolas to go from the Biltmore to Tahiti Beach. The waterways back in the day were built not for...

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Ms. Hegedus: Not for boats but for gondolas.

Commissioner Menendez: It was basically for George Merrick to sell land. They go from the Biltmore and go to Tahiti Beach as part of the sales pitch. The other part that has me a little worried or a little concerned because a lot of residents mentioned it is the public notice. Now, I understand that it was the Coast Guard, I assume was responsible for sending out the notice. Do we know which entity was responsible. I know it's not the city.

Ms. Hegedus: The Coast Guard.

Commissioner Menendez: The Coast Guard and based on what I'm hearing it didn't go exactly the way it should.

Ms. Hegedus: Apparently, the Coast Guard received the drawings and in spite of the process per meeting, they put it in the newspaper saying that here are the drawings, here's the link, you have 30 days for public and apparently the notice that they placed was incorrect.

Commissioner Menendez: So, to me, if the notice was flawed it invalidates the notice, to me. So...

Ms. Hegedus: Well, now a new notice is going to be published because we had to resubmit the plans.

Commissioner Menendez: But look how far down the road we've come since the initial notice. Again, we start the first step, which is flawed and then we have a room full of residents who are concerned and frustrated because they came late to the party. So, unfortunately that first step has led to a lot of the frustration we have here.

Ms. Hegedus: That's correct, but I would like to remind you that we had eight public meetings, it has been placed in the newspaper, three different newspapers, a month in advance of the public meetings. It has been on every website. Representatives from the city had shown up to all of those eight public meetings, but then the residents and the Waterway Advisory Board said that they never received anything. So, I cannot attest to that, other than what we sent, I don't know, 7,420 mails because we also mailed the letters.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. I don't have any comments or questions right now.

Commissioner Fernandez: If I may. So, I don't appreciate the tone, Ms. Hegedus, if you are slowing down the process and Google it. Those are not appropriate responses here. I think we are all trying to find a solution, but we are all upset at the fact that the one most important factor here should have been the residents near the waterway, and they were completely ignored in this process. I myself haven't gotten clear answers, like Commissioner Menendez was saying. I still don't know what the maximum height could have been, potentially it could be if we have a

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different entrance to the bridge, if we angle the ramp to the bridge. There are other potential things that as far as I know have not been considered. I haven't heard from your team to this point, what options have been considered that could alleviate the concerns that our residents have, and like these residents, our family has property near the water, not in Coral Gables, but I'll tell you over the last five years we have definitely seen the impacts of the rising tide in our property where five years ago we never saw water on our property and every time that we have a King Tide, we have flooding on our property today. So, the numbers that you are giving us, this 11.1, 13.34 feet at mean low tide, mean high tide. Is that at today's levels. What have those numbers showing you for ten years down the road?

Mr. Cleckley: So, Commissioner Menendez, so this is Eulois from the Underline. So just to answer one of your questions with respect to how the county looked at alternative design and what they did. This is something that was brought up in a previous Waterway Advisory Board meeting and one of the suggestions was to push all of the bicycle and pedestrian traffic on the Ponce de Leon. One of the speakers had mentioned the width, Ponce de Leon approximately 7 feet in width and which is much narrower and creates another safety issue when you have co-mingling of bicyclists and pedestrians and individuals with ADA, excuse me. Secondly, also there was an idea of splitting the traffic between pedestrians as well as cyclists and creating an increased height of the bridge and only dedicating it towards cyclists, while the pedestrians move to another path and that was considered as well. And again, getting it to a number that's been articulated before, a desired number of 14 feet width of clearance, that's where Ms. Hegedus made mention of the fact of the safety issues around the slope being 7.2 percent, and again, the slope really is relative to the approach to the bridge. So, that's an unsafe slope for cyclists as well and again, creating unsafe conditions for users. So that has been a part of what was analyzed, as a part of this design process and that's why the team has come back and settled in on this shared use path as being the best approach and again design it to the height at its maximum height that's still ADA compliant with 5 percent slopes to the approaches. All this information was presented and detailed at the virtual session that Commissioner Regalado hosted, and we are happy to share, I'm sure the county team is happy to share those details as well to ensure that all the specific measurements are clearly understood.

Mayor Lago: So, one of the conversations...

