

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-1
February 27, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Jack Thompson
Andy Gomez

Agenda Item E-1 [12:08:17 p.m.]

Personal Appearance by Jack Thompson regarding the danger of video games.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Now, the next item is personal appearance by Jack Thompson regarding the danger of video games. Mr. Thompson, I apologize for making you wait the whole morning, but the floor is yours, sir.

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Agenda Item E-1 - Personal Appearance by Jack Thompson regarding the danger of video games.

Jack Thompson: Thank you. No, that was educational. I appreciate it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I hope it was.

Mr. Thompson: I was here when I arrived with my pastor, and he would like me, if I may, just to read...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Of course.

Mr. Thompson: His comments. He is Phillip Short, who's the pastor at First United Methodist Church of Coral Gables. He gave the invocation here, I think, a couple weeks ago. He says, when this meeting started, the rabbi gave the meditation about the feast of Purim, Queen Esther and the story of Haman, a man who wanted to eradicate an entire population of people. The rabbi pointed out that such evil was around, even back then, as it is now. I compare this story to Parkland, Florida, a community just a short drive from here. The people of Parkland knew that Nikolas Cruz had problems. I wonder and suspect that the people of Persia could tell that Haman had his problems. What could have happened to make a difference? The answers that are brought forth in the national political scene all seemed to wait until a vulnerable person has already snapped. We see way too much time, too much life, too much living. I hope the faith community will step into that void. I've been working as a pastor in the faith community to step into that gap. In Parkland, there are some good things, some local steps from government and others that offer compassion, intervention, safety and security. Ladies and gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity. I'm here to try and make Coral Gables High School safer. On December 1, 1997, 14-year-old Michael Carneal walked into his Paducah, Kentucky high school and opened fire with a handgun on a dispersing bible study. He hit eight students, killing three. In early April 1999, I filed a federal lawsuit in Paducah identifying Doom as an adult-rated video game sold to this 14-year-old. Carneal's criminal proceedings identified the indispensable role of this murder simulator in suppressing his inhibition to kill. It also gave him a unique, counterintuitive one-shot-per-target technique taught in the game. It made him an efficient

school killer. The day after we filed the lawsuit, the parents of the three slain girls and I appeared on NBC's Today Show and Matt Lauer asked me what we feared based most upon -- based upon what we had learned in Paducah. And I said, Matt, what we fear is that other boys in other American high schools will train on the same game and kill more. Two weeks later, Columbine happened, and we learned, within 72 hours, that Klebold and Harris had trained on Doom, stating in their videotaped suicide note that they wanted to replicate Doom in the hallways of Columbine. What have we learned in the intervening 20 years since Columbine? Apparently, absolutely nothing. President Clinton, that April, ordered the FBI to conduct and then issue a threat assessment explaining why these mass school shootings were happening. The report identified all the red flags that popped up in those incidents. It reads like a description of Nikolas Cruz. The one common denominator in all of the school shootings, found the FBI, was the immersion of the perpetrators in violent, adult-rated entertainment, most particularly, violent video games. Just last month, the World Health Organization formally found that video game addiction is a mental disorder. Teens process these games in a different part of the brain than do adults. Now, fast-forward to the Valentine's Day massacre up the road, in Parkland, Florida, on, of all days, Ash Wednesday. The Miami Herald reports that Nikolas Cruz played murder simulation video games for 15 hours a day. He was rehearsing -- whether he knew it or not -- for the massacre. Now, no one in his right mind thinks that a video game -- all by itself -- can turn a little angel into a demon, but it is one link in a tragic chain of causation that trains you for mass murder. Just ask the FBI. That is why the US Military uses video games to desensitize and train on the two sides of the video game coin. Almost all of the military-themed video games, most particularly, the Call of Duty games, teach you to use smoke bombs in hallways to maximize your kills, and that is precisely what Cruz did and that is most likely the game he trained on. Adam Lanza, of Sandy Hook, killed 26. He was just another lost boy, whom the governor of Connecticut's Sandy Hook report found played Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto in a basement with blacked out windows sometimes 15 hours a day. How did the Broward School System and Sheriff's Office and the FBI miss all the FBI red flags Cruz unfurled? They didn't miss them. They ignored them. I have in my hands the most shocking document I have ever seen. It is called the Collaborative Agreement on School Discipline, entered into between the

