

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-6**  
**August 24, 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**

**Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria**

**City Attorney, Miriam Ramos**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Fire Chief, Marcos De La Rosa**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Robert Birch**

**Sue Kawalerski**

**David Perez**

**Aurora Lonbana**

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Agenda Item F-6 [11:49 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process", Section 14-213, and Comprehensive Plan amendment procedures (ss. 163.3187, Florida Statutes), changing the land use designation for property legally described as Lots 6 and 19, and the west 25 feet of lots 7 and 18, Block 219, Riviera Section #14, Coral Gables, Florida, from Religious/Institutional to Public Buildings

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City Commission Meeting

August 24, 2021

Agenda Item F-6 - Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, and Comprehensive Plan amendment procedures, changing the land use designation for property legally described as Lots 6 and 19, and the west 25 feet of Lots 7 and 18, Block 219, Riviera Section #14, from Religious/Institutional to Public Buildings and Grounds.

and Grounds; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date. ( Legal Description on file)

Mayor Lago: Moving on to Item F-6.

City Attorney Ramos: F-6 is an ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process", Section 14-213, and Comprehensive Plan amendment procedures, changing the land use designation for property legally described as Lots 6 and 19, and the west 25 feet of Lots 7 and 18, Block 219, Riviera Section 14, Coral Gables, Florida, from Religious/Institutional to Public Buildings and Grounds; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date. This is a public hearing item. Anyone wishing to testify in this item, including Mr. Trias, should be sworn in by the City Clerk.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Madam City Attorney. Mr. Clerk, has anybody -- is anybody --?

City Clerk Urquia: No, sir.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Attorney Ramos: We need to swear everybody in, Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you will provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth, sir?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: I do.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Thank you very much. May I have the PowerPoint, please?  
May I have the PowerPoint? Okay.

Mayor Lago: Any moment.

Unidentified Speaker: There you go.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Thank you very much. Thank you. Mayor, Commissioners, this is a very important project that you have been working on for many, many months, and I think finally it's coming to you in a way that can be approved. The request today is only the change of land use. When the second reading comes along, you will have a change of land use, second reading, and also, the municipal facility site plan, which allows for some zoning flexibility in the project. As you know, the location of this project is on Sunset, and the back is on San Ignacio Avenue. You can see it in context here. There's some historic buildings nearby. The current land use is religious, as you know. That used to be parking for -- used for a church partially. And the current zoning is special use, which will remain because it also is appropriate. So, the only change is for the land use. The land use is being changed from Religious to Public Building. And as I said before, next time in the next Commission meeting, you will get a chance to also approve the zoning for public buildings, which gives you some flexibility. The project, as you can see, the building faces Sunset and there's a park -- a buffer Park along San Ignacio. This is the front elevation of the building. And some of the issues that deal with the zoning are minor issues that deal with the open space and the -- I think that was the only issue that we had to correct with the future ordinance.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Trias, going back to the open space issue, can you go over a little bit about that?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes. The open space for special use is 35 percent.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Which we changed that legislation.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes, yes. And what happens is that the actual open space for the site plan if you look at it -- because there's so much paved area -- is a little bit less.

City Manager Iglesias: However, Mayor, we do have a firehouse park in the back, and a lot of that is due to the fact that there is -- this is a firehouse and there is equipment that has to go.

Mayor Lago: No, I just wanted to acknowledge that because I mean, again, it's not what I would like to see, but...

City Manager Iglesias: But it is (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Lago: We have to compromise because if we're going to provide that excellent type of service for a neighborhood that needs it...

Unidentified Speaker: Right.

Mayor Lago: I mean, I -- we opposed adamantly putting this on the Cocoplum Circle. And I think this is a much better opportunity. And this would be one of the things that I would have to give up a little bit on.

City Manager Iglesias: But it's still over 20 percent.

Mayor Lago: No, yeah, it's over 20 percent.

City Manager Iglesias: It's still over 20 percent, and there is quite a buffer with that park on the residential side, which will be, again, a firehouse park with that theme.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah, because of the nature of the building, you do have to pave the front.

Mayor Lago: Pretty much.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: And that's the issue, I think, at hand. If you look at the elevation, obviously, you would need to have pavement.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can I ask why there's so much paving in the back?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: There's some parking. As you can see, there's parking.

Vice Mayor Mena: For the -- okay, understood.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Is there any way that we --? Are we looking --?

City Manager Iglesias: There is parking and there's an emergency exit out the back just in case we need it.

Mayor Lago: Is there any way that we can potentially do some sort of joint agreement with the neighboring facility with all that asphalt and all that parking that's there? Are they --? Have we

spoken with them and said, "Listen, you know, we're bringing this great amenity to the neighborhood. Help us out."

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor. Remember that we paid \$1.5 million for this. We have the -  
- we used the \$1.5 million from the State. We have an emergency exit going to the side and to the  
back just in case something happens in the front. But we would have to -- that parking is part of -  
- is being leased right now.

Mayor Lago: Oh, okay.

City Manager Iglesias: To the commercial area just to the west.

Mayor Lago: Alright, okay, so it's not available.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: So, it is what it is, but there's a park or part of -- that is the  
buffer on San Ignacio. So, I think, from a design point of view, that's very effective. And the  
actual site -- the footprint of the building is more or less consistent with the regulation, so it's very  
close to the zoning regulations. That gives you a sense of the building and the width that it fits in  
context, also in terms of the massing, so you can see that it's fairly consistent with the neighborhood  
character. The park, 40 feet tall -- 44 -- I'm sorry, 44 feet tall and a 30-foot setback in the front.  
The review timeline included a neighborhood meeting in April, the Planning and Zoning in May,  
Board of Architects in June, another neighborhood meeting in July, and today's meeting. The list  
of property owners were sent within 1,500 feet, which is the requirement for land use changes.  
And also, I wanted to emphasize that the comp plan makes it very clear that we need to reach out  
in the community and have a lot of public participation, which we did with the three letters that  
were sent to property owners. The property was posted twice; two website postings and one  
newspaper advertisement. So, staff has reviewed the change of land use, and it is consistent with  
the Comprehensive Plan and recommends approval. And as I said before, in the next meeting, you

will get the task to approve also the resolution for the zoning issues. If you have any questions, I'll be available.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Trias, quick question. In those two neighborhoods -- in the two neighborhood meetings, what was the overall sentiment of the residents that live in the neighborhood? What were their concerns?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: There were concerns about traffic, obviously, the impact. More than concerns, I would say questions. Chief De La Rosa was extremely effective explaining many of those issues. There were some issues about the aesthetics. Some people really liked it, and some people really disliked it. So, as you know, these things tend to be like that.

