

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Second Budget Hearing  
Agenda Item 2  
September 27, 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 Works Director, Ed Santamaria**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Barbara Reese  
Maria Masvidal Visser  
Dyanne Feinberg**

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Agenda Item 2 [0:00:00 a.m.]

Public Hearing for obtaining comments relative to Budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017.

City Attorney Leen: Mr. Mayor, are you ready? So, I will now be reading the ordinances and the resolution. The first -- as an initial matter, this will be a public hearing that's consolidated for all the items. The Mayor is recognizing two minutes per speaker, which there'll be a light for

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Agenda Item 2 – Public Hearing for obtaining comments relative to Budget for Fiscal Year 2016-2017.

when you speak. And at this time, I'm going to read the ordinances into the record. Because of the requirements of a budget hearing, I have to read more than just the title of the ordinance, which is what I typically read, so that's what I'm going to do. I don't read the entire ordinance, so each of these ordinances and also the resolution is available in the Clerk's Office, if you'd like to read the entire ordinance. So, with that, I will begin. I'll start with number 3 on the agenda, which is an ordinance providing for the levy of taxes for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2016 and ending September 30, 2017; fixing the rate of such levy; providing for the segregation and the application of the proceeds of such levy; providing for the separability of the provisions hereof; and providing that this ordinance shall become effective October 1, 2016. This is a second reading ordinance. It was passed on first reading on September 13, 2016. Be it ordained by the Commission of the City of Coral Gables: Section 1. That there is hereby levied upon all the real and personal property within the present corporate limits of the City of Coral Gables, which is assessed for taxation for the year 2015 and, which is subject to taxation under the Constitution and laws of the State of Florida as now written: A tax of 5.559 mills which is a 6.52 percent increase over the rolled-back rate; all proceeds of the collection of this levy to be recorded into the General Fund of the City, and shall be reserved therein and disbursed therefrom for the sole and express purpose of paying the necessary operating expenses of the City of Coral Gables, its departments, offices, and properties, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017. This ordinance requires a four-fifths vote to be passed. The second item is an ordinance adopting the Annual Budget of Estimated Revenues and Expenditures for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2016 and ending September 30, 2017; providing for the separability of the provisions hereof; and providing that this ordinance shall become effective October 1, 2016. This is an ordinance on second reading. It was passed on first reading on September 13, 2016. It is item number 4 on the agenda. And now I must read some of the clauses in the ordinance. Whereas, the City Manager prepared and on July 1, 2016 submitted to the Commission a Budget Estimate of the expenditures and revenues of all City departments, divisions, offices and properties for the fiscal year commencing October 1, 2016 and copies of such estimate have been furnished to the newspaper and library in Coral Gables, and posted at the front door of City Hall; and whereas, the Budget Estimate submitted to the Commission on July 1, 2016 in the amount of

\$183,104,583 has been revised by the City Manager to include additional revenues and expenditures in the amount of \$531,069, bringing the total budget amount to \$183,635,652; and whereas, the revised revenue estimate of \$183,635,652 includes total revenues of \$171,527,004 and transfers from fund balance of \$12,108,648; and the revised expenditure estimate of \$183,635,652 includes expenditures of \$181,976,215 and transfers to reserves of \$1,659,437. Now, therefore, be it ordained by the Commission of the City of Coral Gables: Section 1. That the following summary of estimated revenues and expenditures for the fiscal year commencing October 1, 2016 and ending September 30, 2017 is hereby agreed upon and adopted along with the supporting data relating thereto on file with the Finance Department of the City of Coral Gables as the official 2016-2017 Budget of the City of Coral Gables. I now need to read certain figures in the ordinance. Total operating revenues, \$171,527,004; total transfers from reserves, \$12,108,648; total revenues, \$183,635,652. Capital projects, \$15,460,386; total debt service appropriation, \$7,994,887; total expenditures, \$183,635,652. In addition, there will be a hearing on a resolution adopting the capital improvement program for the five fiscal years from 2017 to 2021. All of these items are consolidated for purposes of the public hearing. Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Cason: Okay. We have three speaker cards, two minutes each. We have a light here. The questions on the cards are all the same, so if after Barbara Reese speaks, if your questions are answered -- all of them has to do with financing of the Segovia Circle art project. So, all three of them had the same question. So, you know, I guess this would be Diana Gomez to answer that. But we're going to have Barbara Reese come up, and if that -- if what she says answers your question, unless somebody has something else, we'll close the public hearing.