Broward Sheriff's Department and the Broward School Board. It is a binding contract removing from law enforcement the ability to charge Nikolas Cruz with anything pretty much short of murder. Its goal is to decrease the arrest rate in schools by decriminalizing all the criminal acts that Cruz committed there. Here's a truth. If you decriminalize everything, pretty soon you will have a zero crime rate. But, the idiocy in Broward does not stop there, and this is why I'm here today. I have in my hand also a news release entitled Miami-Dade Schools Police Reduce Juvenile Delinquency by 60 Percent. How did they do that in six months' time? The answer is in the release. "Our mantra is education, not incarceration. We have taken a student-centered approach to law enforcement. It is our intent to demonstrate compassion and understanding to our disciplined students." Compassion? Where was the compassion for the 31 wounded and killed in Parkland? So, I'm asking the sovereign City Commission, whose duty and whose power is to make all those in Coral Gables safer, and I'm asking you on behalf of 3,500 students at Coral Gables High to exhibit true compassion and pass the resolution or some variant thereof that I've drafted and placed before you by which you ask the Miami-Dade School Board, on behalf of our students in this town, to act upon the FBI threat assessment of 20 years ago; A, to determine who the Nikolas Cruz wannabes at Coral Gables might be; and B, to train security officers, student leaders, school faculty, school administrators and parents what the 20-year-old red flags are. After Columbine, the Miami-Dade School Board asked me to train all of the above individuals that I've listed to identify the threats in the schools in Dade County and then intercept them. I'm ready to do it again at Gables High or anywhere else free, so are other organizations, one of which is led by a Sandy Hook father, whose 7-year-old daughter was killed. He told the President last week we can identify the Nikolas Cruz's in our schools, but you have to let us do it. I conclude by noting that 400 years ago, the great French philosopher, Pascal, wrote that in every human heart there is a space, a hole. It will be filled either with God, who fits that vacuum perfectly, or with the things not of God. We know which of these two paths Nikolas Cruz took. We know there are at-risk lost boys at Coral Gables High. Let us try and recommend to the Miami-Dade School Board, one of whose schools is Coral Gables High. Let us identify and intercept them before they kill and not after. Finally, a Douglas High father said last week, also in the White House, after 9/11, we fixed it. Why, after Columbine, did we not fix it? Let us at

least try to fix it at Coral Gables High School, whose students we know, whose parents we know and whose community we know. I don't want Coral Gables to be added to the names, just like the towns in which Civil War battles were fought, like Antietam and Manassas and Gettysburg and Bull Run. I don't want Coral Gables to be added to Columbine and Paducah and Virginia Tech and Sandy Hook, or now, Parkland. We can do something. We can suggest to the School Board we have the tools to help you fight this good fight.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Ramos: Sir, it's for your consideration. You don't have to take any action. You can discuss it. You can take action, if you wish.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Tell us again exactly what you want us to do.

Mr. Thompson: I would ask that the Commission...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: For the record.

Mr. Thompson: Respectfully -- I'm saying respectfully suggest and move that the Miami-Dade School Board undertake measures to identify individual students, who might be at risk to do these types of things, such as we saw in Parkland. And also, at the same time, alert -- as we did 20 years ago -- student leaders, faculty, administrators and parents of those children as to what they themselves should look out for and to warn them what those risk factors are. I think as part of the process to prevent these things -- and I think it would be a cool thing for Coral Gables High School to be a pilot school. I don't have to do it. I'm happy to do it. There are so many good organizations in the aftermath of Columbine and Sandy Hook that would come down here free of charge and give advice and enable the security people and others as to what to do.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: So, you want us to suggest -- yeah, suggest to the School Board that they take these measures at the Coral Gables High School to identify the potentially troubled students and take measures to -- for security or...

Mr. Thompson: Yes, and the -- one reason I suggest this is this document that I raised, and that is the Miami-Dade School Board, in my opinion, has not wisely suggested that we're going to handle the Nikolas Cruzes in a kid gloves way rather than confront them with things that will, frankly, ultimately, be more compassionate, be -- to deter the Nikolas Cruzes, and also to protect others.