Mayor Lago: Subjective.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes. And then they have very strong opinions, which is a very good thing. And that's what's so great about this city. People have strong opinions because they really care. So, I believe that -- there were also some operational questions about how actually the business of running a firehouse will be. And the Chief, again, explained it very well, and I believe he's here if there are any additional questions.

Mayor Lago: So, there was a lot of balancing similar to what we were talking about open space before. I imagine people were saying, "I may not like this aspect, or I may not be fully convinced about this aspect of the fire station, but I'm willing to overlook that because of the safety aspect and the quality-of-life aspect." Is that --?

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: I think so.

Mayor Lago: Would you see that? Because I didn't go to those meetings. So, did you --? Was that kind of like the overwhelming sentiment?

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So, the overall sentiment, if I had to characterize it, as it was discussed here earlier, was mainly between the design of the building, how we were going to manage being there, and how we were going to behave as a neighbor...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Much less than not wanting the site or the firehouse there. I think that most of the folks that attended, whether it was through Zoom or presently, understood the need for the firehouse and how that location was selected, and how we tried to balance the needs of the City with the desires of the residents. So, I believe that those were not the concerns of our residents. It was mainly more, as Ramon just said -- Mr. Trias just said -- about either the aesthetics or the business of the firehouse.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, and those are the sentiments that I've gotten from the residents, like for example, how will we behave. You know, we're not going to turn on the horns, you know, at three in the morning or in the afternoon. We're going to be thoughtful. The lights will -- you know, we get a few blocks away, then we'll move in that direction of, you know, following the protocols. But just be thoughtful in regards to the neighborhood.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Correct. And you know, try to be good neighbors at all our fire station locations, and cognizant of those that are neighbors of ours. Like some questions that were brought up were -- and we clarified was there is no alerting system or speakers in the exterior of the building and -- that would possibly be going off in the middle of night, for instance. We are designing the station in a way that we can yield into the station and out of the station without disrupting traffic,



for instance. So, a lot of those issues were brought up, and we're going to continue to look at how we can best be a neighbor.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, (INAUDIBLE) Fire Station 1, 2 and 3 are close to residential, and the Chief has done an excellent job in balancing that safety with the residential component.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question on the PowerPoint. Are there schools in that area? Because if I'm not mistaken, or you know, where we have large, you know, groups that we would be serving, you know, besides single-family homes and things like that or anything?

Vice Mayor Mena: There's a school one property away. There's the Cocoplum Women's Club immediately adjacent and then Riviera Day School is the next building. There's also the...

City Manager Iglesias: To answer...

Vice Mayor Mena: There's also...

City Manager Iglesias: Sunset.

Commissioner Menendez: That's fantastic.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: There are two schools; yes, that's correct.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: And yeah, Sunset is also right there.

Commissioner Menendez: Right there.

Vice Mayor Mena: But that's not Coral Gables.

Commissioner Menendez: That's near -- I mean, it's a throw -- a stone's throw away from Sunset.

Vice Mayor Mena: But we wouldn't be servicing...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Sunset.

City Manager Iglesias: No.

Vice Mayor Mena: But Riviera is in Coral Gables.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: That is correct.

Unidentified Speaker: Well, how would that work?

Vice Mayor Mena: They would call the County.

City Manager Iglesias: But let me say that the...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: (INAUDIBLE) the City limits is Sunset.

City Manager Iglesias: Before we purchased the property, the Chief did simulations through that area to make sure that that site was an effective site. And through those simulations, he -- we -- that's how we elected to actually buy it. So, it was simulations done with the school, Sunset, and those factors to make sure that it was effective. And I'll let the Chief further answer that. But that's one of the reasons that we did purchase the property.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So, one of the motivating factors that we were looking at always before we identified this property was the vicinity around Sunset Drive, simply because it was south of the Gables Waterway, and it provided east-west access to two major thoroughfares for us, and Schoolhouse Road in the middle that we can traverse across. When we did simulations -- as the Manager stated -- on Sunset Drive, one of the things is there is a school there. They do have a school zone, but that operation of either pickup or drop-off -- drop-off or pickup is well managed in the means that most of the traffic is either stacked within the property of the school or along the large swale that Sunset has, and they always have a police officer there to assist in managing the traffic. So, when we did simulations during schooltime hours, that was one of the aspects that we noticed that actually worked in our favor. Another one that I can bring up is, in contrast to Old Cutler, where you have the curb that runs alongside the road to protect either pedestrians or your bicyclists, that does not enable traffic to yield out of your way when you're going north or south. In contrast, Sunset Drive does have a soft swale on either side that does enable traffic to yield in the event that we're approaching them going to an emergency scene so...

Commissioner Menendez: In that area, there's a -- because my mom, when she got older, medical issues -- I think it's called the Riviera...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: And I think it's a six- or seven-story building...

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: -- or if not higher. And -- I guess an important question is staffing. Where do you --? Where will you draw your team from to be able to house that -- you know, staff that station?

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So, initially when the concept of this fire station was realized and we were moving forward, the initial step is to redirect one of the fire trucks that's at the station on US 1. So, right now there's two fire trucks there. Move one of those fire trucks to that station because it can offer one, fire suppression, and then two, all our fire engines have the same equipment that a rescue truck does. So, we have all of the paramedic equipment and staffing that goes along with it. So, initially in our plan is to move that fire engine there. Once that is in place, with regards to future staffing, that is something that the Manager and I have been discussing since January, and we will be proposing a long-term strategic plan, not only for that station, but for the City as a whole as what are our future needs with regards to staffing. So, that's an ongoing process.