Barbara Reese: Hi.

Commissioner Lago: How are you?

Ms. Reese: Hello. My name is Barbara Reese, and I've been a resident of Coral Gables for almost 40 years. And I'm 840 Coral Way, a historic road in Coral Way and Coral Gables. I

think our question today really revolves around the circle artwork that has been put in. It's my understanding -- correct me if I'm incorrect -- that there is an interest fee that the City of Coral Gables will be paying yearly at \$50,000 on these circles. I'd like to know where that's incorporated in the budget and why that is happening as part of our taxpayers' dollars. Fifty thousand dollars a year for something that a majority of the people really do not even want...

Mayor Cason: That's an opinion.

Ms. Reese: That's an opinion and...

Mayor Cason: I understand.

Ms. Reese: I know we're not here to discuss that today, but anyway, \$50,000 of our taxpayers' money is. So, I do have a question as to that. And also, I understand the maintenance of those two circles are \$1,000 a month. I'm not sure if that's true or not. Anyway, I just want to find out where that is in the budget and how that is possible.

Mayor Cason: Alright, thank you. Diana.

Finance Director Gomez: The debt service budget is included in the -- the debt service for the particular sculpture is -- or for the entire NRP project is included in the \$7.9 million of debt service budget. The payment -- since this was an bond issuance -- is from legally available non-ad valorem revenue, so it's not coming from tax -- property tax dollars. It's coming from all other special revenues, such as fees and things of that nature and state shared revenues. So, it's not coming from taxes. We can't pay debt with taxes if it's not general obligation bonds.

Mayor Cason: And the funding for this came from the Neighborhood Renaissance Program, which was a refinancing of debt...

Finance Director Gomez: So, at the time that the...

Mayor Cason: Six years ago, I think.

Finance Director Gomez: Right. So, at the time it was done, the City had debt to a certain level. And when we financed that debt, which allowed us to have additional -- the savings were used to pay the new money debt, so there was no increase in the debt service budget at that time, so it was absorbed with the -- through the savings we received from the refinance allowed to pay for the new debt, which included this Neighborhood Renaissance Program.

Mayor Cason: Do we have a figure in terms of maintenance?

Finance Director Gomez: And so, I spoke with the Public Works director. He says it's approximately \$8,600 a year.

Mayor Cason: How much?

Finance Director Gomez: Eighty-six hundred dollars a year.

Mayor Cason: Okay, and that's what, cutting the grass and...

Finance Director Gomez: Cutting the grass, maintaining the scul -- I'm not -- maintaining fountain, maintaining the grass, the flowers, all the landscaping.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, there's very little maintenance toward the sculpture itself. The materials and whatever that it's made out of don't require maintenance. It's really the circle and...

Finance Director Gomez The shrubbery and...

Commissioner Keon: Ensuring that the water circulates in the...

Mayor Cason: And we don't know how much the...

Commissioner Keon: Pond and all of those things.

Mayor Cason: How much the -- I guess we could figure it out, but what the maintenance would have been for circles with nothing in there or something else?

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Finance Director Gomez: I would have to defer that to...

Commissioner Lago: Maybe you could also just clarify really quickly, since we're talking about debt, when you compare the City of Coral Gables versus the other four cities in Dade County, how do we stack up in reference to the debt that we have?

