

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
September 10, 2024
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz
Assistant Public Works Director, Melissa DeZayas
Assistant Public Works Director, Deena Bell-Llewellyn

Public Speaker(s)

Robert Ruano
Matilda Kalaveshi
Roland Rodriguez
Saralane Conde
Nicole Puerto
Dariel Gonzalez

Agenda Item H-1 [11:30 a.m.]
Update on the Alhambra Circle sidewalk.

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Agenda Item H-1 - Update on the Alhambra Circle sidewalk.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, we're back. Moving on to Item H-1. Mr. Clerk, you said we had several people on Zoom and also, I know we had some guests here also for the H-1 update on Alhambra Circle sidewalk.

City Manager Rojas: Hermes, Melissa, you guys are up. You're up. And Deena. Joe, where's Deena?

Public Works Director Diaz: She's coming up.

City Manager Rojas: Thank you.

Public Works Director Diaz: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners. I believe -- oh, there it is. So, we put together a very brief presentation just to just kind of go over the process that we went through, and you know, hopefully get a direction from the Commission how to move forward.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: So, ballots were mailed out at the request of the Commission. Two options were presented.

Commissioner Castro: Two options? What happened to my option, the third option?

Public Works Director Diaz: So, if you recall, we had a conversation at the last Commission meeting that -- where this was brought up, we had an entire -- we had a discussion where we showed the location of the sidewalk behind the trees and how the only feasible way to do that would be to remove all those trees. And that was the presentation that we brought to Commission. I forgot the date exactly.

Unidentified Speaker: March.

Public Works Director Diaz: Was it March?

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: It was in May.

Public Works Director Diaz: And we actually added a couple of slides to this Commission that we -- that we had on that last Commission meeting, but I went through a very detailed, you know, discussion about the issue of putting the sidewalk in the rear. I mean, we can do it, but the trees need to go. There is no other way about it.

Commissioner Castro: Yes, but I -- the agreement was that we were going to present the third option, right? And then we only presented two options in the ballot.

Public Works Director Diaz: I mean, if -- I mean, that...

City Manager Rojas: Commissioner, if I may. Honestly, I don't recall that we were going to do three options for this particular project.

Commissioner Castro: So...

City Manager Rojas: I do not recall.

Mayor Lago: Let me -- if I may, just to clear it up, Mr. Clerk, can you provide the Commission with a public record in regards to the video and see if a third option was supposed to be provided?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: And you can provide it at the end of the meeting. Thank you.

Public Works Director Diaz: And one of the slides here, it will include a couple of slides that we added because, you know, we started getting some feedback over the weekend and after we uploaded that as to the discussion that we had at the last Commission meeting where that third option was discussed, and you know, maybe we're mistaken but we were under the understanding that that wasn't -- it's not really viable, again, unless we're willing to remove all those trees. And that's really the way forward.

Commissioner Fernandez: I was there when the arborist was there. At no point did the arborist said -- say that all the trees had to go down if the sidewalk -- what they said is there's some trees you had to put the sidewalk on the front, but at no point did they say you have to take down all the trees to put the sidewalk...

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: That was Option 2...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: That was presented.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct. So, we -- what we sent to the community was two options. So, one of the options that we sent was the one that the sidewalk is all the way on the sidewalk, right? And the other option was the one that meandered around where it was feasible to put on the back, it was put on the back, and where it was feasible to put on the front, it was put on the front. The other option that was discussed was the feasibility of putting it all in the rear. And that was the one that without the removal of a significant number of those trees, that was not feasible. So - - but the two options that we sent to the community was one that is in the back, the front, in the back, and the front, and it just moves around based on precisely that discussion with the arborist.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: So, just to highlight what Hermes was talking about, see Option 2 is where we meandered and we actually put it behind the trees where we could, but there were some places that we had to bring it forward because of ADA. We were not going to be able to meet the slopes that we needed because of the tree roots that were coming out of the ground. (INAUDIBLE).

Public Works Director Diaz: And also, the proximity -- the proximity of the trees.

City Manager Rojas: Excuse me, Mayor, if I may. May I suggest that we just do the presentation and then we can actually go into the details of what is different or not from -- from those, and then we'll look into that option three. Go ahead.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: Okay, so two options were presented, and they were balloted. Option 1 was the one that we had discussed which is the one with the curb all throughout. And then Option 2 is where we tried to put it at the right-of-way line where we could, but if there were any issues with tree roots, we put it to the front.

Public Works Director Diaz: And that's one of the things that we're talking about, right? So, for example, at that location, one option is to cut those roots off, which at that point the tree needs to be removed. The other option is to bridge over, except that now you're looking at a drop about roughly 10 inches between the back of the sidewalk and the rear. Now, in some other locations, like the next slide over, that route, we don't have sufficient space to bridge over the route. And then as we come down into the driveway approach, then we will not be meeting ADA requirements. So, those are the challenges of putting the sidewalk in the rear, given the size of the trees and the location of them. So -- but we did try the two options that were -- it was our understanding that we were asked to do, and we ended up doing one on the front and the other one where we basically meandered around them to the best that we could. And that's what we sent to the community for a vote. If we erred on that, I, you know.

City Manager Rojas: Let Melissa finish her...

Public Works Director Diaz: Yeah.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: So, basically, when you have a tree root just as this one, we have certain requirements that have to be met for ADA. You cannot be over 1 in 12 or 8.33 percent. So, when you see that the tree root is sticking out like this, not only do you have to put four inches of concrete on top of it, you have to put a base. So, what we did was we had our surveyor go out and take spot elevations on all these tree roots to tell us what the elevation was and what the elevation was on the driveway. And then we basically figured out what the slopes would be and at these locations, we wouldn't be able to meet ADA if we went to the back. So, those were the locations that for Option 2, we brought it to the front. So, the ballots were mailed

out to the five property owners, four were received, all of them were in favor of Option 1, which is the one with the curb. And two of them said that they would like to keep the trees.