Commissioner Lago: Mr. Thompson, thank you for being here, by the way. This is the first time I've had the pleasure of meeting you. In preparation for you coming here today and the comments that Commissioner -- Vice Mayor Slesnick -- excuse me. I apologize, excuse me. Vice Mayor Keon put on today's agenda in reference to AR-15s, which I think is a discussion that we're going to have later -- I did a little bit of like research and I wanted to find where we stood as a municipality in reference to the schools. So, I ended up calling some of the principals in our great schools here in the City, and I ended up speaking with Principal Costa from Coral Gables, along with the principal from West Lab. And, there are a few things right now that are in the works and a few things that are forthcoming, like Coral Gables has a police issue -- not a security -- a policeman on site during school hours that his job or her job is to monitor the school and make sure that everybody's taken care of. Another item -- the piece of technology that's forthcoming that I was made aware of by the West Lab principal is cameras are going to be instituted in all the schools. And, the reason why I think that's important -- and another point that we need to do -- and I was going to bring this up under the Vice Mayor's comments was we need to make sure that these cameras are connected with the City of Coral Gables. And I would love to take credit for this idea, but I cannot. I saw it on TV where other states and other municipalities, what they're doing is they're connecting the schools with -- for example, our ACM Frank Fernandez is -- in his kind of -- he has a command center. And that way, you can track if there is somebody in a school, and you can kind of make your best concerted effort to

reduce the damage that occurs if someone is able to slip in and overrun the individual who's there, the police person. They did request, for example, they want more crisis training. They want to be prepared when something, you know, occurs or if there's an issue. But, one of the main issues that I did notice and that it was brought to my attention, for example, from the principal at West Lab was they don't have a full-time policeman or policewoman on the team, you know, and I think that's critical. I think that we need to find a way to find -- to balance our interests. I know that these interests are financial, and I think we need to find a way, either the City, like a lot of other municipalities are chipping in and making sure that this happens. Or the School Board, somehow, some way, we have to find -- and I know that the City of Coral Gables spends millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars in reference to revenue that we send to the School Board. But, we have to find and we have to strike that balance.

Mr. Thompson: May...

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, of course. And your other issue was the issue of -- I think we have a serious lack of parenting.

Mr. Thompson: Absolutely.

Commissioner Lago: We have a serious lack of discipline in this country. We have a serious lack of -- and I understand there's a lot of single parents and my heart goes out to them. But there's people -- we, as parents, have a duty to sit down with our children, you know. And I know people don't want to talk about prayer. I know people don't want to talk about church. I know people -- whatever that may be. But we, as a community, we need to sit down and we need to take account of who we are as fathers, as mothers, as grandparents, and I think we're lacking that. We're lacking that. Because guns didn't come into play 15 years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago. Guns have been around for a long time. But, this type of behavior that you're talking about is -- I don't know if it's the Internet or what it is, but it's just so fresh and it seems to be happening over and over again.

Commissioner Quesada: So, Commissioner Lago, I had a long conversation with staff yesterday on this topic. And I think there are a lot of steps to it. I don't think there's obviously one...

Commissioner Lago: It's a long conversation.

Commissioner Quesada: Answer.

Commissioner Lago: It's a long conversation.

Commissioner Quesada: It's a very long conversation.

Commissioner Lago: Long conversation.

Commissioner Quesada: You know, I volunteer at the -- at Coral Gables High, and when I go, it's typically Tuesday afternoons and I -- it's funny, when I first started doing it -- because I walked into a classroom in one of the newer buildings on the third floor. I walk right in. I walk by hundreds of kids. I don't go through the front entrance. I go through the park. It's so easy to get in and out. So, we were talking about there's got to be one ingress point...

Commissioner Lago: That's exactly what Costa told me, exactly.

Commissioner Quesada: You know, there's a lot of different issues that I've seen for myself -- and I don't have children there, but again, I volunteer there. And, there's just -- it's -- we're not going to solve our problem right now in this one conversation.

Commissioner Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Quesada: I think it's got to be, you know, with the Fire Department, with the Police Department, with staff. It's got to be a comprehensive sort of attack that we can do -- and obviously, try to push the School Board, as well, so it's not just one issue. You talk about video games. There's so much to it that I think what we got to do is we got to itemize what we think are the most important points, listen to our experts and professionals and have a comprehensive, you know, approach to it all.

Commissioner Mena: And I think -- very briefly, I also wanted to look into this issue and I reached out to Mari Tere Rojas' office. And, I know that both her and School Board Chair Hantman have proposed some resolutions to basically review their security protocol and procedures in schools. There's a couple of different resolutions that they have proposed. In fact, what I'll do is in -- during lunch and in advance of this afternoon's discussion, which I think will go farther into some of these issues -- I'll have a copy made of a summary that her office sent over about the pending resolutions that they have, which I think delves into some of these things. I think Mr. Thompson's point or request is a little distinct from sort of looking at the structure and the security on premises. I'm sure he probably would agree with a lot of that, but I think he's talking about asking the School Board to go in and conduct more, you know, training for people to identify troubled kids, who are more prone to this type of behavior. I'm not sure exactly -- and you can address this now -- how specific you're trying to tie it because you're -- on the one end, you're talking about this video game issue, as a...