City Manager Iglesias: And let me just say that plan includes Police also.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: We've been working with Police to look at our long-term needs and how to move progressively through a five-year plan.

Mayor Lago: So, we have some public comment. I think we have -- how many individuals do we have?

City Clerk Urquia: Right now, three, sir.

Mayor Lago: Okay, three. My only concern outside of the open space, which it is what it is, we have no other choice -- the public service component, and obviously, the safety, you know, trumps the open space in this situation -- is the design is nice, but I would like a little bit more softer, kind of Med feel to it, especially when we're talking about public funds. That's just my opinion. If my colleagues disagree, we can move forward. It's fine, but I think it's a little bit too kind of contemporary from my feel, not that I don't like contemporary. I think contemporary's beautiful, but I'd like to see something a little bit softer. Can we open --?

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we went through the Board of Architects and they suggested something like that. We're looking at some stone to bring that down right now, and I think the Board of Architects has been very helpful in all the projects that we've done. So, we're going to incorporate those Board of Architects comments and do exactly what you're saying, kind of bring it down and look at the stone component and so forth.

Mayor Lago: My only concern with the stone is the cost and the maintenance, which is pretty big. I mean, again, just -- I speak on the record what I know, you know. I've been dealing with stone and it's a significant cost.

City Manager Iglesias: If you try to do something, there's always that balance of doing nice versus...

Mayor Lago: No, I just that, you know...

City Manager Iglesias: That, as you know.

Mayor Lago: We're having a discussion about Mediterranean, and it could be an opportunity to really set the tone on something which I think could be simple and soft. It doesn't have to be over-the-top Mediterranean, but we could discuss that later. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker is Mr. Robert Birch.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Birch, thank you for joining us today. Sorry about the long wait. The floor is yours.

City Clerk Urquia: Sir, before you begin, if you could be sworn in.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you will provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

Robert Birch: I do.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Birch: My name is Robert Birch, and I am a neighbor to this project. In fact, I can probably throw a rock out of my backyard and hit it. I am opposed to the siting of this. I do not necessarily support or oppose the building of a fire station in the City of Coral Gables. I don't have enough information. I first learned of this project in probably about March. I participated in a Zoom meeting. I attempted to ask questions about the project, the need for the fire station, the cost of it, the options that were looked at and et cetera. I was told that's not part of that meeting. One lady on the call that worked for the City was nice enough to try and get me some information to enlighten me about the project. And one of the things I got was this four-page memo deals with the City Commission meeting of January 28, 2010. And when I started looking at it, I found that the reason for doing it is to improve the Department's response time to mid-southeast portions of the City. And it shows that Figure 1 provides a map depicting the radius of all the fire stations in

the City. Unfortunately, this map does not show the proposed fire station. It shows the proposed fire station in the location down near the circle at Sunset, Le Jeune, and Old Cutler. If it had shown the proposed one, you would have clearly seen that the vast majority -- probably 60 percent of the land area -- residence, buildings are not even in the City of Coral Gables. So, it's providing minimal benefits of that site versus the original site. I have no idea why the Commission didn't approve the original site, and I didn't even know about it. And here it says it wasn't approved and that all it said about the purchase of that site. This site is over a mile west of the original site. Therefore, it's not going to provide the benefits, much benefits to the mid-southeast portion of the City because it's now a mile away from that, from where it was. It also -- it was two schools located by. You know, you all just got -- talked a little bit. One was Riviera. That's a block -- if not a block away, it's a couple hundred feet away from this site.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Mr. Birch: There is a lot of traffic in front of that school. Often, it backs up way down the street when it comes time to pick people up. It's a very congested area. On the east side of this project, less than a block away, is Sunset Elementary. It has congestion. They do a pretty good job of managing it, but it's still a lot of congestion, a lot of pedestrians walking back and forth. In front of this project on Sunset, traffic often backs up at rush hour, and it's gotten much worse in the last couple of months because there's some changes done at the signaling at Red Road and Sunset. They changed the logic of it there. There's no right turns anymore there. There's about a 45-, 40-second pedestrian walk that stops all traffic in all directions. It's causing major backup right near the front of this thing. It's not going to -- to me, it doesn't serve the best interest of the siting of it. Most of the area, again, is not even in Coral Gables that it covers. It has minimal benefits to the area that it was designed to enhance the response time. So, therefore, I'm just opposed to the site. Again, I'm not necessarily in support or opposed to building a fire station. I'd sure like to know the facts about it. I'd like to know how much is it going to cost, the benefits, the need, where is it

deficient, all the criteria met, the existing. Is it really needed? There's a lot of cost that the City's going to incur and therefore, the residents are going to incur. So, I just wanted to make my points.

Vice Mayor Mena: I can give you a little bit of background, and then I'll ask staff to provide details to you. But -- and for the record, Mr. Birch is my immediate next-door neighbor for six years.

Mr. Birch: I wanted to discuss it with somebody that had recently moved in the neighborhood, but I didn't do that.

Vice Mayor Mena: The -- and I think you -- if I heard you correctly, you said the document you were provided was from 2010, did you say?

Mr. Birch: No, no, 2020.

Vice Mayor Mena: 2020, okay.

Mr. Birch: If I said '10, I meant '20.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay, good. So, this originally came to us per that document with a property located at basically Cocoplum Circle, the southwest corner...

Mr. Birch: Sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: Of Cocoplum Circle. The cost of that property, if I recall, was \$4 million.

City Attorney Ramos: Correct, I just confirmed it.



Vice Mayor Mena: was \$4 million, the acquisition cost. We had at the time a state grant for -- was it 1.5?

City Attorney Ramos: 1.5.

City Manager Iglesias: 1.5.

