

**TRAFFIC ADVISORY BOARD
CORAL GABLES YOUTH CENTER – CONFERENCE ROOM
TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2010, 5:30 P.M.**

- SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES -

MEMBERS	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	APPOINTED BY:
	10	10	10	10	10	09	10	10	10	10	09	09	
Vacant	-						P	P	P	E	P	P	Donald D. Slesnick, II
Larry D. Kries	P						P	P	P	P	P	P	Maria Anderson
Deborah Swain	P						P	P	P	P	P	P	Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Vacant	-						P	P	P	#	#	E	William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Chris Zoller*	P						P	P	P	P	P	P	Wayne "Chip" Withers
Donna Kupper*	E						P	E	P	P	E	P	Commission-as-a-Whole
Al Smith*	P						P	A	P	P	P	P	City Manager

P - Present
E - Excused Absence
A - Absent
*** - New Member**
+ - No Meeting
(#) Resigned

Staff

Glenn Kephart, Public Works Director
 Ernesto Pino, Assistant Public Works Director
 James Kay, Engineering Division Supervisor
 Esther Zabalo, Civil Engineer
 Chief Robert Lowman, Fire Department
 Sergeant Jesus Garcia, Police Department

Commission Official

Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.

Residents

Mr. Fernando Menoyo

Guests

Mr. Carlos Sarmiento, Community Traffic Safety Coordinator - FDOT

Ms. Swain called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. She thanked the board members for attending this special meeting to discuss the proposed Segovia Streetscape project.

Secretary's Report:

Mr. Kephart thanked all present and informed the reason for this special meeting is that Public Works is working on the final design of the Segovia Streetscape Project in hopes to begin construction by December 2010. He expressed that it is important to present this to the Board and ask for the Board's comments. Mr. Kephart introduced Mr. Pino to proceed with a detailed description of the project.

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Mr. Pino stated that the old version of the project remains the same. The limits of the work extend from Bird Road to the newly completed Segovia/Biltmore roundabout and the scope of work remains the same, with the exclusion or addition of certain items that resulted from a traffic study conducted by Marlin Engineering. In particular, the addition of curb and gutter to the center of the median and the resurfacing of the asphalt for the entire project. He explained that the project, which was originally bid on, included the cut out of the median in the center without any curb or gutter and the inclusion of bicycle lanes and restriping of the existing asphalt pavement. The bid results were very low, but unfortunately the low bidder did not acknowledge some items in the bid documents. As a result of this, we looked at the first apparent responsive bidder which was the fourth place bidder and whose bid was over in an excess of \$100,000 higher than the low bidder. Mr. Pino referred to a drawing, showing an existing cross section of Segovia Street and a drawing of a cross section reflecting the proposed revised layout. He explained that it is basically the same median (a 16 ft. median) and because of the 16 ft. width, curbs and gutters need to be included.

Mr. Kries asked if the curbs and gutters are a requirement. Mr. Pino explained that it is a requirement from an FDOT standard and they are according to the Green Book, which was used by the consultant to conduct the study. Mr. Pino said that in order for the median not to have curb and gutter it needs to be over 22 ft.

Mr. Kries asked if the original plan met the FDOT standard. Commissioner Cabrera pointed out that over 100 City's traffic calming circles do not meet the Green Book standard.

Mr. Menoyo added that all other parkways in the City are 16 ft. in width and are without curbs and gutters.

Mr. Kries commented that he was sure that they were built before standards.

Mr. Pino continued to explain that in addition to curbs and gutters, the entire road from Bird Road to Biltmore Way will be resurfaced and striped for bicycle lanes. The project remains the same: four lanes will be reduced to two lanes, one north and one south. The traffic study conducted proved that the level of service will not be affected. Another change from the original scope is the actual tree species in the median. The original plan called for fig trees and the revised proposal calls for oaks. Another change is the addition of irrigation in the median which, according to the consultant will increase the trees' growth rate by 75% - 100%. Mr. Pino mentioned that the trees shown on the swale are optional and will be listed as an alternative in the bid for the oak trees. Also, in the original plan, the area between Riviera Drive and Anastasia Avenue had a wide median in the middle, but as a result of the possible coming of the UBC School and the Youth Center across from it, the consultant recommended reducing the wide portion of the median. This median will be 6 ft. wide and it will be landscaped but without oak trees since it will not have the proper width for trees. Mr. Kay added by saying that at the intersections, the sidewalks will be extended up to the pavement and that this is the appropriate time to incorporate it into this project. Mr. Pino commented that this was included in the original plan.