Finance Director Gomez: So, I don't know -- I haven't done the comparison between how much debt we have versus how much debt another city has. We don't have any general obligation debt. We only have special revenue debt, but I can do that analysis.

Commissioner Lago: No, but just by saying that, I mean, that's pretty significant because a lot of other municipalities, especially the County, has significant general obligation debt.

Finance Director Gomez: Yes, which is paid for with tax dollars.

Commissioner Lago: Yes. And by the -- and I -- you hit on a point that -- I know we moved on to maintenance, but I think it was very important, that this is not being paid -- like how is this being paid. How is this debt being paid? It's not being paid by tax revenue or property taxes.

Finance Director Gomez: Right. It's not paid for with property taxes. It's paid for any other legally available non-ad valorem debt -- revenues, rather, sorry. So, it means any other revenues that we receive, such as fees for services, charges for services, state shared revenues, things that are not...

Commissioner Lago: Permits.

Finance Director Gomez: Right. Things that are not tax...

Commissioner Lago: Associated with property taxes.

Mayor Cason: And this was one of the original 17 -- if I'm not mistaken, 17 neighborhood renaissance projects that were associated with the bond issue.

Finance Director Gomez: Correct. It was included from the beginning of the project.

Mayor Cason: Was there any -- so, I guess you have a -- you want to ask -- answer anything about -- what you know about the maintenance and just...

Public Works Director Santamaria: Yes. Good evening, Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission. Ed Santamaria, director of Public Works. In terms of maintenance, we do have a component of maintenance in connection to maintaining the sculpture, which is the periodic pressure washing just to make sure that the potter coat finish does stay in the Grove for as long as possible. We also do have a component regarding as to landscape maintenance, and there's also a component for fountains -- for the operation of fountains. The landscape maintenance

typically will be handled in house, so the bulk of the cost of the \$8,600 a year is actually related to maintaining the sculpture and also to maintain the fountains.

Commissioner Keon: The fountains, okay. I think it's important, Diana, if you could comment on the budget for the City is about \$183 million -- is that right -- and the property tax revenue from the City is about \$75 million, approximately. So, you know, the property tax revenue is only -- is a component of the general revenue for the City because \$183 million, that is the total revenue coming in that we spend. We can't spend money that isn't coming, so 75 million is only a portion. The property taxes are only a portion of the budget paid for -- only a portion of the operation of the city. And of that 75 million, there is probably 40 to 50 percent of that that comes from the commercial properties downtown. So, you know, the actual revenue from homeowners, the taxpayers in the City is, you know, probably in the neighborhood of maybe 40 million or less.

Mayor Cason: Yeah, 40 percent.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, it's...

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

Commissioner Keon: Is that about right?

Finance Director Gomez: I don't know the exact split on...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, I...

Finance Director Gomez: Between commercial and...

Commissioner Keon: I don't need the -- but in general.



Finance Director Gomez: Residential.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Finance Director Gomez: But correct, there is a portion that is from homeowners and there is a portion of it that comes from...

Commissioner Keon: From commercial.

Finance Director Gomez: Commercial, yes.

Commissioner Keon: From the commercial development downtown. So, you know, as much as we feel we pay in property taxes, as homeowners, in particular, you can see that it is really -- it is not even -- it's maybe, what, an eighth of our budget.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: About an eighth of our budget is actually the property taxes that come from homeowners.

Commissioner Lago: And that's why we -- you've made the point on several occasions and I'll reiterate it for you. That's why it's critical to invest in our downtown because we're very fortunate -- we're one of the few cities that has a vibrant, thriving downtown. That's why we're making that significant investment on Miracle Mile and Giralda. I mean, you know, the increase in property values has been a windfall for the city and that's why we've been able to keep our millage rate so low over the last six years. While other municipalities and cities have been raising their millage rates, we haven't. It's because of our downtown.