Vice Mayor Mena: \$1.5 million. And so basically, we were going to apply the State grant and spend another two and a half million dollars on acquisition. I voted against that. Mayor Lago voted against that. It was a -- I believe it was a three to two vote in favor of purchasing that property, but you need four-fifths vote to purchase property in the City, so the item failed. The City then pivoted to identifying other locations. As you can imagine, locations for fire stations are not, you know, all the readily available. There's not a million options out there, so they undertook an analysis. And I would ask Chief De La Rosa to provide you any of the documentation, you know, involved in identifying the site, involved in the study he referenced about traffic patterns. But long story short, the acquisition price for this lot was 1.5, right?

City Manager Iglesias: Two million.

Vice Mayor Mena: Two, excuse me, two. So, it was a net savings of \$2 million on acquisition. There's obviously costs associated with building versus retrofitting the other property that we can also get you that information. To your point about traffic -- which is a fair point -- one of the -- and I'll defer to Chief De La Rosa if he has a more expert way of explaining this, given his expertise -- but one of -- when we discussed it originally, one of the issues was the fire station on Old Cutler down south, during certain times of day, in the mornings, et cetera, the traffic for that station to service anything north of it is -- makes it really close to impossible to get there in a reasonable response time. So, the goal originally -- and there was an occasion -- I forget what year now -- where a gentleman in one of the neighborhoods along Old Cutler -- I forget which one -- had a

choking incident, he died. Our response times were less than -- they weren't horrible, but they were not up to the standards of what we want to see in terms of response times. So, that's what sort of started this whole process to identify a site, and ended up on this location. The objective - - and I hear your point about, if you draw another concentric circle, there's a large portion of that pie, if you will, that's not even the City of Coral Gables. The objective of identifying this other location was so that these fire stations, the fire station on US 1, the fire station down Old Cutler, and this fire station can essentially work in tandem, so that depending on the time of day and the location of a call received, they can strategically manage that and deploy a fire truck and paramedics from the location that's able to get there with the fastest response time. And so I just wanted to kind of explain that backdrop to you of how this all came about and what the logic is behind it. Because you're right, there will be times of day where it may not make sense to deploy a fire truck from this location and the Chief will have protocols in place that may dictate that the fire truck instead be deployed from the Old Cutler station or perhaps the station on US 1. But he undertook analysis to try to improve our response times and found that this general area was the right area. Now...

Mr. Birch: Was that a better response than the Circle?

Vice Mayor Mena: Was that a better response than the Circle? I guess it depends to where. But you know if it's on Old Cutler, obviously not, right? I'm not going to -- right? In other words, it's a mile difference, right?

Mr. Birch: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, now, he will -- again, he has protocols in place that determine which station deploys it. If it's during -- I hear you. If it's during drop-off hour at Sunset Elementary, it probably doesn't make sense to deploy a fire truck going east on Sunset. But if it's the rest of the day, that difference between this fire station and Cocoplum Circle is minimal. So, it just sort of depends on

logistically when the call comes in, what type of call it is, et cetera. So, I don't want to speak for Chief De La Rosa, but I wanted to give you the benefit of sort of how we got here and what the thought process was. And it was both the public safety component was the impetus for the entire objective of having a fire station in this general area, and then obviously, the decision to change from the Cocoplum location -- or I shouldn't say to change from there to this location, because at the time we didn't have another location. We just said, "Let's not pay \$4 million for that property..."

Mr. Birch: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Which was an obscene price, frankly, to pay for it at the time. Like really...

Mr. Birch: Probably higher today.

Vice Mayor Mena: Egregious maybe and still not even -- right. The issue was -- I believe the appraised value at the time was...

Mayor Lago: Two million.

Mr. Birch: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: And they were asking four.

Mayor Lago: They were asking...

City Manager Iglesias: Four million.

Mayor Lago: Pretty significant money.

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City Commission Meeting

August 24, 2021

Agenda Item F-6 - Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, and Comprehensive Plan amendment procedures, changing the land use designation for property legally described as Lots 6 and 19, and the west 25 feet of Lots 7 and 18, Block 219, Riviera Section #14, from Religious/Institutional to Public Buildings and Grounds. Page 19

Vice Mayor Mena: So, it was just an obscene price at the time, obviously.

Mr. Birch: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: And so, that's -- I wanted to give you the benefit of that background. And I'll save my other comments on the matter for after, but I wanted to answer Mr. Birch's comments.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, I think that was an excellent -- your comments were right on point. And I will also say that we looked everywhere for a site. We had realtors looking for it, we looked for it. And the Chief and our Asset Manager did a fantastic job in finding this site ourselves. And so, we came very close to losing the \$1.5 million from the State, but we did not. And so, it was a desperate effort to find another suitable site because there has to be a suitable site. And it's something that Chief De La Rosa looked at and I think you explained it very well.

Vice Mayor Mena: I would also add -- and again, there's no perfect answer to this. But they negotiated or spoke to at least various property owners along Sunset to try to identify different sites. A lot of them didn't work out or weren't properly suited. I would note this site -- as you know -- but just for the benefit of the public -- again, it has the Cocoplum Women's Club immediately to -- adjacent to the west. It has the Riviera Presbyterian Church and school immediately adjacent to the east, and will front -- and therefore, ingress and egress will 99 percent of the time be via Sunset, as opposed to into a Gables residential street. And then again, the idea of having a park on the back side to just buffer a bit the station from the actual Gables residential...

Mr. Birch: I was happy to hear that the exit onto San Ignacio was an emergency exit because that wasn't what it was set for in the Zoom meeting. They talked about having possibly vehicles going in and out of that. That disturbed me.

Vice Mayor Mena: That should not be the case and I don't see...

City Manager Iglesias: It was never an exit. It was always an emergency exit.

Mr. Birch: That was the impression I got from...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: That was a discussion, as you stated, that was brought up out of one of the neighborhood meetings. And we assured the individual that brought that conversation to bear that there will be no customary operations, daily operations coming out towards San Ignacio. In fact, the way the station is established on the property is that 100 percent of Fire Department operations will go on Sunset. That access gate in the back was there as an extreme emergency in case, for whatever reason, we needed access to the back of the fire station. But there would not be traversed with fire apparatus on any daily basis.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I don't -- and I also would add, I don't -- I want you to know that that wasn't an afterthought. That was key to us identifying and proceeding with this site because both the fact that ingress and egress would be via Sunset, and the fact that there would be a buffer on the backside to the residential. So, you know, definitely...

