

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Items F-6 and F-7 are related**  
**October 26, 2021**  
**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 Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Attorney, Miriam Ramos**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Items F-6 and F-7 are related [11:05 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, "Architecture," Section 5-200, "Mediterranean Standards;" to limit the Mediterranean Bonus program to Coral Gables Mediterranean Architectural Style and expand the Board of Architects review process to include an optional conceptual review; providing for severability clause, repealer provision, codification, and providing for an effective date.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)

(Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

A Resolution of the City Commission amending Ordinance 2015-17, as amended,

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City Commission Meeting

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Agenda Items F-6 and F-7 are related - Ordinance of the City Commission providing for text amendments to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, "Architecture," Section 5-200, "Mediterranean Standards;" to limit the Mediterranean Bonus program to Coral Gables Mediterranean Architectural Style and expand the Board of Architects review process to include an optional conceptual review; and a resolution amending Ordinance 2015-17 to add a Board of Architects fee for Conceptual Review.

to add a Board of Architects fees for Conceptual Review; providing for severability and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: F-6.

City Attorney Ramos: F-6 is an ordinance of the City Commission providing for a text amendment to the City of Coral Gables Official Zoning Code, Article 5, "Architecture," Section 5-200, "Mediterranean Standards;" to limit the Mediterranean Bonus program to Coral Gables Mediterranean Architectural Style and expand the Board of Architects review process to include optional conceptual review; providing for severability clause, repealer provision, codification, and providing for an effective date. This is a public hearing item. I will turn it over to Mr. Trias, but I do want to make sure that the public is aware that there was a different version of the ordinance uploaded last week. The ordinance has been significantly reduced in scope, and that is what is before everyone today.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: So, Mayor, following up on the City Attorney, the original version of the ordinance had four items, and two of those items have been removed; the MF4 and the MF3 setbacks. So, there's only two issues that are in the current version of the ordinance. And those issues are the emphasis on Mediterranean style, which requires some strike-throughs and some language added simply about the Coral Gables Mediterranean Style, and also, the optional conceptual design review by the Board of Architects, which has been included on the DRC language, not quite on the Mediterranean language, but in the DRC language. There's an option right now to go to the Board of Architects, as proposed. And an additional resolution deals with the fee that would be requested for the conceptual design review; a fee of \$2,000 for commercial and mixed-use projects, and \$250 for residential and single-family houses. So, I think it's important to realize how successful the Mediterranean Style concepts have been. And if we look at downtown, Miracle Mile looking north -- for example, one can see in the foreground, the Colonnade, one of the very earliest of this idea of these projects that -- including a very important

component of historic preservation and then architecture with a new project. And I just want to remind you, if you look at the red arrow, of the building that inspired the Mediterranean ordinance, the building located in Alhambra and Ponce de Leon. And you can see that the buildings built afterwards have a very different style, very consistent style, and I would say, very appropriate style for Coral Gables. So, I think from that point of view, this has been very successful. The Code already has probably the best provisions I've ever seen in a zoning code, talking about architecture. It tells you to look at these eight buildings. And that's already in the Code, and we have emphasized that because, at the end of the day, what I think the Commission asked is for the changes to be about whether the buildings will be more Mediterranean, and I think the answer is yes if we do the changes as proposed. In the past, the range of projects has been very wide. If you look at the building right in the lower area, that picture, the building actually got a Mediterranean bonus at the time. And from many points of view, it probably isn't at the standards that many people would realize. The building right on top, the tall building, also was an early version of the Mediterranean bonus. And the building on the right, the Plaza, is probably the current range of ideas, so that gives you a sense of what we've done. The conceptual review would allow an early view of the projects, and hopefully, will enhance the architecture. So, that's the request and staff recommends approval.

Mayor Lago: Sponsors of the legislation.