Mayor Cason: Let me ask -- the other two questions were from Maria Masvidal and Diane -- I think it's -- I can't read it. Is it (INAUDIBLE) or (INAUDIBLE)? That was the same question. Does that answer your...

Maria Masvidal Visser: No, it does not.

Mayor Cason: Why don't you come up? You have two minutes.

Commissioner Slesnick: May I ask a question while she's coming up? The \$8 million in debt service, is that all on the same percentage rate interest now?

Finance Director Gomez: No.

Commissioner Slesnick: It's a variety of interest rates.

Finance Director Gomez: There's a variety on some of the interest rates and some of the debt. So, the highest interest rate that we have currently is 3.5 percent. The low is 1.57. You know, the average of all of them is about 2.6, so there's a variety. The different debt issuances have different interest rates.

Mayor Cason: Okay, go ahead.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Good evening to all. My name is Maria Masvidal Visser. I lived the last 30 years at 421 Maya Avenue, in Coral Gables. I attended the meeting on Saturday that we had in regards to the artwork at the circle. And Olga Ramudo, who had sent some letters out and inquiries, cannot be here. She's traveling. My concern is the following. The other day I was with clients, corporate relocation clients, and we were out to dinner and we were by Merrick Park and actually there's a lot of sidewalks there that need really a lot of fixing. It was in the

evening. It was dark and the ladies with heels, it was very dangerous. So, I have pictures of that. I bring that up because I don't know in the budget where that might be.

Mayor Cason: There's a...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: And we were all concerned also in the meeting on Saturday...

Mayor Cason: She'll answer that for you, but there's...

Commissioner Keon: There is a sidewalk...

Mayor Cason: A lot of money.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: So, there's a relation...

Commissioner Keon: There's going to be sidewalk repair.

Commissioner Lago: I know exactly what you're talking about. Like, for example, the -- right behind the restaurant...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Exactly.

Mayor Cason: Yeah.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Of Café Violetto.

Commissioner Lago: Violetto, the sidewalks...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: It's a disaster.

Commissioner Lago: Are a disaster. But all those sidewalks are planned to be replaced because there is neighboring developments that have that incorporated as per their development agreements.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, right.

Commissioner Lago: And I -- we've brought that up, the Manager and I, and I know that the other Commissioners have discussed it and that there's some other developments taking place that were supposed to take care of that as part of their development agreement.

Mayor Cason: The plan is to fix every broken sidewalk. I think we have 4.7 miles, if I'm not mistaken, next year.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: But is that in the budget?

Mayor Cason: Yeah.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Okay.

Mayor Cason: It's in our budget.

Commissioner Lago: And by the way, just...

Mayor Cason: There's line items.

Commissioner Lago: And I know I've said this before, that was deferred maintenance that hadn't been touched in 30 years, just along with the road repaving. I mean, that's significant and that's been occurring for the last four years that hadn't been touched in 30 years, the sidewalk

repair. So, I know exactly what you're talking about and it needs to be fixed. And I -- to this point, you know, we've been waiting so long for these projects to commence. The fear is that we fix the sidewalks, right, and they're going to have to be all recut anyway because...

Mayor Cason: It's on page 13 of...

Commissioner Lago: There's major projects going to be built on that block.

Commissioner Keon: But you know...

Mayor Cason: Sidewalk...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: It's also on the other side...

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Of the street.

Commissioner Keon: But maybe...

Commissioner Lago: Where the 7-Eleven is, correct?

Commissioner Keon: I'm going to pass these down because maybe you may want to take a look at them and go safe up some of them that are -- that (INAUDIBLE).

Ms. Masvidal Visser: But I bring it up because I think the correlation with our artwork...

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, thank you.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Because we were concerned in the meeting the other day in regards to where the budget really -- you know, where the monies are in the budget to perhaps even relocate the artwork. I don't know if it exists, but a lot of us were talking about maybe having a referendum in the November election so that the citizens and the residents of Coral Gables can actually voice their opinion because a lot of people are not happy.