Mr. Birch: Have you looked at the impact of the changes to that interchange -- intersection, I mean, Red Road and Sunset?

Fire Chief De La Rosa: Yes.

Mr. Birch: They've changed the operation of that -- those lights that are backing traffic up. It now takes me two or three times in changing the light to get through that intersection, where before it was once or twice.

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So, as Commissioner Mean -- I don't think I can articulate the background behind it as -- almost as well as the Commissioner stated earlier. Our intent, just to add to what the Commissioner said, was locate a firehouse south of the Gables Waterway, south of the Le Jeune Bridge, that we could use or take advantage of major thoroughfares to do most of our traversing. So, for instance, a call right now on Cocoplum Circle, for instance, or anywhere on Sunset, requires our unit from South Dixie Highway to come south, so either they could use Le Jeune, Red Road, and most of the time, they traverse through Riviera, which is mainly a residential area, to get down to that area. That was a level of concern because there was actually a five-mile distance between Fire Station 3 and Fire Station 2, which is on Riviera. Locating a unit south of that bridge, Red Road, south of the waterway, also allows us to mitigate the impact of when that bridge is going to be under construction and remodeled and puts a unit where now we have -- if you look at the concentric circles, we average about 2 to 3 miles per fire station throughout the community. So, it allows us a unit that can provide both for medical and fire, south of the Gables Waterway. We could take advantage of using a major thoroughfare like Sunset to traverse to the location of those calls. And in addition to that, the location of the fire station was something that we wanted to look at where how we can minimally impact our function, our location to a residential area, not just in emergency calls, but traversing through, let's say a residential block to get to and from the fire station. So, as the Commissioner stated, that location is -- I don't want to say commercial, but non-residential for most of the area surrounding that location.

Vice Mayor Mena: The last...

Fire Chief De La Rosa: So, a lot of things went into effect in that.

Vice Mayor Mena: And one last point that I neglected to mention, the property at Cocoplum Circle was a single-family home immediately adjacent to other single-family homes. And when I say immediately adjacent, I mean like...

Mayor Lago: Both sides.

Vice Mayor Mena: You think your house is close to this? The person's bathroom was like ten feet away from the house, you know, like it was very close. And so, it was changing basically the zoning of a single-family house in a residential neighborhood to a fire station. This was a surface parking lot that services a commercial or religious operation fronting Sunset. So again, these are just all the factors that we discussed (INAUDIBLE)...

Mr. Birch: My concern was just that where it's located, you're affecting or benefitting the least number of Gables residents versus the other site. That was what I was looking at.

Mayor Lago: So, I think...

Mr. Birch: The other site had more...

Mayor Lago: Yeah, if I could just add to that. I mean, I think the Vice Mayor -- and people have mentioned already -- did a very good job explaining it. But for me, it was not only the cost, which was, you know, out of line. I kind of felt at one point that we were potentially being extorted, you know...

Mr. Birch: Sounds like it.

Mayor Lago: At the expense of people's lives, you know. It was really the issue of crossing US 1. And this is a conversation that I had with the Chief and then the Manager and the Commission was the issue of our US 1 site. And as we've gotten -- as this community has grown and we have hundreds of thousands of cars traversing, you know, our city, the issue was Le Jeune is very heavily congested. 57th Avenue is an issue, so it was affecting our response times. So, I think that this -- again, may -- is it going to be right at the exact location where something may happen? No, but

it's a lot closer in accessibility for a person or a business, if someone's having an issue at that business for a call, just the fact that we're on the other side of US 1. I think it saves us significant time. I don't know the exact time, but it's pretty significant as per the Chief has told us. So, I mean, please feel free. We're here. We're willing to answer any questions. I think we've taken care of the issue about the rear access. We've given you our word about that. I'm more than willing to put it in writing if you'd like.

Mr. Birch: Oh, no, no.

Mayor Lago: I just want you to feel...

Mr. Birch: I just really came to voice my concerns.

Mayor Lago: I want you to feel comfortable. I want you to feel comfortable.

Mr. Birch: I was unable to get a lot of information.

Mayor Lago: Listen...

Mr. Birch: I asked for it. I was told, "This isn't the forum."

Mayor Lago: So, we...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, you should -- and I'd suggest that Mr. Birch should get...

Mayor Lago: Everything he wants.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

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City Commission Meeting

August 24, 2021

Agenda Item F-6 - Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, and Comprehensive Plan amendment procedures, changing the land use designation for property legally described as Lots 6 and 19, and the west 25 feet of Lots 7 and 18, Block 219, Riviera Section #14, from Religious/Institutional to Public Buildings and Grounds.



Mr. Birch: No, I'm not complaining, but I just didn't know...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no. You should absolutely have that.

City Manager Iglesias: We'll be happy to provide any...

Mr. Birch: I wasn't opposed to building a fire station and wasn't for it necessarily. I didn't have the information to say this makes practical sense or not.

Mayor Lago: I want you to be aware, like I mentioned it before, every Commissioner, our staff is available at your discretion. So, if you have any questions, you can reach us by email, you can reach us by phone. And again, this is an issue about public safety, and we want to make sure that we make the experience for you as pleasant as possible. And I give you my word that we will be present to address any concerns or issues, landscaping issues, buffer issues, accessibility issues, any issues you may have with lighting, any issues that you may have. I want to make sure the lighting is as least intrusive as possible, that it's very thoughtful, that you don't have a lot of lights and that place is not glowing at night. Those are things that we've talked about, and we made it very clear to our team that we will -- we were going to be very vigilant on. And like I mentioned to you before, we may not be talking design today, but to me, I want maybe something a little softer.

Vice Mayor Mena: But please do get him the benefit of the -- when we originally voted on it, you gave us an analysis of the response times based on your evaluation and your studies, and you felt that it adequately addressed the concerns you had. So, if you could get that information to him, I think that's the gist...