Mr. Thompson: It's part of it, yeah.

Commissioner Mena: As a tab that you would look at, but I think you're speaking a little broader than...

Mr. Thompson: I am.

Commissioner Mena: That as well, so...

Mr. Thompson: May I, by way of response to your three gentlemen's concerns. No, it's not just video games.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Mr. Thompson: It's -- if you get the FBI threat assessment ordered by President Clinton, you can see what all the dangers are. There are lost boys -- there's a book by that title about these kids. I agree with you on parenting. It's the hardest job in the world. Cruz had no parents, and - - ultimately, eventually. And so, he was at-risk for a lot of reasons. The idea, which was repeated to the President and the Secretary of Education in the White House and so forth is there are things we can do before it gets to the point of some kid coming into the school that surveillance cameras can see with either an AR-15 or a handgun in his backpack. So, this is a prophylaxis. This is a preventative measure before we get to that point. Let me just say about -- since you mentioned AR-15s. I'm for gun control. I'm not just for doing something about violent entertainment. The problem, though, is we have more guns than people in this country. And one of the things I've appreciated as a conservative Republican about Bill and Hillary Clinton was the fact their position was if we live in a country where we are drowning in guns, then let us at least do something about the stimuli to use those guns, that kids, as Peggy Noonan, after Columbine said, Klebold and Harris were swimming in a culture that they inhaled too deeply. So, -- and I worked personally with Hillary Clinton's staff on this issue and with Joe Lieberman and so forth. And let me just end with this. For 300 years, boys went to school with guns in this country, so they could hunt for the dinner for their families afterwards. They didn't turn them on one another. Something has changed. There are now Nikolas Cruzes who are, in effect, mini Manchurian candidates who are out there, who unwittingly sometimes are training themselves to do these things. So, that's all I'm talking about. Let's do what we did after Columbine in the Dade County School System at least at Coral Gables High School and educate people as to what to look out for. You know, post-9/11, the saying, if you see something, say something. The good people of Parkland said something and people didn't listen. So, we need

to encourage people to say something continually, and for government, whether in our school systems or elsewhere, to respond to when people say something and try to warn them.

Commissioner Mena: I think to try to sort of bring this to a head -- I mean, I think if we're going to urge the School Board to evaluate this and take some sort of action, you know, I think we have to be careful sort of how specific we are.

Mr. Thompson: Sure.

Commissioner Mena: I think it needs to be broad enough...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: For them to evaluate what needs to be done and take action, you know, to the extent there's a desire to make a request to the School Board that they look into these issues and try to effectuate some sort of process. I think they're doing some of that already, but maybe a little more specific to what he's asking.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right. Can I...

Commissioner Quesada: I think its two part. I think it's that. I think it's a general, but also a specific on how -- this is how we're going to work with you with the schools within our borders.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right. Can I read...

Commissioner Quesada: Because if you think -- you know, I was talking to Frank Fernandez about this yesterday. And the conversation was, well, hypothetically, if something happens at one of our schools, who's going to be the first one there? Is it School Board Police or it's Coral Gables?

Vice Mayor Keon: It's going to be the City.

Commissioner Lago: It's officers.

Commissioner Quesada: It's Coral Gables officers more likely than not.

Commissioner Mena: Sure.

Commissioner Quesada: So, you know, what are our protocols? You know, what kind of training do the teachers have there? And I'm not saying carrying guns. What I'm saying is, in those procedures, what do they do? They lock the doors. They get behind a desk, whatever it is. I mean, are they doing those trainings? Are we -- and I was...

Commissioner Mena: That exact thing you just described...

Commissioner Quesada: And hold on. I was happy to hear that actually we have been, for a while, doing that training in the schools. And, it just so happens that there was another one -- it just so happened another one was coming up in the following weeks. So, you know, I applaud our Police Department for being proactive on it, but I think, at the same time, we need to be very visible with it. Parents need to know it, because I'm sure all of you -- I know a lot of the parents at Coral Gables High and the calls have been nonstop and it's -- and residents have never really been involved. They're just -- they're afraid. And we've got to educate. We're going to let people know what we're doing. And I think we've got to be very visible with it, everything we're doing. So, Commissioner Mena, to your point, whatever we send to the School Board is -- it's got to be general, we support you, but at the same time, look, we just want to let you know this is what we're doing. These are the steps we're doing within our borders. Let's continue to work together.