Commissioner Keon: I think that...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: They're just not happy. It's very unsafe, that circle, to have that piece.

Mayor Cason: Remember, though, that...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Regardless if it's beautiful or not...

Mayor Cason: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and there are different opinions...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: It has nothing to do with the art. It has to do with safety.

Commissioner Keon: Okay, but I think that you have to understand -- and the City Attorney could help you understand why it won't be -- it cannot be on the November referendum because you have to have the -- you would have to do all of your signatures. You would have to collect everything. It has to be to the clerk -- to the County Clerk, who holds the elections -- how much is it in advance?

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Well, that's why we're here. We want to know what the...

Commissioner Keon: It has to be so much in advance.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Process is.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: If there are funds to move it.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD).

Ms. Masvidal Visser: If there are no funds to move it.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah, I think that time has passed for...

Commissioner Lago: And also, from my understanding, I was copied on an email that Olga was copied, where the City Attorney, he can repeat it, basically stated what was detailed with the contract with the artist in reference to the...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: That we understand, the six months.

Commissioner Lago: Mobility of the piece and...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Right.

Commissioner Lago: Who has the final say in reference to if the artwork is moved in reference to where the City would stand if the artwork were to be moved.

City Attorney Leen: Just if I can comment. The -- there's two issues. The deadline for November passed.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Okay.

City Attorney Leen: The second issue is whether a referendum could be used to direct the City to essentially move the artwork. The point I would make is that a referendum still has to be legally sufficient. So, you know, a straw poll can suggest something, but the issue is that the City has an agreement with the artist that it can only be moved with their consent.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: That is correct, in six months.

City Attorney Leen: And you mentioned the 180-day provision. That relates to removing the art.

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

City Attorney Leen: So, that means putting the art away. Obviously, that -- you know, that's largely a policy decision, but that's something that is called that law -- it's called a forfeiture, essentially, where either you lose the art to the artist and then they keep it or the City ends up putting it in a warehouse. There's issues with that because bond funds are used for this particular artwork, so we have to receive a benefit. So, ultimately, from a legal perspective, the -- if the Commission ever were to make that decision, there would need to be a discussion with the artist and there would need to be an agreement.

Mayor Cason: But in terms of your question about the sidewalks, there's -- I think I got it from the Public Works director recently -- I think it's 4.7 miles this coming -- in this budget of sidewalk repairs. We're also are connecting all throughout the city, all the missing sidewalks where you go from sidewalk, grass, street, grass, sidewalk. All those are being connected. So, there's a program over the next, I think, five years to fix all the broken sidewalks.



City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And it's listed in our capital plan for the number -- you're adding every year additional monies for that citywide sidewalk.

Commissioner Lago: And that program was started when, Madam City Manager?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm sorry?

Commissioner Lago: When was that -- that was started two years ago.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The prior year expenditures were \$1.8 million.

Commissioner Lago: And the year before that?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So, it has built -- of the 2016 projected, 366,000. I mean, there's -- you have gone citywide first in repairs. I really appreciate these pictures because we'll find out...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: It's really bad. It really is.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And so, we'll work with our Public Works director on two things. One, it's not acceptable and we want to make sure that it wasn't a covenant of the building in front that's responsible for it, and we'll enforce it if it is.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: (INAUDIBLE).

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But it's an unusual paver. You know, it's not our like Coral Gables beige, but we will get this addressed. We appreciate you bringing it to our attention.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Yeah, because it's very unsafe.

Mayor Cason: Yeah.