Public Works Director Diaz: There were a couple of trees that the original arborist had recommended that get removed, mostly because they were considered to be in poor shape. And when we sent the ballot out, we included that suggestion. Those -- a couple of residents said we want the trees to stay. We will have to see during construction whether when you start -- assuming we proceed with the work, when we start digging, do we find any structural roots, and we may need to remove it anyways, or given the fact that the tree's in poor shape. Because at the end of the day, any time you do any of this work near a tree, there will be some kind of an impact, right? If the tree is already into some kind of a -- in a poor condition, there's a high probability that it will continue to, you know, get worse more rapidly. We can always observe it. So, our response to those two requests will be that we'll have to see during construction when we start digging what we find, and we will probably have to monitor them moving forward. And if we see a more rapid decline of those trees, that they may still need to be removed anyway. It's something that we couldn't tell you for sure right now that they could stay or not, but we can try.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: But we do know at the locations where we're proposing it to be where the asphalt pavement is, the tree roots there are obviously not at the surface because they had to grow either out or under the pavement, the base, and everything.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right, the challenge of that location is that, you know, your typical pavement, you have a 12-inch of compacted sub-base, 8 inches of lime rock base, and then you have the asphalt on top. So, you have about 2 feet of really hard, compacted material. So, the tree has to find its way in the area of least resistance, which in this case it will be along the side on the rear. So, you know, those are -- those are the challenges with -- with locating a sidewalk at this location.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: So, staff's recommendation based on the ballots that was received is that we proceed with Option 1. And...

Public Works Director Diaz: If you keep going and see we have...

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: We don't have anything else.

Public Works Director Diaz: Can you put it --? Sorry, when we put it back, we killed the presentation. So, there's a little bit of discrepancy between the -- between the one that we posted. These two slides, we added after the fact. I'm so sorry, I keep -- I keep going. There you go. These are the slides that we added from the one that we posted on the -- on the -- on the Commission. We added those lights over the weekend just to...

Commissioner Castro: So, staff's recommendation is based on the ballots?

Public Works Director Diaz: So, we were given -- our understanding, we were given two -- we were given two tasks. Find the path that it will limit the impact to the trees and ask the residents what their opinion is, and I believe we have done that. At the end of the day, the decision is -- belongs to the board. So, that -- that's -- so it is our opinion that the location where we'll have the lesser impact to the trees will be by the street and that also is the location that the people that we polled, that's where they'd like to see a sidewalk.

Commissioner Castro: So...

City Manager Rojas: Melissa, can you put...?

Commissioner Castro: So, as much as I do love the trees, I think what comes first is safety, pedestrian safety, our residents, more than where the sidewalk is going to be. And I believe that on the curb is not the safest place to put the sidewalk.

Public Works Director Diaz: The preferred location under regular circumstances in a residential street, you're absolutely right, would be to put it against the property line in the rear. That would absolutely be the preferred location for the sidewalks in a residential neighborhood. The condition of having a curb on a sidewalk next to a driving lane does exist throughout. It exists in San Amaro; it exists throughout downtown. It's not as common in residential areas. San Amaro is probably the closest location that will more closely mimic the condition where you have somewhat of a similar situation. So, it -- placing the location -- the sidewalk by the curb meets all applicable engineering standards. There's nothing unsafe about it, but absolutely, it would be preferable to put on the rear if that was a possibility.

Commissioner Castro: I mean, you're putting one right next to -- right next to the street. It's almost the same as walking basically on the street. And this Commission brought up, and I think we voted on Vision Zero, and how important pedestrian safety is for us. And I don't -- I just feel like this is not meshing. It's not where...

Public Works Director Diaz: It meets all applicable engineering standards. There's nothing particularly unsafe about it. I mean, it's a sidewalk next to a curb that happens, that exists throughout the entire county. You know, will it be preferred on the back? Absolutely. 100 percent.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I know that Deena is available to answer some of the questions on the tree roots, but before we really rock and roll on the tree roots, I wanted to address with you the speed limit in the area, see if we can slow it down even further, a block before the bridge, you know, so you're not just getting the sign, what is it, 20 miles per hour at the bridge?

Public Works Director Diaz: Right, the bridge has a 20 miles per hour, that is a -- Melissa, I'm sorry, the yellow signs are...?

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: Warning.

Public Works Director Diaz: The warning signs, they're not enforceable per se. But the -- and I think we recently put a 25 miles per hour speed limit on the corridor also.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: So, Alhambra Circle south of Coral Way is 25 miles an hour and then as part of this project, we're also planning on installing medians to help even slow it down even further directly on the approaches to the bridge. So, there's different things that we're looking at.

Public Works Director Diaz: Replacing that 20 miles per hour on the bridge with 15 may be feasible.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right, I mean...

Public Works Director Diaz: That's a -- that may be as a warning.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think people would psychologically feel that 15 indicates if you go faster than that, it's going to be dangerous, so they'll probably go 20.

Public Works Director Diaz: That's something that we can definitely work on. It wouldn't necessarily be enforceable. The warning yellow signs are not enforceable, only the white speed limit signs are enforceable.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right, well...

Public Works Director Diaz: But you know -- and by the same token, I would like to add that on the first block specifically, that's really -- it's no tree root issue that will cause the sidewalk to be placed in the rear.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, yeah...

Public Works Director Diaz: It's strictly a preference by the abutting property owner so just (INAUDIBLE)...

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to deal with what we're referring to here now as...

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The first block being the one closest to the bridge.

Public Works Director Diaz: The bridge, correct.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, and before today's meeting, I talked to you a little bit about moving the sidewalk back on that spot, reaching a happy medium somewhere to where it's -- you have some gap away from the street, but also providing some curbing to kind of corral the vehicles away from the bridge itself?

Public Works Director Diaz: There is more space there than some of the others, so either option would be workable. I couldn't give you exact details on how much wider we can make the sidewalk. It may well be that as we get closer to some of the trees, we may need to shrink it a little bit. We're probably going to have to do that throughout that entire run, regardless.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

Public Works Director Diaz: You won't see like consistent sidewalk. You know, as you get closer to the tree, you may need to shrink to the bare minimum for ADA. Again, the tree situation is what makes this area complicated. You know, I mean, if the desire of the Commission is that we remove the trees and plant them later, then that's a whole -- that's a whole different discussion, right? So -- but, you know, this is the best we can do, unfortunately, given the constraints that we're dealing with.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, the run and walk path down on Old Cutler runs into the same situation on a much busier street where they had to put up some curbing and you do have the run and walk path right next to the traffic on Le Jeune.

Public Works Director Diaz: But it's asphalt, right? The path in Old Cutler is asphalt, I believe.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, it is asphalt, but it's still...

Public Works Director Diaz: More flexible and you see the condition that it's in.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's...

Public Works Director Diaz: It's actually because of the trees and the location.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The number of lights that I've lost on my bicycle are reflective of how bad the condition is of that path. But yes, I mean, it does get closer, but if we bring down the speed limit in the area and put a median in there, and I'm praying that maybe by next time we have the speed radar signs available.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: Well, the agreement was approved by Miami-Dade County, the interlocal for the speed feedback signs.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Speed feedback, okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: That will be another location that will potentially...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right, because I, you know, was out there yesterday and the traffic moves fast and we need to do what we can to slow it down by dropping the speed limit, putting the signs up, putting in medians in between to kind of pinch that traffic down to where it slows down, because people right now are walking on the street, and it's incredibly dangerous, and everybody wants us to do something, not to be kicking this can down the road. I don't think we're going to be able to ever make everybody happy. It's impossible on this particular case to make everybody happy, but it's going to be safer, in my opinion. So, to our esteemed landscape architect, arborist, I would like you to enlighten us about the condition of the roots and on these trees and whether or not any of them can be cut and still maintain the health and stability of the trees going forward.