Ms. Swain opened for comments from everyone present and asked the Board members to address any questions after.

Commissioner Cabrera stated that this project is very close to him because he worked with Mr. Alberto Delgado, former Public Works Director, as well as Miami-Dade County/Public Works Department. Commissioner Cabrera stated that this project was stopped by the City Manager. He said that this project has been already approved by Miami-Dade County/Public Works Department and it's ready to go. He stated that he has an agenda and itinerary which came from the Assistant City Manager with a timeline and start date of May 20th. The Commissioner said that the City Manager told him that he chose to stop the project because he felt the project was not complete, thought it was unfinished, and wanted someone to explain the curbs and the gutters and irrigation. Commissioner Cabrera continued by saying that he tried his best to tell the City Manager that in the City of Coral Gables,

especially in the residential areas, there are five (5) gorgeous medians which are all very soft residential medians without curbs and gutters and no irrigation. The Commissioner asked three (3) questions: (1) Has anyone in staff met with the County's Traffic Division Engineers more specifically Mr. Vishu, Design Administrator, in order to assess and determine the guidelines/criteria used by the County, which is the permit authority on this project? Mr. Pino answered no; (2) Have staff ever met with a representative of the Flagler Developers' Traffic Engineers Consultants in order to go over the multiple traffic studies that were performed for their project's affected area, which included a traffic analysis of Segovia Street? Mr. Kay responded that he didn't know if Mr. Delgado met with the developers. Commissioner Cabrera advised that Mr. Delgado left in December and that he's only talking since May 20th, which is when the City Manager put a stop to this project. Mr. Pino responded no; (3) Have you ever meet with the County Impact Fees administrator staff to determine if the changes to the approved scope of work of the Segovia median project will affect the JPA? He said the JPA is the Joint Participation Agreement signed between the City of Coral Gables and Miami-Dade County government. Mr. Pino responded, yes. Commissioner Cabrera asked if Mr. Pino believed there is any chance of a potential slow down of the funding for this project based on these modifications. Mr. Pino responded, no. Commissioner Cabrera said that he told himself if staff answered no to any of these three (3) questions, he was going to ask the Board to defer this item. He stated that in all his years as a City of Coral Gables Commissioner, he has never seen an individual stop a project like the City Manager has stopped this project, which has been approved by the authority that has jurisdiction over the City of Coral Gables, Miami-Dade County/Public Works Department. He continued to state that before he became a Commissioner, he served on three (3) boards: Parks and Recreations Board, the City's Board of Adjustments and Planning Board and he's also been a resident of this community since 1966 and has never seen anything like this in his life. He stated that there has been an analysis done of this traffic impact in the area by Tim Plummer and Associates. In reference to the David Plummer & Associates study, he said that the consultant looked at two (2) things: volume and turning movements of this project and at that time they saw no reason for left hand turns. He said nothing has been done to go back to the authorities who approved and worked on this project because someone just decided that this was an incomplete, unfinished project and didn't like the way it looked. The Commissioner stated that maybe this project, as presented by staff, will look really fine somewhere in West Kendall or perhaps in the City of Sunrise, but in the City of Coral Gables with the gorgeous medians mentioned before, has no characteristic that defines the City. This looks like Ponce de Leon, an urban design and it doesn't fit in our neighborhood. The Commissioner continued to say that he probably won't prevail on this one because staff has resources that he doesn't have. He then referred to the Manager's Straight Talk Newsletter and stated that this document that was put out reminds him of when he was a little kid in Cuba and the communist propaganda machine put out these kinds of things to let people know what separates the facts from fiction. He said this is layered with all kinds of misinformation, but he was going to save that for the cameras. Regarding the three (3) questions asked, he reiterated that staff answered no to two (2) of his questions and he didn't know how a project like this can move forward if the authority responsible for this project, who has a JPA with the City of Coral Gables, has yet to know anything about it outside of what Mr. Pino shared. He said these are my questions and my concerns and that he really hopes that this Board will seriously contemplate it. Commissioner Cabrera said he didn't believe he's going to prevail, like the old saying that you can't beat City Hall...this is alive and well in Coral Gables.