Commissioner Mena: And I don't think we can sort of...

Vice Mayor Keon: We can't do that.

Commissioner Mena: Wing it up here today.

Vice Mayor Keon: No.

Commissioner Quesada: Of course not.

Commissioner Mena: I think that, you know, we need to ask the City Attorney to maybe start coming up with...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Madam City Manager, would your office come up with some, you know, suggested language...

Vice Mayor Keon: Can I...

Commissioner Lago: Protocol...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And some...

Vice Mayor Keon: Can I read you an email? It's a very quick email that I received from a 10th grader at Coral Gables High School that I think addresses it. It says, Dear Vice Mayor Keon, as Coral Gables considers state and federal legislation responses to the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, please consider the model provided by Connecticut Senate Bill 1160 drafted in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary killings and signed into law in the spring of 2013. The bill provides for broad local government participation in school safety plans and imposing safety requirements on the construction and renovation of schools. The bill calls for

local authorities to join the effort to prevent school violence. The Coral Gables fire and emergency departments can be instrumental in helping to ensure school safety. Broad participation in development of school safety plans, including local municipal officials, superintendents, law enforcement via the public health emergency management and emergency medical services. The results of fire and emergency drills must be evaluated by the local law enforcement and other local public safety officials. The development of the multiagency command centers -- each school must have a Security and Safety Committee. The committee collects, evaluates and reports disturbing or threatening behavior, other than bullying, to a safe -- including bullying, to a safe school climate coordinator. And, every school employee must be trained on violence prevention and the implementation of a school safety and security plan. The bill imposes enhanced safety requirements in the construction and renovation of schools. This is an area where Coral Gables can offer advocacy and support to Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Requirements for school buildings and classroom entryways, including but not limited to reinforcement of entryways, ballistic glass, solid (INAUDIBLE) doors, double-door access, computer-controlled electronic locks, remove locks on all entrances and exits and buzzer systems, requirements for the use of video cameras throughout the school building and in all entrances and exits, including the use of closed-circuit television monitoring, requirements for penetration (INAUDIBLE) rooms, areas, and provision to upgrade/enhance the security as new technology and equipment becomes standard. I am a 10th grader at Coral Gables High School and safety is the greatest concern to our students here in this community. Respectfully, Joaquin Bierman (phonetic). I mean, this is an exceedingly, exceedingly thoughtful, well-written email by this girl. So, I think it's the -- or this child. It isn't that we need to come up with a whole set of regulations. I think what she is...

Commissioner Lago: It's existing.

Vice Mayor Keon: She's referring to is Connecticut Senate Bill 1160 that I think we can actually look at and speak to and work with our school system to reach out and say that we can

work together as a community to ensure the safety and the well-being of children in our community.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's a very good idea. And...

Vice Mayor Keon: So, I would like to see us -- I forwarded each of you her email...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: So that you...

City Attorney Ramos: My office can...

Vice Mayor Keon: Can see it.

City Attorney Ramos: Prepare a resolution to bring back...

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes.

City Attorney Ramos: Next time.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's good.

City Attorney Ramos: That sets forth some of the principles and just a collaborative working relationship with Miami-Dade County Public Schools...

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

City Attorney Ramos: With regard to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very good.

Vice Mayor Keon: But, I think what she has...

City Attorney Ramos: Moving forward.

Vice Mayor Keon: Written is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Keon: Really what -- everything we're saying. This is a 10th grader, you know.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's beautiful.

Vice Mayor Keon: Wonderfully written.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Gomez, you wanted to say a few words regarding school safety?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And Mr. Thompson, if you would...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Thompson.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: If you have the FBI threat assessment from 20 years ago, we would love to have a copy.

Mr. Thompson: I'll send it to you.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please do, and thank you for your presentation...

Mr. Thompson: You bet.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's very -- it has generated a lot of very constructive debate, and we will pursue this for sure.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you. Can I mention one thing that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, sir.

Mr. Thompson: Broke in the news while I was sitting here? Mr. Cruz was asked to have mental assessment and care, and he successfully said, no, I don't want that. And, this is sort of the mentality that we defer to the potential perpetrator what he may or may not want to do. There was an entire movie made on his response, Catch-22. If you want counseling help, you're probably not insane; and if you refuse it, you are. So, there's a mentality that we need to be deferential -- which is why I'm here today -- to the perpetrators and potential perpetrators. We need to be more aggressive, as Miami-Dade School System was after Columbine. Identify who the dangers are. Get them the help that they need, whether they want it or not.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Gomez.