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: Hi, Deena Bell from Green Space. So, a lot of these trees are very large and mature black olives. The further you get away from a tree's trunk and possibly cut roots, the better. Arborist guidelines have minimum distances you are to cut roots. We don't really know that until we start pulling the soil away and seeing the roots below. But just basically, the option that meanders is obviously the one that was come up with that's best for the trees. That's why we came up with that layout. So, with that said, it's really tough to decide which exact roots can be cut until we actually get out there and start removing soil. But as Melissa said, the sidewalks on the back side close to the property line are going to be going over very large tree roots. So, there's going to be a minimum probably of six inches height on top of the tree roots when you have the base and the four-inch sidewalk. So, there's going to be some up and down movement over the tree roots to protect them underneath.

Public Works Director Diaz: And in some areas, it creates a problem with the ADA.

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: ADA, the slopes of the sidewalk having to go up and over tree roots, it's not possible when you're getting next to a driveway because then the walkway's got to slope down to meet the driveway, and it's a hill.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: A hill that's too slow -- too steep for the wheelchair. That's the issue.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right, I went back out yesterday to refresh my memory and we talked about the first block, but the last block I think is the most challenging of them all. It has the thickest

root that appears to, you know, be a structural root going underneath the driveway and it's not lifting the driveway. So, it's -- it is going down in there. So, if you cut that, it would appear to me to be a substantial root and it's too close to the trunk to be taken out, at least from my experience on those things. And then it goes straight down to the driveway. And then in the next house to the -- to the north as well you have, if the sidewalk was put back further from -- from the edge along the property line, it's a very steep piece of property and then getting down to the grade level again would be difficult. So, I think we're going to have to use a combination of tools that we have in our toolbox to be able to slow the traffic down and make it safer for pedestrians as well as everyone using the street or the sidewalk areas to diverge through that area. I've biked through there, I've walked through there, I've run through there. I'm very, very familiar with it and I do think that the sidewalk is going to be a tremendous improvement and I'm hoping we can move this forward.

Commissioner Menendez: I want to share my thoughts. I guess the -- the instructions were to analyze the impact to the trees. We should have asked what's the impact of safety of pedestrians. If I'm not mistaken, very recently a car drove into the canal a block or so away from what we're talking about, drove into the canal. So, no matter what measures we take, that's a winding road and it's not safe. I've lived 100 feet or so from Le Jeune Road for 47 years. And when my wife and I had our first child 23 years ago, we made it a family policy we would not ever, ever go on the sidewalk on Le Jeune Road to, let's say, get to the library or to the Youth Center. We take the long way home for safety. In Disney World some years ago, there was a car that hit the curb, elevated, and it went airborne, and it killed members of a family. Having the sidewalk, and I know we have it in other areas -- and by the way, the reason why we have it on Le Jeune Road, Le Jeune Road was a two-lane road originally, one going north, one going east. And as South Florida grew, they expanded the road. That's why it's right next to the property lines, the sidewalks. It doesn't mean it's safe. So, I'm very hesitant to do anything in support if we are putting pedestrians at risk, having them right next to the road when the road is winding. A car -- we've mentioned before, cars that hit the bridge. Imagine if a car hits a bridge -- instead of a bridge it hits a person. And yet we are the ones who vote to put them in harm's way. So, those are the obstacles that we're going to have to overcome for me to be comfortable.

Commissioner Fernandez: I have some comments, but I'd like to reserve them until after we hear from public comment.

City Manager Rojas: Can I --? Real quick, the presentation is for Option 1 or Option 2. So, staff and myself will need directions at the end if we're going to Option 1, Option 2, or just start from scratch on this issue that we've put a lot of effort and time into it.

Commissioner Castro: I really appreciate all the time and effort, it truly shows. And I think that maybe we didn't give -- at least I didn't give the right direction or very persistent direction to safety is number one. Yeah, we love trees. Coral Gables is about trees, but safety and life is number one. And I don't think these options reflect it 100 percent.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Robert Ruano.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Robert Ruano: Good morning. Oh, good afternoon, right? Is it good morning still? I don't know.

Commissioner Castro: It's still...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Mr. Ruano: Well, so much to say, but before I do go into what I would say, I would like to say that Commissioner Castro had asked for a report and I had a meeting with the Manager last month with his staff and they agreed -- well, they said first that their directive was to develop a sidewalk originally that was the least impactful to the trees, right? And I don't know if you heard it right, but he said under the road, you've got about two feet of compacted soil. So, the least impactful to trees anywhere in this city is probably going to be on the street, right? So, that's the first mistake. So, they did a plan with 100 percent against the street and then they sent it to the arborist, and they said, what's the impact on the trees? And so, the arborist is saying, well, in this condition, this is this impact or no impact or whatever. They never said -- they never did a plan that said, this is the sidewalk that we usually do, which is the safest, which is in the Florida Green Book, which says the sidewalks -- new sidewalks should be placed as far as from the roadway as practical. Okay, that's the Green Book that they use, the engineers use. But they chose not to. They chose to design it against the road, and then they went to the arborist and said, what's the impact on the trees? So, that's the first flaw, but I'll move on with what I had to say. Good morning again, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners. I'm here today because I care about our city and I want it to remain the City Beautiful, but also because I want it to be a safe city where everyone can walk without fear of getting run over by a car. In fact, you say you also want this because you passed a Vision Zero resolution in April, thanks to Commissioner -- Vice Mayor Anderson, which said in part, the quote, "the Vision Zero program is a systematic approach to implementing proven safety countermeasures and policies that focus on safer people, safer roads." To that end, I would like to remind you why this proposed sidewalk configuration is a terrible idea, and you should vote against it once and for all. In this particular case, the City has in an unprecedented move, one they did not do on University Drive -- by the way, which has new wonderful sidewalks behind the trees in many cases -- they asked residents not if they want a sidewalk in front of their home, but where they would like it. They did this not because it was required by the Code or City resolution, but because the Mayor offered residents that option. Now, unsurprisingly, four residents, four, just four, want a sidewalk against the road with a curb on beautiful winding and historic Alhambra Circle. Why do they want this? Well, you have to ask them that. But one thing is clear, it's not about the impact of the trees. In fact, in some cases, where trees are failing and recommended for