Commissioner Anderson: Right. I brought this forward because that's consistent with what we have been discussing for some months now, that we gave the Blue Ribbon Committee direction to focus on Mediterranean design for the ordinance and not any and all architectural styles. And the Blue Ribbon Committee's idea about conceptual review -- which I think will help not only save them money but result in better projects in the future. It's a pretty simple concept, really, to move this forward. And if you all have any other ideas that you want to discuss at this time, please let me know.

Commissioner Menendez: I want to mention that -- and I'm glad to cosponsor with Commissioner Anderson. I remember that town hall meeting we had at the Adult Activity Center, and the phrase of the day was make buildings that get the bonus more Mediterranean. They want to be able to identify that's a Mediterranean style architecture. And it's been a lengthy process to get here, a lot of input. The Blue Ribbon Committee worked very hard, long hours, many meetings, a lot of community input. You know, and at the end of the day, I think the ability to focus specifically on those items that bring immediate solutions to making things more Mediterranean, I think is what we finally have before us. You know, the community wants us to take action efficiently and effectively in the best possible way. And I think collectively, we've done a great job of getting this to this point where I think we can embrace it, and it's something that the community can be proud of and be proud of the City for having brought something at this level forward.

Vice Mayor Mena: I just had a question for the sponsors, which is -- and I have no issue with what's in this limited proposal. My question is, is it your intent that the Blue Ribbon Committee's efforts are done for the time being? I know at the last meeting there was talk about a workshop and that they were going to go to P and Z, which I know they went to. And P and Z really wasn't in a position to give any material guidance other than -- so, I guess that's what I'm -- I'm just trying to understand is this, in your mind -- other than -- I know there's the one item about the MF4 issue that's been split off...

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Setting that aside from -- is this the finish line on this undertaking? Is it your intent that the Blue Ribbon Committee has unresolved business? I just want to make sure we're clear on that so that I know because if they are, and that's your proposal, then so be it. Let's move forward with a decision. But if they're not, then I'm not really sure if I would necessarily piecemeal this if there's going to be more involved, so...

Commissioner Menendez: Well, I can share my thoughts. You know, between the issues the Law Department had last time, between issues that came up in discussion, there's been a lot of work behind the scenes to streamline and identify those things that don't keep us tied up or the community tied up for the next year and a half. So, we've gotten to the point where we've identified those things that truly bring out the Mediterranean style and architecture the community wants. So, in my eyes, I thank the Blue Ribbon Committee for having done a great job, to staff for having identified and streamlined the issues down to legislative item. And yes, there's, I think, MF4; that's something that, you know, we'll discuss, I guess, after this vote. But in my eyes, the Blue Ribbon Committee did the job it was tasked to do. Staff and the Law Department has done the job they were tasked to do, and now we're at the finish line with regards to this issue. There'll be other issues, other concerns on other matters that we can always discuss, but in my eyes, job's been accomplished, completed.

Commissioner Anderson: As far as the Mediterranean design, I feel that it's been accomplished, completed. I mean, we can debate some other day whether or not underground garages are something we should promote, but that's not going to really change the architectural design. I think this takes care of well over 90 percent of the concerns, and you know, we can then have clear direction for the Board of Architects and improve the system.

Vice Mayor Mena: And...

Commissioner Fors: Would we in this --? Sorry.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, go ahead.

Commissioner Fors: Just -- would we in this same vote, or can we, I guess, grant leave or conclusion to the Blue Ribbon Committee? Not that I want to for any particular reason, but for me, that's a measure of whether this really is the final product or not.

City Attorney Ramos: You could do it. It wouldn't be part of the same vote; it would be a separate vote.

Vice Mayor Mena: My only objective is, if we want or desire for them to do more work on this, that's fine, but then I would probably defer on this. If we feel like -- and I think I've just heard the answer -- we're at the finish line, if you will...

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Again, setting aside the MF4 issue that's separate, then so be it. I think that's fair. You know, and I want to make clear because we did all get -- I believe we all got...