Andy Gomez: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, Madam City Manager and Attorney. As you know, I've spent 33 years of my life in education. My wife has been teaching now for 32 years in the public school system. She's a math teacher now at MAST Academy. My daughters, my grandkids, all live in Coral Gables. My two oldest grandkids go to school down the street. This is a bigger problem than Coral Gables High. This is a bigger issue than just Miami-Dade County. In 1987, while I was number 2 at the University of Houston, I got a call at 3:30 in the morning from the Chief of Police of the City of Houston, because we had had a shooting on campus. My Chief of Police at the University of Houston and a number of officers and students went down. Thank God, no one was killed. I do believe in all the discussions and respect to Mr. Thompson, that this Commission ought to look at creating a peer review of citizens to make sure because to -- the coordination between Miami-Dade Public Schools and their safety, our fantastic police department and fire department and other entities -- as a matter of fact, we had an incident in Coral Gables High School last week, which our police department had to react immediately to. It was false, but we had to deal with it. We can do everything possible. I served as Under Secretary of Education for years at the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I'm not talking about politics because I do believe you, as elected officials, at the local, state and federal level are going to have to come to terms with some of these issues and address them. But at the same time, we, as citizens -- and let's worry about Coral Gables. We, as citizens of Coral Gables, have to look at what we do, and the time is now because we do it very well. But, like in any bureaucracy -- and we are a bureaucracy -- any large organization, it is good to take a look at what we have on hand and how it works. And that's what I think, Mr. Mayor and Commissioners, we ought to do now.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You're suggesting that we appoint an ad-hoc committee...

Mr. Gomez: Correct.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To look at the situation and make recommendations?

Mr. Gomez: Correct.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, I think we would all be favorably disposed to that, and would you like to chair that committee?

Commissioner Quesada: Well, let me just jump in for a second. We have a School Community Relations Committee and we have the...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Quesada: Anticrime Commission -- Committee. I mean, both those groups have already been...

Mr. Gomez: Commissioner...

Commissioner Quesada: Dealing with these issues.

Mr. Gomez: My problem with that -- I think we need to get to one term, one issue. Those particular committees, with all due respect to the members, which are fantastic, deal with a multitude of issues. We need to concentrate on one issue.

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah, but I think their central focus right now is...

Mr. Gomez: Well, let's involve...

Commissioner Quesada: Is this.

Mr. Gomez: The School and Community Relations. I'm not opposed...

Vice Mayor Keon: But...

Mr. Gomez: To that.

Vice Mayor Keon: You know, I don't...

Mr. Gomez: But, I think this issue needs to be addressed and needs to be addressed immediately.

Commissioner Quesada: I just don't want three different boards giving advice on the exact same thing.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. This would be an ad hoc committee and not...

Vice Mayor Keon: Right. I...

Mr. Gomez: Well, this would have to be an ad hoc committee because in talking to the City Attorney, as you know, I'm Chair of your retirement board, so I cannot sit on two boards. But, this would be an ad hoc committee that, if you guys wish, I'll be -- and it would be my honor to lead it. But, I do think we need to address this issue.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think we do also, but I also think we have to be respectful of the fact that we have an independent school -- countywide school system that is set by state charter that has their own rules, their own regulations, their own governing board.

Mr. Gomez: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Keon: And we, you know, we can do all we want and we can recommend to them...

Mr. Gomez: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Keon: But, I think that our best effort -- and I truly believe that the Superintendent is working very hard to ensure the safety and the well-being of every child in their school. And, I would hope that we could -- I would ask that the Manager -- we would reach out to the school Superintendent and tell them we are very willing to become their partner, and we would like to establish these things.

Mr. Gomez: I'm not opposed to that.

Vice Mayor Keon: So that, you know, whatever we do doesn't fall on deaf ears, that what we do has a means and a mechanism by which to go to, you know, that board and be heard.

Mr. Gomez: Vice Mayor Keon, let me remind you, if I may, with all due respect, that -- and I completely agree with you -- more than 60 percent of the household children in Coral Gables go to private schools in Coral Gables.

Vice Mayor Keon: I know.

Mr. Gomez: So, the other issue is, respecting that privacy, what can we, as a city, what can the police and the fire department, in cooperation, offer to assess the security of those schools because the majority of our citizens, their kids go to school at private schools.

Commissioner Quesada: And so, to answer that question, is it's already happening, and it's been happening for a while. Our police department goes around to the public schools...