removal, making more space for sidewalks, they still want the sidewalk on the street, making it a less safe place to push a stroller or walk. As I said, according to the Florida Green Book, the guide for building safe roads, new sidewalks should be placed as far from the roadway as possible. The proposed location in front of large trees makes no sense as a pedestrian. On the proposed sidewalk will be directly in the path of a car that might jump the curb. Additionally, this location is in direct contrast to the City's implementation of Vision Zero policy. The City choosing a less safe option only because some people want it. Not surprisingly, we have asked City staff which option of a sidewalk is safer. And you saw it today. They didn't say necessarily which one is safer, against the road or behind the tree? And they refused to answer that. But I would ask them, which is safer? They'll probably have to tell us after today, behind the tree. Another concern is that the cost of sidewalk with curbs and gutters are significantly more expensive than without a curb. They haven't talked about that. Also, the new design will require a change in drainage that will be more expensive than if it was against the property line. Didn't we just have a conversation about infrastructure needs but not enough money? I'd also like to remind you the next year, the Gables will be celebrating 100 years. If we really want to honor George Merrick and the city he created, we should respect his vision. Merrick relied on two movements in founding Coral Gables, City Beautiful and Garden City. Both of these promoted wide green boulevards, tree-lined streets and plazas. If you were to approve this project, the visual impact of curbs in front of just five houses on one side of the road will have a detrimental impact on the appeal of the road, forever changing Alhambra's historic and green character. Not to mention with a curb and a concrete divider in the middle. Not to mention the right-of-way line is much farther back than the trees. But last but not least, you should vote against this recommendation because of the precedent it will set. First, you truly have no requirement to ask even if the residents want a sidewalk. This is basic life safety infrastructure that does not need to go to a vote. In fact, in 2018, and the Mayor will remember because he was here and he voted for it, the City Commission declared Alhambra a collector road that did not have to go through that process. Even if the City did have to ask by providing two plans and then not including Commissioner Castro's requested plan behind the trees, the City is still influencing the outcome as they know that these residents would likely pick a bigger yard than a safer sidewalk. In fact, another safer option is already on the table and approved by an arborist, Option 2, but it's not being recommended by residents or the Administration. Thank you for your time today. I urge you to please think about the hundreds, if not thousands of residents that walk or bike in this area monthly and consider if their ability to move around our city safely is less important than four. One, two, three, four people, Mayor. New city residents that want your -- their yard to look -- remain looking as big as it can without any regard to the safety of the community. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right. Commissioner?

Commissioner Fernandez: Commissioner Castro, like you, I thought there was going to be a third option presented. I was under that impression. I'll go back and look at the minutes to see, but I was under the impression that we were. We have received numerous communications over the last few weeks regarding this issue and it is an issue that, like you said, Mr. Manager, staff has invested a lot of time in trying to find a plan that works. I think everybody here has mentioned safety as one of the priorities. And it's a difficult decision for me because, like Vice Mayor Anderson, protecting our tree canopy is a priority that I have always said. But there was one email in particular that really made me think. Jessica Keller sent an email asking whether I would walk there with my child. And a sidewalk on a curb is not a sidewalk I would walk on with my child. And I mentioned that when we did the walk-through that -- a couple of times. I was at a couple of those Sunshine meetings. The rate of speed of traffic is incredible on that block. It's not even about walking. I don't feel safe driving on Alhambra in my golf cart because of the rate of speed the cars drive through. And I know we're working on traffic calming measures and that kind of thing, but on my block, we have traffic calming. And you still see cars that fly over those speed humps landing on the other side, and you can hear them hitting the ground because they're not slowing down. They have a mission to get to wherever they're going and they're going to continue to go as fast as they can. And this is a sidewalk that would not just be on the curb, this is the curb that will set the curve of the curvature of the road because the road will curve on this sidewalk. So, just putting the safety of our residents is a priority for me. I would not be able to support a sidewalk that's on the curb. It's just not something I can -- I can sign on to.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to follow up on a couple of things because what I was speaking to staff about here today was a combination of things. And part of the things that you're not, I should say, are not being highlighted is the fact that the sloping requirements for ADA would make it best if, in some of these locations, that the sidewalk is closer to the street if speeds are brought down, if we have the traffic calming. You know, if it -- if it has the speed reductions that we do in some of the areas around the university, where we have lots of students going through and appropriate enforcement there to where we have it down to 15 to 20 miles an hour, it's a safer condition. Yes, there's a couple of trees that are in not as good a condition. If it was my ballot and my choice, I would probably have deferred to taking the ones that are in poor condition out. As we get closer to the bridge, I think curbing is necessary, absolutely necessary, to prevent those cars from going into the canal, to prevent the cars from hitting the bridge. Just like where you have a bridge support, you have the bumpers around the support for the bridge, the curbing will help steer people in and help slow cars down. You see that on corners in every area in our city, residential-wise, that where if you have the curbing added to the corners, it helps control where the cars go and they're not just driving up and over and through the grass and through someone's yard to be able to get to their destination. So, in the first block to the south, a combination can be done where you meander the sidewalk between the trees, add the curbing to help slow down the vehicles and steer them away from the bridge, and all the way down to the corner of that lot and meander it, not necessarily on the property.

Commissioner Fernandez: Can we put up the diagram so --? I think that'll be easier for you to explain with a diagram on screen. Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Can you blow that up bigger? Because that's -- one day we're going to get screens on our dais.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes. So, the first block is the one on top, correct? That's the closest to the bridge?

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct, yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You see where there's an angle where that's going around one tree? I think that's one of the trees, 14, isn't that one of the ones that's in poor condition? Now that's out of all of them I think it's the one that's in the worst condition.

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: It was listed as poor condition but there was no recommendation to remove in the arborist report.

Vice Mayor Anderson: When we were walking out there it looked like it was not a great candidate to keep. Okay, so for that reason and the fact that this is probably where, you know, you're going to have the greatest encounters with vehicles, I'd prefer to move the sidewalk back and get the people on to the pedestrian bridge there. The median in between is going to work just like we have the medians that go around University of Miami to help slow down that traffic. I am old enough to remember what it was like, you know, before sidewalks, before anybody, you know, restricting the speeds because I used to jog around that university every day with my ROTC training, so lots of memories there. So, my suggestion is in that first block, you do have curbing, but you allow for the drainage if you allow some slits in there, just like the County does along Red Road and stuff, you allow the water to flow into the swale areas so you don't have the high expense of the drainage. And then we have very great looking trees along the way that are healthy, are robust, and the last thing you want to be doing to these residents is taking the trees away. When I went door to door and asked the residents what they wanted at Salvadore Park for the dog park, although staff had written, you know, for tree removal because they presumed that people didn't want the black olive trees, they wanted them. They want the shade, they don't want to lose the canopy, and every single one of those trees was healthy. So, Deena, I think it's tree number -- at least here, it's tree number six. The house number is 3400. Do you recall that tree?