Ms. Masvidal Visser: But in regards to the meeting that we had on Saturday that both Commissioner Slesnick and Commissioner Keon attended, I think a lot of people, a lot of the residents were voicing the concern that perhaps they -- or we didn't know exactly where the monies were coming from so we also wanted to see how we can participate, or in the future, have things like that be avoided because a lot of people are not happy. I think out of 500 questionnaires, there was like 300 or 400 people against it. and I, myself, almost crashed with corporate transferees trying to go around it because it was very busy and it's the first time I saw it, so you get very surprised. And it has nothing to do with if it's beautiful or not beautiful. I think we can't really appreciate it where it is, and I think that we should look into addressing this with the residents in regards to there should be a process. I know you have some sort of process, but perhaps the communication's not getting to residents properly and we just want to know.

Mayor Cason: I think, City Manager, we had in 31 different occasions this piece of art was publicized so...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: But there's also a question that I've heard a lot of people talk about that from the renderings to the actual piece, the size is just tremendous. It just doesn't seem like that's what was expected. So, I think that's something that people have to take into consideration because people are upset.

Mayor Cason: Thank you for your...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Okay.

Mayor Cason: Comments on this and...

Ms. Masvidal Visser: Thank you very much. Have a good evening.

Mayor Cason: And Diane...

Dyanne Feinberg: I'll be very brief. Hi. My name is Dyanne Feinberg.

Commissioner Lago: How are you?

Ms. Feinberg: I'm an attorney with the Kozyak Tropin law firm here in Miami, and I live at 620 Alhambra Circle, right next to these wonderful sculptures. I've never been involved in politics in the city as an attorney, but I think I'm going to get involved because I also feel the way that other people feel. I'm not going to talk aesthetics, but it is -- the circle is very hazardous because of the way people enter it, and that is really not helping anything. So, I just wanted to -- because it's a budget hearing, I've been told that I can only speak to budget and not to appropriateness in the community or danger, which I couldn't help but speak of. But I did want to just say that on behalf of myself as a citizen of Coral Gables and pretty much every single person that I've talked to, we urge you not to spend any of our city dollars either maintaining or keeping the sculpture because, as a committee, we're going to do what we can to just put a -- again, moving it maybe where it's appropriate because this is historical Coral Gables. It just doesn't belong here. And if I can paint my house any of the colors of the sculpture, then I might change my mind. But I know if I was here trying to paint my house purple, green or yellow, I would be soundly thrown out of this meeting, which I think I'm about to be. So, thank you very much.

Mayor Cason: Thank you. Thank you for your -- alright, with that, we will close the public hearing. Let's start with -- any more discussion on the budget?

Commissioner Keon: No. Thank you. I'm...

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: You've done a great job, I think, in putting it together and explaining it and working with us on it. I would like to particularly thank the Manager and all of you for this strategic plan. As far as I know -- we celebrate our 90<sup>th</sup> birthday this year -- the City of Coral Gables, we have never created a strategic plan like this that actually sets out goals and objectives and a means to measure them. And over the next year, we expect to start doing resident surveys as well as the surveys of our downtown to look at your satisfaction with the quality of services and the kinds of services that are being presented to you. So, thank you very, very, very much.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And Commissioner, if we can, (INAUDIBLE), can you stand up? (INAUDIBLE) has really done a phenomenal job at herding cats through this process, and we appreciate the passion and the commitment. And Keith, if you'll stand up too. The two of them, as a team -- and they owe -- Kenny Ingersoll jumped ship and went over to Human Resources. But all the departments worked hard on it, but they really made it all happen, so we appreciate it.

Mayor Cason: And we continue to get every year awards. I just got another letter today from whoever it is that gives the awards to Diana for the quality of the budget presentation. It's getting better every year, and I think it's wonderful that all of -- everything that we wanted in terms of our capital projects -- I think all of it was -- and just that one thing was -- we found the funds for it, so we're addressing the pent up infrastructure demands, the beautification of the city. And hopefully, we'll be able to get a triple triple bond rating and be the only one in Florida. I'm crossing my fingers. But where we've gone -- come from to where we are now, we're in fabulous financial state. We could weather a hurricane and get through the first three or four months before FEMA money came back in without having to touch anything else, so I think you all have done a terrific job. And again, thank you.