Commissioner Fernandez: I've told Mr. Escarra about that webinar. I wasn't even informed till the day before. I got emails from residents and from members of the Waterway Advisory Board who had not received notice until 48 hours before. This is something we had been talking about for several weeks, there should have been more notice, and I think this is where the problems lie. If we are not working with the community, if we are just doing things last minute and just tossing it out there to tick the box, we are not doing our jobs, we just are not; and yes, the Underline has

been going on for years. Everybody knew there was an Underline project going, but you can't blame the people who live on the waterway for not being aware that these community meetings were going to have a direct impact on their properties, because there were changes that were coming to the waterway behind their homes. These notices were just about the Underline is going to have community meetings and as I told Mr. Eulois before, I wasn't aware what the final plan was until he sent it to me after that last Commission meeting. Those were never shared. The website doesn't really show what the actual plans are for the Underline. The information is not available. This lack of transparency is what causes these issues in our community.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Unidentified Speaker: I would also like to express my displeasure with characterizations that we are just simply trying to check boxes. We are making an effort as possible, we are expending funds, we are spending people's time. We have looked at Ponce, we have looked at several different suggestions and we came up with the best that could be done given the constraints of the project.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yet to this point, today I'm finding out that we are not at the four feet. Last time I spoke with somebody, I was told that it was four feet, so we had gone up, now its gone back down. As a member of the Coral Gables Commission, I'm not informed what can residents expect.

Mayor Lago: So, with that being said, moving forward. It seems like the project is pretty much set in stone, as a result we've hit the limits, as per the design, ADA requirements, the engineers that have reviewed this on multiple occasions have said that they don't feel comfortable signing off on these plans if you increase the slope. The county is moving forward. We are here advocating for as much height as possible. No number has been given, whether it's 15 feet, 17 feet, again, no number, actual number has been codified and said this is what we're looking for. The city as-a-whole would like to see it as tall as possible, the spread, the amount. So, at the end of the day, it's pretty much out of our hands. Like I said before, the train has left the station. Can you tell me so we can put this on record? I want to make sure for the last two months that we've been working on this together, the city and the county and the residents, more importantly, how much of the change has been that we have increased the heights by. I want to make sure.

Mr. Cleckley: So, Irene, the question is, how much is the increase from the different iterations. I think she explained it before, the difference in what was calculated in terms of the measurements.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mr. Cleckley: That came up with the discrepancy, so I'll let her tell you in detail.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. And the reason why I'm doing that is because you've gone back and forth so much with so many different numbers. I want to give that final number, I think it's important.

Ms. Hegedus: Sadly, when we realized that we were using the wrong datum on measuring, we had already started when you put those at the same level, we were just four inches above the lowest member, US-1, now we're at 3.7. Now that all of the measurements have been recalculated at the same height.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Does the Commission have anything else they'd like to add?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you for the presentation.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much, obviously to the county, to Commissioner Regalado's office, thank you to the residents for being here. I appreciate you.

Unidentified Speaker: [Rebuttal – off mic]

Mayor Lago: I just think that – I don't have a problem you coming to speak up, but the point is that we're pretty limitless in regard to what we can do here.

Unidentified Speaker: Mayor, I understand that.

Mayor Lago: And I would love, look, I would love nothing more, love nothing more than at this moment to have the necessary funds to be able to do all the bridges, address them, raise them up, raise US-1, and give you what you want, because I think it's appropriate.

Unidentified Speaker: Mayor, I understand. Then why have we had all of these Commission meetings? Why have they come here and talked about it and talked about it. I just want to make some factual statements on the record.

Mayor Lago: Let me just answer that and then I'll give you the time that you'd like. Okay. We have a very long meeting, but we'll take the time, we'll take the time. You know why I think they did it, and I don't want to speak for them, at the end of the day its out of courtesy; courtesy to the city, courtesy to the residents, and say we are going to a two-month break and we are going to let this process go on, do it as transparent as we possibly can, move forward, have conversations with the residents and try to build some trust on this project, because I think the last thing the Underline wants after building trust for ten years, because its been a very, very complicated project, \$100 million dollar project, I think what they are looking for is to not tarnish the incredible reputation they have if they ram something through. So that's my opinion, that's my opinion.