Mr. Menoyo shared information with the Board which compared the urban median (being proposed by the City Manager) and the residential median (original median) and briefly discussed the pros and cons. He stated that in order to complete the urban median suggested by the City Manager, there will only be enough funds to go to University Drive. As a result, it will be depriving residents of a complete project between Biltmore Way & Bird Road. He said if you go with the concrete curbs and you go with irrigation with a drainage system, it will interfere with the growth of the trees because they are French drains. The trees will shade the bike lanes. This project has been approved by Miami-Dade County and was to be completed this summer. He stated that there is no question that a group of residents are in favor of completing the project, as designed originally, which is what the City deserves.

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Mr. Kries stated that this Board has already approved this project and that the version presented by the Manager has never been reviewed and approved by the Board. He stated that the only initial concern brought out was regarding the fig trees. He further commented that as a resident of the area, the curbs make no sense and that they don't fit with the rest of the neighborhood. He said that the Board thought the original design made sense.

Mr. Zoller stated that he agreed with Mr. Kries' comment (above). He also mentioned that he's lived for many years at 525 Malaga Avenue, 1-1/2 houses off Segovia, and has many good friends in the neighborhood who have been looking forward to this project. He also stated he appreciated Commissioner Cabrera's involvement.

Commissioner Cabrera said that this has been very disturbing and that he's tried not to get emotional about things, but it's been disturbing the way this has been handled. He gave Mr. Kephart a copy of the timeline, which he stated came directly from Assistant City Manager, Maria Menendez.

Mr. Zoller stated that he appreciated Commissioner Cabrera's passion and interest. He further commented that this is a neighborhood issue and he's glad that everyone is here as neighbors and glad that Mr. Kries is here because this is his zone (his backyard). He also mentioned that he couldn't agree more with replacing the Ficus with Oaks.

Mr. Menoyo said that he wasn't going to make the trees his battle, his battle is with the curbs and irrigation.

Mr. Zoller stated that the trees need to be a shade tree instead of a palm. He also said that the existence of curbs are appropriate for the Ponce de Leon median, an urban setting, but not going to be effective on Segovia. He stated that he has mentioned to the Board, numerous times, for them to take a ½ hour of their day and take a quick drive down to High Pines (74th street as it runs from Red Road all the way over past School House Road), which is not only the most gorgeous median in all Miami-Dade County but in the evenings you see families, kids and dogs. Also, you have a chance to see traffic calming devices that he's been recommending for quite some time. Mr. Zoller stated that he agreed with Larry and Ralph. This project was approved by this Board and he's disappointed that it has come to this and now maybe it's totally changed, perhaps ruined.

Ms. Swain commented that this item came in front of this Board last fall and they discussed the original design, the trees, and the planting.

Mr. Smith asked if the Board voted on something and Ms. Swain responded yes.

Mr. Zoller stated that the Board voted on the proposal that was approved without curbs and gutters, without drainage, and without irrigation.

Mr. Smith stated that it seems the Board did not vote on this. Ms. Swain stated that the Board's vote was to support the project as originally designed. Mr. Zoller agreed with Ms. Swain and stated the Board gave it its blessing to the original design.

Mr. Smith asked if the presence of the curbs would narrow the center for Police/Fire access. Chief Lowman replied that it shouldn't change access.

Ms. Swain asked if the standards are standards or requirements, since the City obviously deviates throughout the City regarding traffic calming.

Mr. Kephart replied that they are standards that set-up requirements that control liability. The challenge is that this is a Green Book recommendation and in order to do something different, it puts the City at increased risk of liability. He said that as soon as anyone hits the tree, the first thing that somebody will say is that we built something that didn't meet today's current standards. He stated that he doesn't believe that we have the same level of liability on the streets that were built a long time ago, perhaps before most of the standards were even written, because we don't have the resource to correct those situations. They exist and they are part of our environment, but to take current public funds and build something that doesn't meet current standards creates additional liability to the City.

Ms. Swain asked if the standard curb is at 18 ft. and asked Mr. Pino if he said 20 ft. or 22 ft. is required. Mr. Pino said that according to the consultant, in order to be categorized as a rural x-section it needs to be 22 ft. He said that 22 ft. or over you don't need curb & gutter and that anything less than 22 ft. requires it.

Ms. Swain asked that if that's the case, what will be involved in expanding the outer white stripe to 22 ft. to meet that criteria. Mr. Pino said that this is something that could be addressed and discussed.

Mr. Menoyo asked if it will be going into the parkway on both sides. Ms. Swain said that what she understands it's the edge of pavement, which includes the white lane to the sides.

Mr. Pino said that it's measured from the edge of the pavement.