Mr. Birch: (INAUDIBLE) provided all...

Vice Mayor Mena: Of what he's talking about.

Mr. Birch: A lot of good information.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Mr. Birch: Information I hadn't had.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, we'll be happy to provide any information.

Mayor Lago: So, we have a few items time certain. I want to get to the...

Commissioner Menendez: Before he leaves, I just want to commend you for coming here and asking great questions and allowing us and the team to go back and forth and answer your questions and address your concerns. And your demeanor and the way you presented yourself is highly respect, and I thank you for that.

Mayor Lago: I like that.

Mr. Birch: And thank you.

Mayor Lago: Very well said. Who's next? Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Sue Kawalerski.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Kawalerski, if we could swear you in, please? Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you will provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth, ma'am?

Sue Kawalerski: I do.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Ms. Kawalerski: I'm Sue Kawalerski. I live at 6830 Gratian Street. Today, I'm representing the Coral Gables Neighbors Association. And based off of the two public hearings on this issue, a number of residents did have questions, like Mr. Birch, but we found that most of the residents on San Ignacio specifically were satisfied particularly with the buffer of the park, and therefore, the CGNA endorses this site for this firehouse. We did have some questions that we asked Chief De La Rosa, and I think he satisfied them, but I do want to make you aware that we were concerned about the traffic issue on Sunset particularly, and about how they're going to back in the fire trucks. Because obviously, without a back ingress/egress, they're going to have to back those fire trucks in somehow. And our concern was that the traffic on Sunset Drive already is extremely backed up. And just as a side note, let me tell you, I live approximately five streets away from this location. At 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon when I was coming from work at Tropical Park, it took me an hour to get home. And the reason is because once I reached Sunset and Red Road, the traffic going to Sunset Elementary for the pickup of the school children -- and I understand it's Day 1 -- was backed up to US 1. That's a long distance. That's a mile's worth of traffic backed on Sunset. So, our issue was, "How is this going to be mitigated when there is that kind of school traffic?" And yes, it was Day 1 yesterday, but I live there. I can tell you it backs up almost to US 1 every day. So, the Chief assured us of a couple of things. Number one, there would be enough pavement in front of this building to allow for the backing up of the fire truck and not using Sunset Drive to do the back-up. Okay, so he satisfied that issue. The second issue, he was going to look at some kind of signalization there. And I know you probably can't put an actual traffic signal there, but if a fire truck wanted to get out yesterday during that school traffic, it would never have been able to leave

the firehouse. So, there has to be some consideration for how that emergency vehicle is going to get out of there and onto Sunset and to its location. So, we need the traffic mitigation really, really looked at. And number two, Riviera nursing home. We want to make sure that Riviera nursing home doesn't take for granted the fact that we're around the corner and that our resources are going to be diverted constantly for the Riviera nursing home. Okay, so we need some reassurance there. And I totally agree with Mayor Lago regarding the aesthetics. This location is perfect for some kind of Mediterranean-looking facility, especially a City building, considering it's next to an historic Cocoplum Women's Club, which is Mediterranean in architecture. I know that's not for this time to consider that -- the architecture, but we agree with Mayor Lago that it has to be softened up somehow, and Mediterranean is the perfect kind of architecture for this kind of location. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Sue.

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Our next item -- next speaker.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Mr. David Perez.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Perez, the floor is yours. Welcome.

City Clerk Urquia: Sir, can we swear you in?

David Perez: Sure.

City Clerk Urquia: Please raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you will provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

Mr. Perez: I do.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Perez: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, Mr. Manager, thank you very much for the opportunity to come before you. My name is David Perez. I represent the Coral Gables Professional Firefighters Local 1210. And let me start my comments by saying we absolutely are in favor of the addition of a new station 4. We thank the Fire Chief for his leadership, and we thank you all for your commitment to public safety with the addition of this new fire service. With that being said, we just felt that there was a need to address an issue. While I realize this was -- or this is a zoning issue, the question was asked earlier as to staffing. I believe it was Commissioner Menendez who asked a question on staffing. And that's the reason we felt the need to speak. The answer was that there was going to be assets moved in there that we currently have. And in all honesty, with the growth that we're seeing in the City, with the possible annexation of other areas to augment the city surface miles, we feel that there has to be new assets, new personnel, when this station opens in March of 2023. We're asking each and every one of you, as the upcoming budget meetings take place, that you consider new assets and new personnel for this fire station. Again, we are looking at possible annexation. We're looking at the continued growth vertically in the City. We saw a project go before the Planning and Zoning Board last week, that it was another large project, multistory. There was another project that I believe is going to go before Planning and Zoning again, just to the west of that, on Salzedo, north of University, another large development. As a matter of fact, the gentleman who presented at the last Planning and Zoning Board meeting actually said, "This is not the first, this is not the second, this is not the third, the fourth or fifth large project to come before the City," and I found that very interesting. That speaks volumes as to how this City is growing vertically. And right now, we're not meeting a national standard as it relates to high-rise fires. So, again, I just want to sum up my comments by saying we absolutely are in favor of this new station 4. We applaud the Fire Chief for his leadership, for

his vision, and you all for your commitment to public safety. Having said that, please, in March of 2023, let's make sure we have new assets, new personnel at this fire station. If we can start that budgetary planning purpose now, reserve those funds. I'm not saying use those funds but commit those funds so that they're available in 2023, so that those new assets are in place when that fire station opens. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, the last speaker is Ms. Aurora Lonbana. She is through Zoom.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Lonbana, good afternoon. Thank you for joining us.

Ms. Lonbana: Yes, good afternoon.

City Clerk Urquia: Good afternoon, ma'am.

Ms. Lonbana: My name is...

City Clerk Urquia: If we can please swear you in. Please raise your right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you will offer today is the truth and nothing but the truth?