Speaker: The only thing I want to correct, and this is what I'm concerned about is, there's been so much misinformation that I'm concerned the construction is going to go awry with the rushed process. If I could just correct one thing.

Mayor Lago: Let me touch on that point, because you said there is so much information. At the end, I said, let's get the numbers stated adequately here so there isn't that we made a mistake and here's the real numbers.

Speaker: Mayor, the plans online, last page of the plans, left side, it shows a difference between the two structures. The difference is 3.3 feet, that's on the current plans. We've had all of these discussions, and they initially said, as Commissioner Fernandez noted, we can now go to four with a two percent slope. Then they dropped it down after the webinar, during the webinar to a 5 percent slope, which is more of a slope, but now the height is 3.7. So just to correct the record from the plans I read online that are still there, last page, left side, it says 3.3 feet, they've gone up four inches, that's fact number one. So, they've increased it with all this discussion by four inches. Fact number two is the 11.1 feet is based upon a mean high tide of 7.5 feet and anybody who's been at that bridge knows that is not true. So, what concerns me is that with all this misinformation that I'm hearing from my own knowledge, how are they going to get this right.

Mayor Lago: Again, again, that's the reason why I'm mentioning that I want to put everything on the record when we close this out to see what was the actual heights. I think it's important. We can go back and forth all day on this issue. We've had multiple meetings. It's out of our hands. There is only so much that we can do. Here, I'll show you. Mr. Director, let's make the bridge 20 feet, no, no, I'm just saying, let's make it 18 feet, no let's make it 17, let's make it 16, can you do it for me? Can you do it for me, yes or no, without affecting US-1, without affecting all the issues that we're having.

Mr. Cleckley: No. No, you can't.

Mayor Lago: Without affecting ADA, without affecting these issues. Tell me. I would love to give you what you want.

Mr. Cleckley: We can't because another limiting factor....

Mayor Lago: Is obviously the Metrorail.

Mr. Cleckley: The section zone with Metrorail. So, with all these constraints, again, the county has done a Yeoman's job trying to take all of the comments for what has been articulated on the Waterway Board and everything else. So, I think, as I stated before, to ensure that the community is confident that what is being built is going to be accurate with respect to the design, we will work with the county and ensure that we are updating and doing construction updates. As design gets

finalized and as we move forward with installing the bridge. That's the commitment collectively and not speaking out of turn here, but I think the county is in agreement with that and for the Underline we'll make sure that we'll facilitate that sharing of information as well.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. We can't do this like this, we can't.

Mr. Portuondo: If I may Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We can't do this like this.

Mr. Portuondo: One minute I ask. I have 616 petitions of supporters that have signed this petition. One minute to rebuttal, you had the Underline rebuttal at least five times. Please, one minute Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We can't do this like this.

Commissioner Fernandez: I move to have Mr. Portuondo to speak.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Mr. Portuondo: Thank you. So, as all this back-and-forth debate has been happening, I imagine in my head where the Mayor was and Commissioners were 40, 50 years ago when the US-1 bridge was being built and I can imagine sort of the same rushed process, no real acknowledgement of the facts or errors in numbers that they've now acknowledged. I didn't know this until today. It's just a rushed process and to think that the county's best engineers cannot come up with a bridge design that they can curve the bridge. In the last meeting, they talked about safety of bikers, they put bollards already in the front of the bridge to slow down the bicycles so they don't take great speed getting to US-1, so there are things that they can do. They've decided not to consider them, maybe it's a financial impact, maybe it's a timeline impact that they have in terms of funds, and I understand that. To say that there aren't alternative bridge designs that engineers can assign and that's just baloney. That's what I wanted to say, and please don't rush the decision. This decision impacts us for the next 50, 60, 80 years.

Mayor Lago: If I may, just one second. I'm going to do it much easier for you. You ready? I make the motion to accept the resolution. Next. Anybody going to second it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second it.

Mayor Lago: Let's take a vote.

City Attorney Suarez: So, Mayor, the Vice Mayor's the Chair.

Mayor Lago: Let's take a vote. I don't want to play politics.

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Mr. Meyer: The county is going to do what the county is going to do clearly. We're here to see what the city says as to whether or not they want to do an independent study and see if they can make the bridge higher.

Mayor Lago: Levi, I'm all for it, man, let's go.

