

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-14
August 24, 2022
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 Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Carl Leon Prime

Karelia Carbonell

Agenda Item G-14 [4:17 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission opposing amendments to Florida Statute 553.79 that preempt the City's demolition permit process as applied to historic properties and urging the Florida Legislature to rescind said amendments.
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto G-14.

City Attorney Ramos: This is a Resolution of the City Commission opposing amendments to Florida Statute 553.79 that preempt the City's demolition permit process as applied to historic properties and urging the Florida Legislature to rescind said amendments.

Mayor Lago: Very simple. Hello. How are you?

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Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Hello again. I'm well, thank you. So, this resolution basically is an opposition to HP-423, passed last session. It would preempt the city's ability to stop certain demolitions if a property is within a certain flood zone, under certain base floor elevation, and has not yet been designated historic. So, we oppose it, and we urge the Florida Legislature to rescind it, and we'll carry it on our state legislative priorities next year.

Mayor Lago: Naomi, thank you for paying such good attention in regard to what's going on in the state, and all your hard work. Mr. Clerk, do we have any comments?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir, we do. We have Mr. Carl Leon Prime wishing to speak on this item.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Prime, why didn't you tell me you wanted to speak on this issue. I thought you were just...

Commissioner Anderson: You just like being out.

Mayor Lago: I had no clue why you were here. I thought you were just here to provide some input. Come on in. I wish you would have dropped me a little note or something you know.

Mr. Prime: Well, it sort of caught me by surprise also. Thank you all. Carl Leon Prime, 209 Florida Avenue. I'll just get straight to it. I stand before you today as a lifelong citizen and resident of the only historically designated neighborhood on a national register of historic places within the City of Coral Gables. I'm in favor of a strongly worded resolution and likewise strong lobbying effort asking the legislature to rescind the amendments to Florida Statute 553.79, erasing the process for demolition of historic structures. And chipping away of municipal sovereignty concerning preservations of these unique qualities that make the city beautiful, a world-class city, need to be addressed and brought before them. I cherish the unique quality of living and preservation of the structures in my neighborhood. I do not want to see little by slowly a Coconut Groving of the historic district or the sections of the city that this may open the door for. Again, strongly word the resolution and engage in a robust lobbying effort. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for your guidance and for your support.

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Just for clarification's sake, I will mention that there are certain exemptions in HB-423. One of those exemptions is that the property has been designated historic prior to January 1st of this year. Its not subject to the provisions of the Bill.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have one more speaker, its on Zoom, and its Ms. Karelia Carbonell.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell, the floor is yours and welcome to the City Beautiful.

City Clerk Urquia: She's not unmuting.

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Mayor Lago: Give her a few seconds.

Ms. Carbonell: Hello?

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell, how are you?

Ms. Carbonell: Oh, hi, hi, sorry about that. Hi, my name is Karelia Martinez Carbonell, and I want to first commend the Mayor for bringing this resolution up to Commission. I have been an opponent since I first learned about it, and if you don't mind, I would love to read my letter to the editor that was published in the Miami Herald. And it really does encapsulate the importance of rescinding this Bill. So let me just get that. It was published back on July 10th, and it says that due to the lack of public debate, Governor Ron DeSantis may not have been briefed on the environmental repercussions of the legislation he recently signed into law. The legislation has far-reaching implications for the historic fabric of our state and also catastrophically aggravates climate change. Mitigating for sea level rise is treating the symptom and not the cause and does nothing to protect the environment. The new law accepts the dire prognosis of climate as fete-a-complete...

[Note: Her audio went out]

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell.

Commissioner Anderson: She has a problem.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell, I think you may have hit mute.

Commissioner Menendez: I think its more than mute right now.

City Clerk Urquia: She is no longer on the line.

Commissioner Anderson: I did read the letter to the editor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, so did I.

Commissioner Anderson: And for the record, can we just put it in the record.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes ma'am.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. So that resolves that issue.

Commissioner Menendez: I have something to say.

Mayor Lago: Of course, please.

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Commissioner Menendez: So, I think it's very important legislation, but it goes back to something that I think we collectively have talked about since the beginning of time. A lot of times folks just look at what the local government is doing, what the City Commission is doing, what the administration is doing and we tell everybody time and time again, what happens in Tallahassee, what happens at levels of government above us could have cataclysmic impact on our community with one fell swoop, with one Bill they can basically dismantle our own code, and time and time again, it happens, and I think its just picking up steam, and I ask the organizations that are out there working so hard for our community, working so hard for our residents. We have great team together that we're always monitoring, and tracking Bills and we do everything we can, but its important to get ahead of these Bills. Once the session starts, even before the session starts when they have their pre-session meetings, these things are floating out there, and they impact, not only Coral Gables, every other municipality. So, I think going forward, we need to find a way to jump on these things. It can't just fall on the local government's shoulders, there are community members that are so active, so involved, and can't wait until it lands on the shoulders or on the lap of the City Commission. We need a collective effort to understand and realize that there are Bills floating out there every year that preempt us. And by the way, politics is politics, and they can come up with a very beautiful narrative as to why that Bill is important or why that Bill is going to pass, but I would say nine out of ten times there's always other reasons for it. So, we just need to be vigilant, we need to come together, and we need to be preemptive, but I applaud this legislation because we have to fight the fight.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you, Commissioner. No further comments?

City Clerk Urquia: No sir.

Mayor Lago: Close the public comment. I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

(Vice Mayor Mena: Absent)

Assistant City Attorney Levi-Garcia: Thank you.