Ms. Lonbana: Yes, I do.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Ms. Lonbana: My name Aurora Lonbana. I live at 1233 San Ignacio Avenue. And I know I'm a little late to this party, but I just want to put in my two cents' worth. In the last nine months, I've been dealing with illness of a family member, and I have just recently come up for air. And I find that there's a proposed firehouse to be built across the street from my home, which is a very quiet neighborhood. I believe Mayor Lago is familiar with that area. When he was a Commissioner, he was out there quite a bit. I grew up living in the path of the Miami International Airport runway, so I know what it's like to live with noise. The word nerve-racking comes to mind. Thirty-five years ago, I was blessed to move into the beautiful Riviera neighborhood, nice and quiet. When you come home from a stressful job, (INAUDIBLE) sit outside and listen to the birds and relax. So, you can well imagine my concern about a firehouse being built right across the street from my house. I understand the need for the firehouse to improve the response time, and God knows my admiration for the brave men and women firefighters and what they do. But a firehouse should be located in a commercial area, not a neighborhood. I understand that you all been having trouble finding the location and the threat of losing the \$1.5 million allocated by the State, but why put a firehouse in the middle of a neighborhood? You have residents in front of the firehouse, behind the firehouse, and even east to the firehouse on the corner there. So, you know, the firehouse is completely surrounded by homes. So, I would like to know -- and forgive me if I'm being redundant -- but I would like to know if the City considered all other alternatives, like what studies were performed to improve the response time of existing fire stations? Were preemptive traffic signals throughout the area, for example, considered? There's a US Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic and Administration Office of the Emergency Medical Service that has a report that states traffic signal preemption devices seek to reduce L&S-related collisions at intersections and decrease response time by sensing the responding emergency vehicle and controlling traffic signals to allow cleaner passage of the emergency vehicle. It says, "The NHTSA publication provides a case series for descriptions of traffic signal preemption for emergency vehicles." These jurisdictions report various advantages that includes reduced response time need for fewer fires -- the need for fewer fire stations to maintain response standards and decrease intersection crashes. The document provides advice for communities that are considering purchase

of traffic preemptive devices. In my opinion, that would be cheaper too. So, I would like to know -- you know, having said that, I would like to know what is the existing call volume of the neighboring fire stations serving this area and their response time? Also, addressing my main concern -- the noise -- I understand that there will be a small buffer (INAUDIBLE) park. This park is literally the width of a -- a little larger than a parking spot. Currently, site plans demonstrate an approximate park depth of a parking space plus a few more feet. And then once landscaping is added there, there'll be little playground space to do anything there other than look at it, I would imagine. So, I would suggest considering increasing the size of the park to accommodate landscape buffer, playground equipment, and yard area by (INAUDIBLE) three of the five parking spots to be placed next to the firehouse access (INAUDIBLE) and reducing the size of the dumpster to accommodate a fourth parking space. That would give you a total of seven parking spots. Also, I was wondering if mature plants would be installed there and not the small -- not just small ones. And with regard to the site plan, I would like to know what are the double doors that lead to the park for? Is that an access point? Is that the access point you were all talking about? And also, I would also like to know what measure will be done to reduce the noise of the alarms? It's my understanding that alarms are supposed to be tested daily. How often, and what times will the sirens testing take place? Consider -- also consider preemptive traffic signals at the fire station to delay the use of lights and sirens around the neighboring property. And I agree with the style of the house. It should be Mediterranean to fit more with the Riviera neighborhood. It's more with - - reflects the style of the neighborhood. And that's basically my two cents. Thank you for allowing me to voice these concerns.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Ms. Lonbana. I just want to address a few of your comments. You mentioned that the park is the size of a parking space. So, I took the opportunity to use Google to look up the size of a parking space. I should know that; I don't. It was 300 -- it's on average about 350 square feet. This park is about 2,600 square feet, so it's about the size of probably about eight parking spaces, maybe nine. Not huge, but it's better than nothing, in my opinion. And I think we'll continue to find ways to hopefully expand it. This is something that's needed for the area. It



is not located around residential homes. To the left and to the right of the property are commercial surface parking lots. In regards to the sirens, our Chief can speak a little bit more to that, but he's been very clear, and we've had multiple discussions that this will not -- the purpose of the fire station is to bring a sense of public safety, is to add to the community. It's not to detract from the community, especially the public -- the quality of life. So, I give you my word that that's not going to happen. The rear double doors, you heard from the Chief mentioning that that will only be used on very rare occurrences if there is some sort of emergency. I think I covered as many questions as I could write down as quickly as possible.

Vice Mayor Mena: I would just add...

Mayor Lago: And if I was missing anything...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, I think you pretty much hit the big points. I would just add the park, if you will, is intended to be a buffer and a small neighborhood amenity. There is one of the City's largest parks, about 100 feet away, 200 feet away in Kerdyk Park. So, the park is not there to service some glaring need for a park in that location. It's intended as a buffer and as a small neighborhood amenity, and to make sure that the fire station doesn't impede on the residential there as best as possible. I wrote down the same thing you said. I just wanted to clarify the firehouse is not surrounded by Gables residential. If you follow along that block, you have the Cocoplum Women's Club, which routinely has weddings and other events. You have this, which was currently a parking lot, and now it will be a fire station. Then you have more parking, a church, a school. You then get into the -- there's like a...

Mayor Lago: Community center, kind of a...

Vice Mayor Mena: Is there an Amish center? There's another...

Mayor Lago: Fellowship. It's a fellowship...

Vice Mayor Mena: Fellowship for a religious institution, I think, maybe another block down. There's a strange carve out there that's actually not City of Coral Gables along Sunset.

Mayor Lago: Yep, which is a school.