Mr. Gomez: Absolutely.

Commissioner Quesada: And works with them.

Mr. Gomez: And I...

Commissioner Quesada: So, that's why I was talking about earlier we need to do a better job educating, because a lot of these things that...

Mr. Gomez: Absolutely.

Commissioner Quesada: We're all concerned with, we're all thinking about, our staff has done a tremendous already...

Mr. Gomez: Absolutely.

Commissioner Quesada: And, they've been addressing it for some time. Now, it doesn't mean we can't do better. It doesn't mean we can't scrutinize it, and absolutely, we should. But, I just want -- because -- I just want to be clear, because people are watching at home. People are listening and people are paying attention. I just want to make sure that some of these things that you're bringing up as concerns, the City has been doing for some time...

Mr. Gomez: But, I'm not saying...

Commissioner Quesada: I want to be clear about that.

Mr. Gomez: Commissioner Quesada, let me be very clear. I'm not saying proposing new things. I'm saying review what we have in place...

Commissioner Quesada: No, I don't disagree.

Mr. Gomez: And if we have to, we make it better.

Commissioner Quesada: Absolutely.

Mr. Gomez: We might not have to do anything.

Commissioner Quesada: No problem for that.

Mr. Gomez: But, we also have to address the issue of the private schools, if they're willing to cooperate with us and we offer that service.

Vice Mayor Keon: I know that some of the schools actually have called on our police department to do security reviews...

Mr. Gomez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Keon: At their school. And, they do go out and we -- and walk the campus with the school administration, and they do make recommendations to the school on security.

Mr. Gomez: Yes, ma'am.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, I know that they are currently doing this.

Mr. Gomez: Yes, ma'am.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think it's -- you know, whether you wait for the school to contact the police or do the police contact the school and tell them that that is available to them.

Mr. Gomez: But, the coordination between agencies -- I mean, 18 -- correct me, if I'm wrong, but I believe it was 18 calls into the Sheriff's Department in Broward County that actually were not given proper attention. My point is, I'm sure that doesn't happen in Coral Gables, but if it does, then we need to correct it.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right. You're right.

Mr. Gomez: So, my point, Commissioner Quesada, is not to create something new, but to review what we have in place and come back to this Commission with recommendations, if we have any. If not, at least we have taken a look...

Commissioner Quesada: So...

Mr. Gomez: At what we have in place.

Commissioner Quesada: Let me just wrap this up. I'm not against an ad hoc committee, but if there's going to be an ad hoc committee that is created, I just want to make sure that that ad hoc committee meets with, you know, the major staff departments, police, fire, otherwise, as well as the Anticrime Committee, as well as the School and Community Relations Committee, and that ad hoc committee can be the one that puts -- brings everything together.

Mr. Gomez: I will propose for you that it should be coordinated through the City Manager's Office to make sure to the points...

Commissioner Quesada: However it's coordinated.

Mr. Gomez: That you said, that those issues are addressed.

Vice Mayor Keon: But, maybe we can start with asking the -- or directing the City Manager to have a public safety department come forward and provide us with the information as to how they deal with these issues.

Commissioner Lago: And maybe...

Mr. Gomez: My only point with that, if I may. Time is of essence.

Vice Mayor Keon: They can do that very quickly.

Mr. Gomez: Time is of essence.

Commissioner Lago: And, maybe we can have the City Manager also meet...

Vice Mayor Keon: They can do that very quickly.

Commissioner Lago: With a representative from the School Board to kind of ascertain where we are in regards to construction and what upgrades are coming for the schools...

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, I think the...

Commissioner Lago: Can't...

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

Commissioner Lago: Well, no, I mean...

Vice Mayor Keon: The -- but you know, as the administrator for our city, she should be meeting with the Superintendent.

Commissioner Lago: No, the Superintendent's fine.

Vice Mayor Keon: As opposed to elected officials.

Commissioner Lago: I just -- yeah, the Superintendent's perfectly fine. Whatever you prefer. I don't have an issue.

Commissioner Quesada: Can I just take a step back a second here? I had an extensive conversation to the staff about this, as I'm sure all of you have as well, and there's a lot we do already.

Vice Mayor Keon: We do.

