

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
November 15, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

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

Public Speaker(s)

Mr. Rogers, Coral Gables Resident

Agenda Item F-1 [4:55:30 p.m.]

Discussion regarding the possibility of holding evening City Commission Meetings specific to items requiring public input. (Sponsored by Commissioner Lago and Commissioner Slesnick)

Mayor Cason: F-1. Let me say something before we get into F-1. Over the last six years we've held quite a few meetings starting at 5:01 (pm) to discuss things such as the Charter School, pick-up trucks, Agave, so I don't see anything that's broken. We do this if we see a need. The problem I see if holding evening meetings, look today; today was nine hours, so if you start at 5 with a regular meeting, first of all our ordinance say you have to stop at 9 and you can get one more hour, plus there is no time for dinner in there. So even if we changed it we could be going to 3 in the morning, I'm not sure many people are watching then, many people are going to come to participate or either we aren't going to be the sharpest. It seems to me that we have, we

generally agree on things and I think if we sense that this is an issue there are going to be a lot of people then we do one...

Vice Mayor Quesada: We just need to have better foresight to find those situations that should be at 5:01 (pm).

Mayor Cason: Right, because the other thing too is if you hit 10 o'clock then you've got to come back next morning, so you are going to have two meetings instead of one. So given a lot of people have kids or grandkids and want to do something in the evening as well or have other commitments. If needed, of course.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, I think the Vice Mayor touched on it, I think that was my main point. The reason why I put this on the agenda is, because I had two individuals that came to me and mentioned saying listen, I can't make it during the day. I might want to come and discuss some issues, is there any way we can have the meetings at 5; and I said listen, I know that I'm flexible; I know that my colleagues are flexible, but it has to be the appropriate time. For example, today like you said we'd be here until 2 in the morning, if we were to run the meeting like we have today, and we've been pretty efficient. So, I don't have an issue like what Vice Mayor Quesada said, if we find that there is a contentious issue that needs to be discussed and that we get enough input from the residents that they want to move it to 5:01, I don't have an issue, maybe we can split up the meetings. I'm flexible to whatever you want to do.

Mayor Cason: And one of the reasons we do time certain is so that people can – a couple weeks out know that at 10 o'clock we are going to discuss. Today we did the university and we had two people. So there is always going to be public input, so I just don't want to see us changing something that's been in place for probably 90 years, because we are reasonable and if need be we will hold those meetings and we will go on forever. When we had the Charter School we had 180 people was it?- so there are some issues that are going to require a lot of people are going to come out, but the vast majority, even our budget which you'd think would be the most important, we usually have one person shows up. Mr. Rogers you have something you want to say quickly and then we've got to see if we have something under "K" that we want to do it before we have to close.

Mr. Rogers: I appreciate it. I won't take up too much time. I did want to opine on this, because the reason I – my wife and I we met Commissioner Keon and Commissioner Slesnick at a Saturday morning meeting that we found out about through a community app, called Next Door. Someone decided to post on it and since we were available we said hey, why not get involved, let's attend. I think as a result of that meeting, I do process improvement with a "Big Four" accounting firm and one of the key messages that I heard is communication. There is a real lack

of communication with the residents and they were upset. In that I suggested maybe using all mediums that are currently, that Coral Gables currently uses like the Coral Gables App, maybe have push notifications, use the Facebook, things like that, get on Next Door, the Miami-Dade Police Department is on Next Door sending out weekly communications. If we had an agenda sent out to where we can have an open discussion on social media and then drive...

Mayor Cason: We have right now an app that not one person has used for how long Mr. Clerk?- allowing people to make input at any time even during the meetings. I disagree with you that there is a communications problem. What we have is a lack of attention problem. We have been addressing this for years, everything that we can think of to get information to people. You pointed out we had 80 percent voters in the Presidential Election, you get 23 percent to vote on Municipal Elections. There just are a vast number of people who do not care or are content enough that they just don't want to get involved, they think that we'll take care of the issues.

Commissioner Lago: Just to give you an idea, so you are aware. We've had this discussion on multiple occasions. What this City does to be transparent and to notify the residents and the business community, no one can even compare. In reference to notifications, the City of Miami notifies, I think, 200 feet from the post property, we do up to 1,500.