Commissioner Fors: Yep, emails.

Vice Mayor Mena: An email from at least one of the members from the committee that this is not the entirety of their proposal. They had a broad proposal. This adopts certain aspects of it, but not everything that they necessarily proposed, which is okay. But you know, I think it's important to understand that that's what we're talking about here. Given the concerns that were expressed last time and what we discussed...

Commissioner Menendez: And I think the staff in the Law Department, they addressed, I think, you know, the same email that the cover memo didn't quite coincide with the actual legislative -- the legislation. So, I think if I'm mistaken, the cover memo was revised to more clearly express...

City Attorney Ramos: They've both been fixed now and uploaded.

Commissioner Menendez: Been fixed. So -- and I had the pleasure of speaking personally with the gentleman that sent the email. And I think after that conversation I had with him in terms of where we're headed, they were comfortable with -- you know, at least my conversation, he was comfortable with us moving forward. And I think the community, their biggest concern was this would be kicked down the road, you know, indefinitely, and I think the community will be grateful if we're not kicking it into 2022. We finally bring closure in an effective manner for the benefit of our residents.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, and we really brought the ordinance back to what it originally intended...

Commissioner Menendez: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: Intended to be and give bonuses for this additional expense that goes into this type of design.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, and that was what I -- very briefly, that's what I wanted to mention and memorialize. If we accomplished one goal, and that was -- that goal was to really be thoughtful when a developer's coming before us and requesting for a Mediterranean bonus. And we were able to acknowledge that certain characteristics in design that were being used are not in the true context of Mediterranean and do not deserve the bonus, then I consider this endeavor a success.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: That's that simple. I have had multiple conversations with Mr. Trias, with the City Manager, with my appointment to that board, Mr. Bermello, Mr. Behar. I've had multiple meetings

with the chair, hours discussing this. That is the intent of everyone that is involved, finding and building the most beautiful city that we can continue to build. With that being said, I'd like to recognize with the Commission the individuals, the members of that committee, for their service, so that's something that we can discuss later...

Unidentified Speaker: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: If possible.

Unidentified Speaker: Without a doubt.

Commissioner Anderson: Excellent.

Vice Mayor Mena: I would only add to that that I think going through this process and these discussions, I think there's only so much of this that can be legislated. And I think we've done what we can for the time being. Obviously, if there's future tweaks that, you know, people want to make, you know, it's an evolving thing. But the reality is that the magic is in the execution, right? That's...

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: At the end of the day, it's only as good as it's executed. You know, and so I'm hopeful that, obviously, all the boards and staff members who deal with this ordinance on a regular basis, you know, under Mr. Trias' leadership, and obviously, the Manager -- you know, I've kind of heard some of the concerns that maybe, again, these changes don't necessarily -- can't make the concerns a black and white issue because what we're dealing with is areas of gray, if you will. And so -- but I trust that you all have heard the concerns. And frankly, to be clear, I think have been already executing in a better fashion than some of the projects historic -- you know, older projects



that maybe people had some concerns about for whatever reasons that are now several years ago. And so, you know, we continue to try to do a better job, but always -- and I think you guys are doing a great job on it. But you know, as you go forward, obviously keep in mind all the comments that were made here and some of the concerns that were expressed.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Vice Mayor. With that, I'll entertain a vote.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll make a motion.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

City Clerk Urquia: Really quick, before moving forward, does this mean that we're not going to be having the November 15th workshop?

Vice Mayor Mena: That's correct.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay, thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: That's correct.

City Attorney Ramos: Does the Commission want to make a motion dissolving the Blue Ribbon Committee?

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes, unless I mean...

Commissioner Anderson: I'll second it.

Commissioner Menendez: Second.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Commissioner Fors: Honorably dissolving them.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, that's true.

Commissioner Fors: It should say. And we'll work on having a, as the Mayor said, a formal, you know, opportunity to thank them more formally.