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: I do. The two that they're in poor condition as per the arborist report, they're safe, they're there, but they're not the best-looking trees. So, the design takes into account like is the tree spectacular enough to around in this position? Or is it one that's poor condition, not the best of tree, could it be sacrificed to put the sidewalk where you want? Yes, those were the two that were colored yellow.

Commissioner Menendez: Vice Mayor, I have a question for you if you don't mind before we skip.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Sure.

Commissioner Menendez: If a different kind of tree was planted there, would it make more sense without the root system that those trees have? I know that's your area that you, you know, have a great deal of knowledge. If a different type of tree was planted there, basically they wouldn't lose a tree, but they wouldn't have the root system that would expand to the point that it's creating challenges.

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: The issue is that they're existing very mature trees, they're probably 75 year old trees, that's the issue. So, that's why the root system is expanded to that. So, if that were to be removed and a new tree planted, you might be looking at a smaller species that's not going to have the mature canopy.

Commissioner Menendez: Like oak?

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: If you're trying to get -- well, an oak would give you the same issue 50 years from now.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: But if you're looking for trees that are not going to pop up the sidewalks in the future, you would use a smaller tree perhaps.

Vice Mayor Anderson: As I...

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: Again, it's a mature canopy.

Vice Mayor Anderson: As I recall the discussions back when bike lanes were being discussed in this area, one of the number one issues for these residents in that area, and I do think we need to listen to residents, just like we try to listen to residents on many issues that we've had, you know, like we've taken ballots and so forth, is they want to keep this tree canopy. They absolutely do. And they were opposed to bike lanes. I know there's always the optimum that we can achieve. I know that one time someone wanted to put protected bike lanes. We just don't have the space. Okay, I would love to have protected bike lanes. I absolutely would love to have protected bike lanes because there have been times I've slapped cars to keep them from running into me. Okay, and that's -- that's without even a painted line. But we have to work within the confines of what we have here in a built city. If we drop the speed limit and enforce the speed limit and put in the detours that are necessary to bring that speed down, right now you have what, 24 feet of asphalt?

Public Works Director Diaz: It varies, 20 to 24, it depends where you are, it's not consistent.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, this is like the Indy 500. And my husband, back when he was a young man on Segovia, was one of those folks that got a 50 mile an hour ticket on Segovia. Now we have the median in the middle and when you have mature canopy, people are not going to speed as much because they feel that it's more residential. So, if we pinch the lanes and we bring it down in an appropriate manner, then it helps. So, looking at the diagram for tree number six, I think it is, if the sidewalk is put behind that tree, can the tree be saved?

Public Works Director Diaz: The issue there -- like for example, the first tree, the one that's closer to intersection has very exposed roots, but it's far away from the driveway. What ends up happening with that tree is that it's really close to the driveway and we ended up having the problems with the ADA slope...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

Public Works Director Diaz: As you get across. So, for example, the bridge adjacent to -- I mean, the roots adjacent to 3416 are very exposed. There's a potential for us to go over. We will have to really mount that significantly, but it's doable. Once you're closer to the driveway approach, that's when there's an issue.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, the driveway was a non-starter.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There's just no way.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, you just cannot make the ramp back down at the ADA compliance slope.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right, because the way the yard is mounded itself...

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The yard itself is much higher than the driveway.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, what we're looking for is direction. You know, whatever the desire of the Commission is, we'll...

Commissioner Menendez: A little while ago, the Vice Mayor mentioned University Drive. And University Drive between Segovia and Bird Road has trees with expansive root systems. And yet the sidewalks there are against the property lines, not along the road.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, on University Drive we actually managed to meander the sidewalk around the trees. Generally speaking, the trees in University were not, for the most part, as big as this. And we actually removed quite a number of trees. They're not of this size and age. But we ended up removing several trees in University, and we mitigated for all of them. And that was actually part of the University project. We actually did remove several trees. I couldn't tell you off the top of my head how many, but there were not trees -- unless they were in really bad shape, there were not trees of this size and age. And there's something I'd like to correct on the record. In the discussions of the original Alhambra bike lanes, we had a map that incorrectly showed this portion of Alhambra Circle as a collector. Collector streets are -- collectors -- the classification of streets is done by the state. Alhambra Circle is not a collector south of Coral Way. It never was. We just had a map that had some incorrect information that at the time we didn't realize it until later. So, I just want to make that clear.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, we...

Mayor Lago: May I add something just to...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Sure.

Mayor Lago: To the two points you made there? I was going to wait until later, but I'm happy you brought that up. We brought that up before here on the dais. That's not the first time we correct the issue about the collector street. The second thing is the issue that Commissioner Menendez brought up. I live right next to the University. I drive University every day. There is no tree in that area that I'm aware of that is not invasive, that is not over 25, 30 years old. There's no massive oak trees there. There's no massive black olives like you have in Alhambra. What you did have was some large benjamin ficus.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yeah, the invasive...

Mayor Lago: That were removed.

Public Works Director Diaz: Which were removed.

Mayor Lago: Which were removed. And you have another one on the corner of Blue Road, Blue Road and University, which is going to hinder -- hinder the installation of the sidewalk there, which we're planning on.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Mayor Lago: The whole Commission is in favor of that. That's going to have to be taken out. I've stopped there to see how we can jog around and see if we can save it, but I don't think we're

going to be able to save it, and it's going to affect the canopy on the -- the beautiful canopy that we have on the bridge there. So, there was no massive specimen trees. You can drive down University now, and you'll see some oak trees there, but you won't see anything of the magnitude that you see on...

Public Works Director Diaz: I believe we removed at least one or two oaks that were rather large, but they were in very poor shape as well.

Commissioner Menendez: On that -- on that line of thought, between Segovia and Bird Road, that stretch of University, what are the trees that create this canopy that at night you can't even see the light?

Public Works Director Diaz: Between Segovia, I'm trying to picture it.

Commissioner Menendez: You come from the Youth Center...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Those are...

Commissioner Menendez: Or the library.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Those are banyans.

Unidentified Speaker: Banyans.

Commissioner Menendez: Banyan trees.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Those are massive banyans, they're like a house.

Commissioner Menendez: Massive banyan trees.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Those have been there longer than you and I have lived.

Public Works Director Diaz: Oh, those are banyans, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: Those are...