Mayor Cason: 1,500.

City Attorney Leen: In certain instances.

Commissioner Lago: 1,500 in certain instances. We have a full page ad where we notify everyone in the Neighbors section on a weekly basis what's going on. Every single project that's coming up for review the plans are put up on the Internet, so the person can study them from at home, they don't have to come here and they can make a decision whether to come here and waste their time, or to come here and not waste their time.

Mayor Cason: Everything we do here is televised so they can go back ten years.

Commissioner Lago: We have Facebook, we have Instagram, we have everything like the Mayor mentioned is televised, we have a program, which I'm not aware of any other City in the County, if not the state that has a program that allows you to opine on a live meeting in reference to whatever opinion or whatever issue you may want to discuss, and I know we are forgetting things, but we...

Mayor Cason: 15,000 e-mails I've gotten.

Commissioner Lago: We send out on E-NEWS every single week that goes out, I think 10,000 residents, we send out and I give the Mayor, excuse me, the Manager credit for this, a quarterly newsletter which we started doing a year ago. I think that we are by far and correct me if you disagree, can we be better? - yes, we can always do better, but I think that we are just so transparent and push the information out there. The only thing we can do is offer people tax credits for showing up to the meetings.

[Laughter]

Mayor Cason: What I suggest is we have a Communications Advisory Board with people very much involved in communications. Anybody that has ideas on it and anything else we can do should go there, but we always say, what else can we do?

Commissioner Lago: If 31 boards – we just did a Waterway Advisory Board, because people wanted to talk about the waterway, so we put people to the Waterway Advisory Board. They haven't had quorum four meetings in a row, that's one of the things I want to mention today.

Commissioner Keon: I do think there was a suggestion that you made that I thought was a very interesting suggestion, I'm not sure who I spoke to, I think I spoke to Frank Fernandez about it, but you had suggested that we could do push notices and so if we had like on Commission meetings, we have anybody that subscribes to E-NEWS we could do a push notice on the Friday before a Commission meeting saying there is a Commission meeting this Tuesday at 9 o'clock with a link and push that out, with a link to the agenda. Now if they choose not to open the link to the agenda, you know we've done everything we can, but I do think that, that is a very interesting idea, and I think it's something we should look into and we should incorporate. After you and I spoke, I did speak to staff about it and they were going to talk to IT about where we were with it, but I thought that was a very good idea. Thank you for that.

Mayor Cason: So anybody out watching has any other ideas, please they can...any of us, to the Communications Advisory Board, which was set up specifically to address the communications problem, that we have to remember that there is a tremendous amount of apathy whether its positive or negative of people who just doesn't matter what it is won't show up, don't listen, don't care, don't vote.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, if I may just have one last point, and its interesting, because there hadn't been a public forum, until four years ago when I started doing these Town Hall meetings – Commissioner Keon comes, the Vice Mayor, the Mayor, Commissioner Slesnick, and Commissioner Slesnick started doing them, so literally every quarter you have that opportunity. Again, outside of the fact that if you call here or if you write an e-mail every Commissioner here

meets with every single person. So you have an opportunity to really voice your opinion and voice your concerns. I wish if you have any other opportunities, any other ideas give it to us, we'll take it, we'll do everything we can.

Mayor Cason: Thank you for being an example by being here. I wish more of our residents would come here.

Commissioner Keon: Do you currently serve any boards in the City?

Mr. Rogers: I do not.

Mayor Cason: Why don't you get on her Parking...

Commissioner Keon: Would you like to get on the Parking Advisory Board?

Mr. Rogers: We can talk about it.

[Laughter]

Mayor Cason: Alright. Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: You have somebody that's involved and knowledgeable and process improvement would be a great addition.

Mayor Cason: Leave your phone number.

Mr. Rogers: Yes sir.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Thank you for your involvement. Also we are going to be developing a park on Venetia, 1047 Venetia not too far away.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, we've been involved in that decision making as well.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Perfect. Great.

[End: 5:05:12 p.m.]