Vice Mayor Mena: Where there was two -- what I'll call McMansions that were built next to each other that looked identical, which I'm sure Ms. Lonbana is familiar with it. I believe they're right across from her home or diagonal from. And so, again, the idea here was to try to address as many of these issues as possible, but still identify a location to service the need for better response times. The last point -- because it's been mentioned a couple of times; I didn't mention it earlier -- I agree with the Mayor's comments about the aesthetic of the building if there's a way to soften it to be more residential in nature. It's a firehouse. It's never going to look like a house, you know, when you drive by, but the best you can soften that. I don't think it needs to necessarily be Mediterranean. If it can be, great, but at least be residential in nature as best you can, you know. You know, given the -- some of the inherent restrictions, you obviously need higher ceilings on the first floor for the trucks, et cetera. And that's that. I think we had talked about it, and I don't think we've fleshed out the plans for the park, but my recollection of the initial discussion was that while small, the goal was to make it sort of fire themed. Again, kids in the neighborhood, I think it's a nice amenity.

Mayor Lago: Shade.

Vice Mayor Mena: It has shade that is frankly supportive of our first responders and our firefighters and builds that kind of community pride and support for those institutions, which I think is a nice thing. The firefighters always do a great job when they come around of handing out plastic fire hats to the kids and that kind of stuff. And so, the idea is for this to be kind of a feel-good community location, a nice small amenity for kids, but most importantly, to respond to

emergencies. And nobody ever wants to make that call, but when you do have to make that call, I would say it's probably the number one most important thing we do as a city. So, we've talked about in the past, the Mayor's talked -- actually, my mother-in-law had an accident a week and a half ago, and had to call a 9-1-1 in the Gables, paramedics, and they were there very quickly, and thank God they were. So, you know, that's the key here. Let's not lose sight of that, right. That's issue number one. We need to get there, and we need to make sure we save lives. The other stuff is to make it work within the confines of that goal. And I think that overall, we've done a good job here.

Mayor Lago: And I think you said it well before, and I want to reiterate that. We were talking about a \$4 million site. This doesn't cost the City a dollar in very tough times. And that site was in the middle of a residential neighborhood, and I voted no on that site because I wanted to be very clear that that was -- there's no commercial around it. It was just residential. This site has commercial adjacent to it, and it's facing Sunset. We're going to do everything in our power, and I ask the residents to have faith and trust that we're going to do something beautiful there. We're not going to do something which is not going to be in line with our standards here in Coral Gables. We're going to protect the neighborhood. We're going to listen to the neighborhood. We put things in the record, sirens, lighting. When our great firemen and women are leaving the station, that they're thoughtful, especially during the nighttime. But when you have to call for Police or Fire to show up, you want to make sure they show up in the fastest time they possibly can. And currently, right now, we're facing some serious, serious issues in regards to our response times as a result of just a massive amount of traffic that we're seeing throughout Miami-Dade County. And you know, we have to be honest with ourselves. If you call Fire and they got to come from US 1, they got two options: Le Jeune or 57th Avenue. And they're going to come up Le Jeune. And you better hope that there's no traffic. And there's a better chance, as seconds count, that if they have a fire station on Sunset, that they're going to be able to get you -- get to you as quickly as possible, potentially save your life or your loved one's life. So, I want to take into consideration everyone's comments today, the design, obviously, Ms. Lonbana's concerns, the gentleman who

was here before and left, take all those into consideration, softening up the outside of the building. And I think we need to make a motion on this. We've talked a lot -- unless my colleagues have something else they want to say. You can...

Commissioner Anderson: I just have a few...

Mayor Lago: We have a long agenda today so...

Commissioner Anderson: I know, I know we do, and I'll keep it brief. I lived within three blocks of a fire station for many years until it was moved to the new location. And I got to say, it was a great comfort. And the Fire Chief and his staff were wonderful in the way they operated the station, and it never was a great disturbance to me. And I really only heard the fire truck when it went past my house, not when it was leaving the station itself. I'll second your comments about the Mediterranean design and not belabor it. I know that we did a wonderful job on the new police and fire station softening the building, and I think we can do that here too. And I have great confidence in our Landscaping Division to buffer the neighborhood next to it. I did canvass that area. I'm very familiar with it and I'm sensitive to it. But the last point I think we need to, you know, find the money for is getting the staffing up to where we need it on our Police and Fire. We find the money for a lot of other things, and this is a critical need, and we need to do it sooner rather than later so we can add the one or two personnel that are needed. We've cut a lot of ribbons lately; a lot of buildings are opening. It's great news. And we need to show our dedication to the community by adding the staff needed.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, let's remember that when you add one person, it's actually four, so there's a 3.5 -- 3.75 multiplier that I've worked with the Chief on. We started -- I think at the beginning of the year -- working with Police and Fire to look at what our future staffing needs are. We are working with different departments on that, and we want to do it from a -- we want to be methodical, look at what our population is, look at what's actually happening during the day

and in the evening. And Chief De La Rosa and Chief Hudak are both working on that with other departments. So, we will be looking at that to promote that over a number of years, and that's something that we've already initiated at the beginning of the year.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll be looking forward to it, you know, and I'll attend the meetings.

Commissioner Menendez: I want to echo Commissioner Anderson's thoughts completely. I -- as many of you know, I've lived within blocks of City Hall for now it's almost -- since September, 59 years. And as my mom got older, it became more clear, and as I get older, it becomes more clear that, at the end of the day, there's so many things we take for granted, but our life, our health, and our safety is number one. And it's usually not for us, but it's for the ones we love the most. So, in this situation, whatever it takes, we need to make it happen. Hopefully, you know, at the end of the day, we can all agree on the end result. And just as Commissioner Anderson said, we're having, you know, these amazing firehouses and we have amazing equipment. But at the end of the day, if we're not going to cut corners on facilities, we're not going to cut corners in any other aspect of life and safety for our residents. So, whatever it takes going forward, I completely support the effort.

Mayor Lago: I'll take -- I'll entertain a motion in regards to F-6.

Vice Mayor Mena: I move it.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

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City Commission Meeting

August 24, 2021

Agenda Item F-6 - Ordinance of the City Commission amending the Future Land Use Map of the City of the City of Coral Gables Comprehensive Plan pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, "Process," Section 14-213, and Comprehensive Plan amendment procedures, changing the land use designation for property legally described as Lots 6 and 19, and the west 25 feet of Lots 7 and 18, Block 219, Riviera Section #14, from Religious/Institutional to Public Buildings and Grounds. Page 38