Commissioner Cabrera stated that a lot of this stuff is mud because they have not talked to Miami-Dade County's Public Works and arbitrarily decided to do this at the direction of one man. This is not a regular process and as far as Mr. Kephart's comments, that there are design deviations in every traffic calming project, the Green Book's responsibility really applies to highways and high speed corridors. The Commissioner mentioned that the only section of the Green Book that addresses streets is Chapter 5. He said that there is no other section that applies in regards to something like this, and said do not get distracted what the Green Book is for and there is always deviations. Commissioner Cabrera stated that there are over 100 traffic calming circles since he took office 9 ½ years and to check how many have deviations. He also stated that we can be sued by those too based upon somebody running over into one of those. He said to check on deviations on the City's recently constructed roundabouts, which have deviations and they didn't pass the Green Book standards.

Mr. Menoyo stated that he spoke to Mr. Delgado and by going into parkways, the parkway along both sides of Segovia are extremely wide. Further, he said that you can go into those parkways 1 ft. - 2 ft. or a 1 ft. on each side without altering the parkways. Mr. Menoyo said that with just a little bit of asphalt, you can make the median wider. He said the important measurement is the wide traffic lanes, the outer edge to the outer edge so the median is 16 ft. but there is an extra foot of space between the median and the outer edge of the wide traffic. He mentioned that right now there is 18 ft., but it can be taken to 20 ft. – 21 ft. He stated that Segovia is not a collector street. Further, he said that this term came from our City Manager.

Ms. Swain inquired about the approval and permitting process.

Mr. Pino replied that the City needs to notify the County regarding the changes from the original plans. He said that once the County is advised of these changes, they will respond in a timely manner.

Ms. Swain asked if there was a permit for the original design and Ms. Zabalo responded that the City has County approval.

Mr. Zoller asked how far along was the City towards breaking ground for this project as of May 20th.

Commissioner Cabrera responded that he will provide the timeline and that he felt staff was not prepared to see the document obtained from the Assistant City Manager. He stated it was given to him after a meeting he had with the Assistant City Manager relating to bicycling related issues and asked her to please provide him with the project's timeline.

Mr. Zoller stated that the deadline for bids' submittal was Thursday, April 22nd and that they were not opened. He said nothing happened until of May 25th, which was when the item was pulled.

Commissioner Cabrera stated that on May 20th he went to the City Manager's Office to discuss a different matter which was when the Manager said he was putting a stop to the project for two (2) reasons: (1) He felt the project was incomplete and then he gave him the story about the curbs and the gutters and the irrigation; (2) He commented that we had the issue with the charter school which could have an adverse effect on the project itself (going from 4 to 2 lanes). In addition, Commissioner Cabrera mentioned that he also learned that there was an alternative request for Royal Palms and that as a cyclist, the last thing a cyclist wants are Royal Palms because the palm fronds fall, which may cause injuries to cyclists or cars. Commissioner Cabrera stated that when the City Manager told him the project came below funding, the City Manager said this provided the ability to do these additional things. Commissioner Cabrera suggested using this funding for landscaping that could really beautify the project, but said the Manager took a different approach. The Commissioner continued to state that to the best of his knowledge, this was not done under the direction of the City Commission and finds it very hard to read a sentence that says that the City goals are to create an inviting neighborhood street which portrays Coral Gables' unique character. He said "this unique character" is in about five (5) phenomenal medians in our City and he didn't know about neighborhood streets in Coral Gables, maybe in Sunrise they have curbs and gutters, but here we don't.

Chief Lowman commented on Segovia's speed limit and asked if there was a plan to reduce the speed limit. Mr. Pino said no.

Ms. Swain commented about residents on Segovia using the parkway in front of their houses to park their vehicles and if the median is widened to accommodate the standard, it may interfere with this parking.

Mr. Menoyo asked how much the City spent on this unnecessary study since it's a complete waste. Commissioner Cabrera responded that he didn't know but had asked the City Manager to give him that number by Friday.

Mr. Kries asked Mr. Kephart if he was present to make a recommendation. Mr. Kephart said that they are making a recommendation to move forward with the current project. He also stated that there is a significant amount of controversy around the table and hopes the project is not delayed further. Commissioner Cabrera commented by saying "unfortunately your boss already delayed the project".