Commissioner Menendez: Which have been known to topple in hurricanes and stuff.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: One (INAUDIBLE) a few years ago, got knocked over completely, I remember. Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, generally the benjamina -- ficus benjamina are the ones that go over. The banyans, you know, with their massive root systems and I should say anchoring, I won't use the word shoring poles, but anchoring, they're not likely to go over if you allow the roots to go down, which those have.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm in favor of moving this project forward. We cannot afford to continue to kick this can down the road. I went out there last night and people are begging for a sidewalk, and they want us to make a decision. And I do think we can meander the sidewalk. I do think there -- you know, because of the amount of canopy, perhaps on one or two of these trees that are smaller and in poorest condition can be removed to be able to keep the sidewalk back as much as possible. But it's impossible to save this canopy by putting all these sidewalks at the property line. And that's the last thing this community wants. It's very hot there. Without these trees, not only will it be hot, it'll impact values, and the trees themselves help slow down traffic. We need to listen to the residents. I understand that some people said there were just four people, but people were walking from around the corner and saying, please, we need a sidewalk. Expect people to have strollers going down the street, and what you can't, you know, do in the yards themselves because of the root systems that are well established on these trees, we need to stop kicking the can down the road and take some action and provide staff direction. And I'd respect the, you know, opinion of our landscape architect as to which one of these trees should be saved and which ones are so close to, you know, being in deteriorating condition can be sacrificed.

Mayor Lago: Well, Commissioner, I don't think we have support to move forward in any form. So, I think that the project is incredibly important. We're missing two blocks of sidewalk there, but we don't have the support. We have the support of the residents that want it a certain way, but not of some other individuals that are involved. One of the things also that I think that I recommend, you know, moving forward, just so people can become a little bit more accustomed to it and they understand it. I live in front of San Amaro. I live right there between San Amaro and Urbino. So, I live in an area where there's a lot of traffic, there's a lot of, you know, cars coming in and out, and there is a curb there. Maybe if certain people go and see it, they become a little more used to it, they see the ins and outs of how it works, they spend 30 minutes, 15 minutes understanding the traffic patterns at 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock in the morning. You have a lot of people coming in and out of University of Miami, you have people going to Riviera Country Club, you have people going to the church, you have people going to University of Miami, you have people going to Doctors Hospital. There is a massive curve there. There is a massive -- but also to do it justice, there also are circles there that slow traffic down. It's important, let's be fair. But for example, on the area, the run on Campo Sano, it doesn't have -- it doesn't have a circle. And that area's going to have also more sidewalks, God willing, when we start the parking lot. So, there

really -- there isn't -- there isn't -- there isn't support. I think it's great whether the sidewalks are on the curb, whether the sidewalks are pressed against the house. Whichever way we do this at the end of the day, I think it's critical, just like when you talk about Blue Road, talk about University, talk about what we've been mentioning about Granada. I think it's really important to finally get these sidewalks done in one form or another. I don't have any issues with the sidewalks in front of my house. They're great. You know, people use them. They're constantly being used by University of Miami students, by families, by young kids, and there's a lot of traffic. I'd ask anybody outside of maybe where Commissioner Menendez lives to find me an area that has more traffic than where I live. It's pretty, it's pretty, pretty hectic 24 hours a day in that area. So, I think there was another individual that wanted to speak that clicked in.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. So, I actually have a couple of speakers on Zoom now. Matilda Kalaveshi is the name.

Matila Kalaveshi: Yes, hello everybody, Matilda. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Mayor Lago: How are you?

Ms. Kalaveshi: Okay, hi. I am the owner of 3400 Alhambra Circle. You guys were just talking about the house. I'm one of the residents that will be affected by the decision you all make today. We moved about a year ago. We have a six-year-old daughter. The safety of my child is more important than anything else in this world. Making the decision to go with choice one was not a selfish one based on anything other than safety. But I think before we have any sort of discussion, I think we have to go back to number one. And the number one is figuring out how we can slow down traffic on Alhambra. We can talk about sidewalks all day long, but if we do not take care of the way the traffic pattern is currently being handled on Alhambra Circle, there's nothing else that will better the situation for myself or any other resident walking down the street. We are in the corner of Alhambra and Trevino, and I cannot even let my daughter outside the house because there's traffic coming from both ends of the street. So, I think when we're talking about this issue, I think the main concern and the main decision that needs to be made is how do we slow down traffic on Alhambra. And I don't recall if anyone mentioned speed bumps or anything else that aside from narrowing the road, which I think should be the number one decision that should be made today. In terms of the sidewalk positioning, we all voted for number one, the four homes. Again, it wasn't a decision made on the size of my yard, it was the decision based on safety. Tree number six was -- there was a lot of talk about its health. We conducted a separate report that we paid for. And our report results are very much different from what you guys have shared in terms of the health of the tree. I don't know if that's going to be considered or not. But I think before any other decision is made, I think we all need to discuss ways in which we can narrow the street

and slow down traffic. And without doing that, I think the sidewalk is going to have little to no effect because if cars are still going 50, 60 miles an hour down that street, the chances of accidents are very, very high whether there's a sidewalk or not.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Public Works Director Diaz: And if I may, the -- and this is something that I would like to get further direction of the Commission. The island that you see on the area, it's not really necessarily related to the sidewalk. That was part of the traffic calming attempt. So, I just want to make sure that there's no objection for it, regardless of whether the sidewalk itself move forward, that there's no objection for that portion to continue. Unfortunately, speed tables or (INAUDIBLE) are not really an option here because you cannot put them on a curve. So, the only options that we've kind of thought at this location would be that median separator to create a kind of like a visual break for people to slow down. And there's also the potential of adding the speed fact signs now that we have that interlocal with the County. There's a potential for putting them at this location as well. So...

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Do you feel like you have sufficient direction?

Public Works Director Diaz: No, at the moment we haven't really been told how to move forward.

Commissioner Castro: So -- so...

Mayor Lago: Do you mind if I listen to the rest of public comment? I think there was another person, was there?

City Clerk Urquia: Yeah, I have one more speaker, Mr. Mayor. Roland Rodriguez.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Rodriguez, thank you for being here with us.