Commissioner Fernandez: And if I may ask a question.

Mayor Lago: I don't want to play politics in this game anymore. I'm all for it.

Commissioner Fernandez: Mr. Mayor, you are saying that this is politics is – listen to the residents, they are trying to talk to us. They have very valid concerns.

Mayor Lago: I am with the residents.

Commissioner Fernandez: There is no politics here. The only one doing politics was mocking the residents saying, let's do it 20 feet, 17 feet, and that was you, which is completely inappropriate.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: My question is, is Director Diaz in the room, Hermes?

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Can I have Hermes for a second please.

Public Works Director Diaz: Good afternoon, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director.

Commissioner Fernandez: Mr. Director, do we have the ability in-house to study this and verify the county's numbers or come up with our own numbers?

Public Works Director Diaz: Probably not inhouse. We'll probably have to hire a consultant.

Commissioner Fernandez: What would the cost be and timeline?

Public Works Director Diaz: That would be difficult to tell. If we are looking at verifying survey elevation and some information on the plans, I would say at least 45 days. I'm just trying to think which consultant in the pool we could use. This is not the type of work that we normally do on a regular basis, so we have to check through. Some of the consultants are pretty large companies, so I'm sure they'll have somebody on board that could look at something like this, but it would be hard to tell with confidence at this moment.

Commissioner Fernandez: Because I think it's not an unreasonable request that we're getting. This is about verifying and I think our residents and our Waterway Advisory Board, their concern is

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Agenda Item 2-1 – Resolution of the Waterway Advisory Board recommending the City Commission strongly advocates for a higher clearance from Miami-Dade's Underline Project

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that every measure has not been taken to ensure that we're going as high as possible, and I think as a municipality, it is our duty to ensure that we are maximizing on that, because this will have an impact on us. Twenty years down the road with sea level rise, something has to take place. Coral Gables is going to have to be advocating to raise that bridge. It's not going to be the county doing it. We're going to have to be pushing because it's going to be affecting our residents who live on the waterway.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, we have a motion, and we have a second, can we have a vote.

City Attorney Suarez: So just so we're clear. It's a motion accepting the resolution of the Waterway Advisory Board recommending the City Commission strongly advocate for higher clearance from Miami-Dade's Underline Project's updated bridge clearance of 11.1 feet to maintain safe and accessible waterway navigation; and to direct staff to conduct an independent survey to verify clearances, both under the proposed bridge and under US-1 before any final approvals are granted.

Commissioner Menendez: And if I may, the former President once said, trust but verify, we're going to verify.

City Clerk Urquia: I have the Mayor making the motion, I'm sorry, who seconded.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I did.

Commissioner Fernandez: Commissioner Menendez did.

Mayor Lago: It was the Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I respectfully disagree. You're not here.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'm listening. Mr. Clerk, if you could please verify it when you listen to the tape.

Commissioner Menendez: I seconded it.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

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Mayor Lago: Nancy Sanabria, if you'd please join us, you wanted to speak a few words and you put it in at the last minute, I want to make sure you were heard. Thank you for being here with us.

Ms. Sanabria: Thank you, Mayor, thank you Commissioners, thank you Vice Mayor, thank you to all the residents that came out. My name is – and also to Miami-Dade County and to the Underline Project. I just wanted to say that everybody has been working really fast to find a resolution and I think if we had gone back and the notices were sent, I didn't state my address, 944 San Pedro Avenue. If the notices had been sent in a proper manner, it would have alleviated a lot of this, and we would have had more time. So, I just wanted to know that for the record, of the notices that were sent there were over 7,000, but of those 573 were sent to Coral Gables addresses, so there weren't really that many Coral Gables residents that received the notices and I think as we've all heard today, most of the residents or all of the residents on the Waterway did not receive. So just going forward, if there is a way that when the county or anyone else is proposing a project, we have to find a way to make sure the residents do receive notice in a timely manner, so we're not in a rush to do this, and this has also been pointed out by the board and other members that the Waterway Advisory Board received notice at the last minute, so I know its been a rush. So just going forward, if we could look at notices and make sure they're sent to all the residents and also the bridge was not mentioned on the notices. So that's all I wanted to state. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Commissioner Castro: Mayor, can we please take F-4, the people are here. Thank you.