Ms. Swain asked if there are consequences from further delaying the project and what's in jeopardy. Mr. Kay stated that he didn't think the impact fees were in jeopardy. Commissioner Cabrera asked if the JPA would need to go through any modifications. Mr. Pino responded that this would only to be necessary if the City was requesting additional funds, which they are not.

Ms. Swain also asked if additional turning lanes would change from the original plan. Mr. Pino said no, that no more dedicated left turn lanes were added. Mr. Zoller asked if there were originally dedicated left turn lanes. Mr. Pino said yes.

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Mr. Menoyo stated that as residents of the area, they have proposed to continue the median to the intersections of Valencia & Anastasia and eliminate those recently installed traffic lights. He stated that in his opinion, safety issues in these intersections are better addressed with a wide median.

Ms. Swain asked if there were any thoughts about removing the traffic light. Mr. Pino said that this was the first he's heard about. Mr. Zoller replied that this was not contemplated in the original plan.

Mr. Menoyo stated that as far as the street lights in those mentioned intersections, why this has not been suggested, when he has sent e-mails to Commissioners and Ms. Zabalo for a whole year suggesting that those traffic lights be eliminated. He said that once the median is there, the street lights are not necessary. He also said that once this project is built and those traffic lights are left there, they'll never be changed.

Ms. Zabalo stated that on the original plan it was not contemplated to take out the traffic lights.

Ms. Swain said that the Board can move forward with the project as recommended, not move the project, ask for a deferral or any other alternatives. She asked if there is a motion to approve the project as recommended.

Ms. Swain also mentioned that another way to not defer this is to start with the original project and then address each of the changes recommended as a new project. She stated that this would be an alternative way to approach it and then address the individual components in question: adding curb and gutter, doing the resurfacing, changing the trees, adding irrigation to the median. She also added the other items to be addressed such as shrinking the median at those intersections that are shown and extending the left turns lanes.

Ms. Swain continued to state that her issue with deferring this project is that she does not know what answers would make her change her mind and feels that deferring would not get the Board anywhere.

Mr. Zoller stated that he wants to defer this project and to find the Plummer and Associates study to prove that a study was done. He further requested the written approval from the County to see how it reads.

Mr. Smith asked that since this has already been out for bid, does the bidding process need to start again. Mr. Kephart responded yes.

Mr. Zoller made a motion to defer this project until the Board gets better understanding of what is preventing from moving forward with the original plan and whether or not this new plan is good.

Mr. Kries seconded the motion. He also stated that he did not support the revised plan.

Commissioner Cabrera stated that if the Board did not give their support, the City Commission will question it.

Mr. Kries made a motion to not accept this plan as proposed and for the Board to consider incorporating certain elements. Mr. Zoller seconded.

Ms. Swain stated that those new items to be incorporated need to be discussed. This includes the oak trees and the curb and gutter, which she does not like. However, she said she likes the idea of resurfacing but not at the expense of eliminating any funding available for the planting. She asked if resurfacing was done, would there be funding for planting. Mr. Pino responded that through the road impact fees program, the County will not approve an enhanced beautification project in landscaping. He said they will not fund enhancing the landscape, but they would definitely fund the resurfacing.

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Ms. Swain asked what was the funding for the planting part on the original plan. Mr. Pino said that it was in the neighborhood of \$60,000.

Mr. Menoyo asked if \$60,000 is enough for the median and the parkways. Mr. Pino said no.

A unanimous vote was made to not support the existing plan and all were in favor.

Mr. Kries clarified the previous motion to support the original plan with the change to oak trees not only on the median but also in the swale. Mr. Zoller seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Cabrera introduced Mr. Carlos Sarmiento as the Community Traffic Safety Coordinator (CTST) for the Florida Department of Transportation, District 6. Mr. Sarmiento said he is very interested in working, not only with the City of Coral Gables, but with the City's Traffic Advisory Board relating to issues that are affecting the City and FDOT.

Mr. Carlos Sarmiento discussed the CTST program consisting of Engineering, Enforcement, Education and Emergency Services in hopes to reduce or preferably eliminate fatalities on roadways (any roadway: state, city and county). He has established this program for other local municipalities in which traffic safety issues are discussed and addressed. In addition, relating to enforcement issues, the program works with law enforcement providing them information and supporting them in keeping streets safe. Mr. Sarmiento requested to be not necessarily part of the board, but maybe create a separate team (Coral Gables community traffic safety team).

Mr. Kephart suggested that Mr. Sarmiento work with staff and attend regular meetings with staff.

Ms. Swain stated that this is a good idea.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.