Roland Rodriguez: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Mr. Rodriguez: Roland Rodriguez, 3310 Alhambra Circle. Like Matilda just stated, of course, safety is of the biggest concern to us. I have heard a lot of mention that everybody walks this area, has walked it. Well, I walk and run it at least five to six times a day. So, safety is a concern to us. And like Matilda said, it's not an issue of the size of the yard. Safety is our concern. And we've

also heard about the sidewalk and curb not being safe. Well, I also run along Bird Road, and I run along Miller and there's sidewalk with curb. So, I guess I can't -- I wouldn't be able to run those areas because they're not safe. So, it doesn't make any sense. Having a curb with a sidewalk is an inadequate condition. So, in either case, Option 1 or Option 2, you can see in front of my home, because of the size of the tree and because of the slope and because of the ADA on the roots behind the tree, either option puts the sidewalk in front of the tree anyways. So, there's got to be a curb and gutter based on both options. Now, when we were presenting the ballot, we've gone through this multiple Commission meetings. We also had a Sunshine meeting. We were then presented a ballot. And in the ballot, it pretty much says, should the City receive more than 50 percent of the ballots in favor of either Option 1 or 2, the City will proceed with the sidewalk option that receives the most votes. So, we keep kicking the can around and we want the sidewalk. And if -- we were hoping as residents that due diligence was performed before we presented these options. I mean, otherwise, we're just wasting our time choosing an option if it's not going to move forward anyways. I caught the last part of Mr. Ruano's speech indicating that it's only for four residents. We shouldn't listen to four out of the whole community, but he's very lively in his opinion as well. So, we should also have a very strong opinion living in this area. As a civil engineer, I've done multiple projects, infrastructure projects throughout the state, and I can guarantee you that public opinion of both residents and commercial property owners is heavily taken into account before a decision is made on the approach or best approach of these projects. And then all options are weighed in with resident and commercial property owners' opinions. So, again, I ask that this project move forward quickly. We want the sidewalks. We've gone through several Commission meetings. I've attended several in person. We've had the Sunshine meeting. We were then presented with two options, thinking, okay, this is it. It's stated very clearly in the ballot, we're going to move forward and now we continue to go back and forth. So, that's my opinion on the matter. And again, I -- we hope as residents, and there's four residents in the area that we've become accustomed to talking about this item every day as we walk through this area, and we want the sidewalk. Also, the last pushing the sidewalk into the front of the tree, we would hope also decreases the width of the lanes and thereby decrease the speed that goes through there both in the mornings and the afternoons. And that's all I got. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Commissioner?

City Clerk Urquia: Mayor, sorry, I have a couple more speakers.

Mayor Lago: Okay. I'm sorry. I thought...

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Saralane Conde.

Saralane Conde: Hi, I'm Sara Conde and I'm at 228 Alesio Avenue. I know that a lot of the -- every -- well, a lot of people are mentioning the speed of the cars on Alhambra Circle. And I know this is not totally on point, but I just wanted to say that we -- whatever is on Alhambra Circle, we have worse on Le Jeune. I still want to focus on, you know, in our neighborhood we would like

there to be a slowdown on Le Jeune. I know that we're waiting for the road safety audit report from the FDOT. I still think that we ought to try to impress upon them that we really need to make that road safer, slow down the traffic. You know, and none of the items that you're mentioning, the trees and all that, you know, that doesn't really exist on Le Jeune. So, Le Jeune is just -- it's like the Indianapolis 500. And I know that Commissioner Menendez himself has mentioned in this conversation that he would never let his kids go anywhere near Le Jeune. And this is -- it's been a long time. That road is going through a neighborhood, but there are houses on either side of that road throughout Coral Gables. I think it would behoove us to make that road safer, to slow down the traffic on that road. I'd appreciate it if we could keep the pressure on FDOT and I know that there are a lot of residents that live in the area that have the same feelings that I do, although they haven't been quite so vocal. And I appreciate your taking the time to hear my comment. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor.

City Clerk Urquia: Next, I have Nicole Puerto.

Mayor Lago: Yes, you had a question? Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Oh, we have Nicole Puerto is the next one. Is she on?

City Clerk Urquia: She is unmuted. Yes, ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Good morning -- good afternoon, excuse me.

Nicole Puerto: Hello?

Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Puerto: Oh, okay, thank you. Sorry about that. I had to switch. Thank you so much. So, this is Nicole Puerto. I'm at 3430 Alhambra Circle on the corner of Alhambra and Salvatierra. We are a family of five. We have three children. My oldest is ten years old; my youngest is five. I'm in agreement with Roland and Matilda that the biggest concern we have is traffic calming. Prior to living on Alhambra Circle, we lived on University Drive and our house was on the corner so the back -- our back of our house was on Algaringo, and we would walk endlessly with our kids. We cannot do that at this time on -- on our street because of the traffic. Our kids love the canal. We try to cross to Alhambra Court from our home and it's a fight for your life crossing. So, any - any traffic calming measures we are supportive of. As neighbors we have also been supportive

of the sidewalk. We went through the process. We attended the Sunshine meeting. When given the option we all were in agreement that Option 1 was our preference. I don't understand now while there are other options on the table, we have been supportive of the process, and we thought this was a done deal based on -- on the vote that we had earlier this year. So, we are happy to help in whatever way we can, but we're doing what's being asked of us, and we would hope that because of this is our street that our opinions are taken into consideration. So, thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: And Mr. Mayor, I have one more speaker in person, Dariel Gonzalez.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Gonzalez, thank you for being here. Welcome back.

Dariel Gonzalez: I just want to highlight the importance of the trees. The City's founder created this gorgeous City Beautiful that we know, this garden city. Mr. Merrick hired Frank Button, the state's first landscape architect, to really highlight the focus on trees. So, if sidewalks, which I think we can all agree are an incredibly important issue, if we bring sidewalks, we should maintain as many of the trees as possible and try to meander our way through it. I know that ADA is a really big concern but try to keep the trees. That's it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Gonzalez: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So...

Mayor Lago: Vice Mayor, you had a question.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, you know, I agree that we need to maintain the trees and for many reasons and I do know that it is effective also for traffic calming purposes. This is a unique situation where we have complete ballots in favor of an option. I mean, I added putting some curbing down near the bridge to avoid the concerns with speeding. As far as Le Jeune Road is concerned, Ms. Conde, I live a block away. I walk across there to get to my office, to Publix, all the time. It's been a mission of mine to do something with Le Jeune Road for well over 20 years with prior administrations, and now we finally have FDOT taking action. Their first area of focus has been near the high school, and in that area, they've lowered the speed limit and they're going through the remediations necessary to get there. Their next section will be the section that you're talking about, the section where both Commissioner Menendez and I live, you know, just a minute's walk away or less. We are keeping the pressure on FDOT and FDOT is following through now. It's unfortunate you have to run for office to be able to get some of this stuff done, but I don't think we should be kicking a can down the road on life safety on Alhambra Circle. We shouldn't be ignoring what the residents have voted for. Staff has made recommendations based

upon what is safe for that area. We were able to lower the speed limits there, unlike what we can do on Le Jeune Road. We can install medians there, unlike what we can do as far as narrowing the amount of asphalt that we have on Le Jeune Road. And I can tell you from experience that the Segovia median has significantly reduced the speeding on Segovia. Nothing is going to be perfect because there's always going to be someone, whether it's on Country Club Prado or at other streets, that drives improperly, drives drunk. We're never going to be perfect, but if we add the safety features that we need to, add the speed radar signs, add the median in there like they did around University of Miami that requires the vehicles to meander there, it naturally will slow them down. To ignore what these residents want is a disservice to our community. To ignore what the residents want here now will send a message to residents throughout our city that we're going to ignore what they want. I've made it a practice of mine to go door-to-door to ask residents what they want on their street because we need to respect what they want, and I think we need to respect this now. So, with that I'll move this -- this item forward with the comments that I've already made.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah, I'm very sorry I won't be able to support this. I feel like if I support this, I'm responsible for having some blood in my hands and I will not be responsible for this if I have some say in it. I did request a third option. I hope that if this -- nobody seconds this motion, or it goes through we can work on that third option. And the most important thing to me is safety.