Commissioner Quesada: So, I think the most logical step right now is for staff immediately to put together for us a memo explaining everything it is that we currently do, okay. I think that's the first step in this. I think that needs to happen quickly. I think once that's done, even if it's prior to next Commission meeting, get that before the School Community Relations Committee. Get that in front of the Anticrime Committee. Gather that information, so that by next meeting it's incredibly comprehensive and detailed what we've been doing and any other suggestions to that point. And I think, at that point, once we gather everything, I think we need to publicize that. Obviously, get feedback from schools as well, and then maybe determine an ad hoc committee. What I don't like about ad hoc committees -- and I'm going back and forth on this -- is they just seem to take forever.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. I...

Commissioner Quesada: They just absolutely seem to take forever. And, I just want -- and to your point, let's get it done.

Commissioner Mena: I think we can have somebody within staff as a point person to communicate with all these different entities, the School Board, et cetera.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right.

Commissioner Lago: Meet with the principals of the schools.

Vice Mayor Keon: Administrators.

Commissioner Mena: Meet -- talk to the principals. And that's...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's not just public schools.

Commissioner Mena: A lot more efficient...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's private schools, too.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, but that's a lot more...

Vice Mayor Keon: Public schools, right, and to reach out to the private schools also.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, that's a lot more flexible.

Commissioner Mena: It's a lot more efficient...

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: When it's your job, number one. It's not something you're doing, you know, on the side of whatever your regular...

Mr. Gomez: No, let me tell you. This is not on the side.

Commissioner Mena: Alright.

Mr. Gomez: This is very dear to my heart.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, understood.

Mr. Gomez: And, if you know how I have run things, including the Retirement Committee, which the City Manager can do, it's very no nonsense. We don't waste time.

Commissioner Mena: Right, I understand.

Mr. Gomez: We address the issues.

Commissioner Mena: But...

Mr. Gomez: This issue must be addressed.

Commissioner Mena: Understood, but it is inherent in a committee -- there is inherent inefficiencies, which is that you have to gather the committee. You have to get everybody's input. To me, it would be much more effective and efficient to have somebody on staff to look at these processes, as you suggested, prepare an outline, communicate with the interested parties and the stakeholders and take action.

Vice Mayor Keon: Where we are...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Vice Mayor Keon: Before you start ...

Mr. Gomez: I can tell you...

Vice Mayor Keon: The process.

Mr. Gomez: That many of my friends and my colleagues and my family within the City that have approached me are as concerned as you are.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yeah.

Mr. Gomez: We are very concerned. And, you know the slogan "Never Again" is wonderful, but it's almost impossible. That's the sad part about it.

Vice Mayor Keon: You're right.

Mr. Gomez: And just as Mr. Thompson mentioned, Columbine, Sandy Hook. I mean, these things are just not going to go away until we take very strategic measures and actions to deal with these issues and make them safer.

Commissioner Mena: Well, but if -- and we're going to talk about it this afternoon, but if we're being honest, nothing's changed since any of those events...

Mr. Gomez: Very little.

Commissioner Mena: Happened...

Mr. Gomez: Very little...

Commissioner Mena: Because...

Mr. Gomez: Has changed.

Commissioner Mena: The one constant here is guns. And you can look all over the world. There's mental illness all over the world. There's video games all over the world. There are schools all over the world.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But, there are no murders all over the world.

Commissioner Mena: You look at the statistics about guns in this country and it's a pretty direct correlation, so...

Mr. Gomez: It certainly is.

Commissioner Mena: We have to have a broader discussion than what we're talking about. I think a lot of people are having it. I think that's a good thing, but that's...

Mr. Gomez: It certainly is.

Commissioner Mena: Where the rubber hits the road here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What is the Commission's pleasure regarding an ad hoc committee?

Vice Mayor Keon: Well, I'd rather direct...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They will coordinate all of this.

Vice Mayor Keon: I'd rather have the Manager...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Vice Mayor Keon: You know, provide the information we were talking about...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We need to work with the Manager...

Vice Mayor Keon: Before we do that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we (INAUDIBLE)...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And, we would honor -- it would be our honor if you would be a resource as we formulate that memo...

Mr. Gomez: I'd be happy to.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: As we reach out.

Vice Mayor Keon: Thank you.

Commissioner Quesada: You know, probably the best thing is let's gather all the information. Let's see what we have, and then what maybe we do is a...

Vice Mayor Keon: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Quesada: Seven or six o'clock meeting at the Youth Center presenting everything we have and letting everyone speak and give feedback, something like what we've done with other major -- when we were dealing with the School Board issues two or three years ago. We had a big meeting, so everyone could give input once we have everything we have in front of and we try to expedite all that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Will you work with the City Manager?

Mr. Gomez: I'll be happy to.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

[End: 12:51:11 p.m.]