Mayor Lago: I had something, just one second. I'm going to second the motion just so we can have further discussion. You had a...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, thank you, Mayor. The one common denominator, even from the folks calling in on Zoom, even from folks here that commented, and I think from every single elected official, is the common denominator is safety. We're talking about sidewalks and they're different options, maybe a third option. But everyone's concern, primary concern is the safety and the speed of the cars on that portion of the Alhambra Circle. I've seen people drive on our bike lanes because they think it's part of the road. People are reckless and I'm talking all over Coral Gables. With regards to the opinion, the vote of the folks that live right there, we are taking you into consideration, absolutely. But the safety of all pedestrians that use that sidewalk -- because it won't be exclusively to the people that live immediately in that area, it's everyone who uses that road for the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years, we have to take their safety into consideration. I'm of the opinion we're putting the cart before the horse because I think we should ask you all to come back to us with safety measures, things that the Vice Mayor mentioned. I think signage is good, but signage -- if you're going to be reckless, you're going to be reckless. I think there has to be physical impediments to letting people be reckless speeding and driving in that area. I would like the Administration to come back. We can do these safety measures, do these -- take these steps to make Alhambra Circle safer, that area safer, slow down traffic, like the very nice woman spoke, I think one of the first people about her concerns. If you can come up with viable things that can be done, I'm more than happy to reconsider my position with regards to the options that were laid before us, but it's hard to vote on something and then say later we're going to take these steps. We don't even know what those steps are to make it safer. It's putting the cart before the horse. I

would love for you all to come up, these are the things we can do to make it safer, and I would be more than happy to reconsider the sidewalk options.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I think, Commissioner Menendez, you're absolutely correct. The comments that we heard are our biggest concern is traffic calming. The other lady said she doesn't even allow her child out of the house. This sidewalk isn't going to fix that problem if it's on the curb. The biggest concern these residents have is traffic calming and that needs to be a priority. As far as the median, we've seen traffic circles, they are on Venetia and people drive right over them. They do not go around them, they drive right over those -- those traffic circles. We're a cut-through city and people are taking advantage of that. I don't -- I agree with Commissioner Menendez, there has to be options presented as to how we can slow traffic down. But I think putting a sidewalk next to the road is a recipe for disaster. And it's not going to fix the problem, it's going to create new problems. And like I said before, I'm going to base this on what is the safest option for the people that are using the sidewalk. Putting it on the curb on a street where people are driving 40 or 50 miles an hour -- regardless of what traffic calming you put in there, they're still going to be driving at that rate of speed -- is not an option for me.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I had to ask a question of staff when you're done.

Mayor Lago: I just want to answer some things really quick. So, again, there's not support for this, but I just want to put a few things on the record. We'll take a vote now. We have already existing approved plans for traffic calming for this area, correct?

Public Works Director Diaz: The traffic calming that we were looking for this area was those median separators, which it's not part of the pre-approved slate that the County provided. That requires for us to go back to the County and get their blessing because the design will change slightly depending on the location of the sidewalk. We submitted that for the County to review and comment, but we cannot really -- we haven't been able to submit the County a full, complete set of drawings because it's predicated upon, you know, are we doing a sidewalk, are we not doing a sidewalk, and where's the sidewalk going to go?

Mayor Lago: The reason -- and you answered my question. The reason why I want to mention that is because the next thing we'll receive is 30 emails from residents saying we want traffic calming. Traffic calming has already been considered for this area and it's going to be installed in this area. Is there --? Do we have money in the budget already?

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes, correct.

Mayor Lago: So, that goes to show you -- hold on, let me just finish. So, that goes to show you that there -- that this has been -- that traffic calming has been planned for well over a year, two years, this Commission -- four years, thank you, Robert. So, four years. So, to say up here that there's -- that we got to work on traffic calming, no, no, there's traffic calming, but let's talk about

it. The road is terrible. Like you get all the emails, right? Why haven't we replaced the road? Why would we spend good money on something that we have to later tear out to put traffic calming? So, the whole point was to do sidewalks, wherever the sidewalks go, traffic calming and roads. All at one time to save money. But to say that traffic calming is a priority that we need to start working on now is not true. We've been working on it for four years. We've held off because we've been talking about where these sidewalks go. So, if we don't have the approval for the sidewalks, that's perfectly fine. We take that vote, we move on, and we address it later in one form or another, or that area doesn't get sidewalks. I wish it did. I think it's a benefit for the community. And when people say to me, you know, Vince, why do you talk about curbs? I go, because I live it. I see it in front of me. Every day when I step out of my house or when I get home, I see the curb. I see people walking. I see people running. I see people taking their children, I see people on bikes, you know, I see little kids with bikes. All my neighborhood is full of young kids, and they use that bike to go into UM to enjoy UM. They go through it. So, I have experience on a sidewalk that has -- that has a curb. You can't tell me it's going to be a bloodbath when I know it's not going to be a bloodbath. And Melissa's smiling because it's not. It is a -- it is a proper safety and engineering option that can be used here. Now, if we don't want to allow it, that's a different story. It's allowed by the standards. So, moving on, you know, we've talked about this ad nauseum, and we have a long Commission agenda to address. We can address this later. We've been talking about it for four years. We've been talking about traffic calming, we've been talking about the asphalt, but I want to put it on the record. Traffic calming has been addressed. It's there. We're going back and forth with the County. It's budgeted. That street should not be re-asphalted until we address it. And we've been talking about sidewalks for years and years and years. If you want to re-asphalt and you want to move on with the traffic calming, that's perfectly fine. Let's do it. Fine. There's no sidewalks that get installed. I believe that sidewalks, in one form or another, should be -- should be installed in this area. And we talk about listening to the residents. Let's listen to the residents all the time. I won't -- I won't move in one direction or another because the residents don't want it. We have a pretty much unanimous position here where residents want it, the residents that are most affected in this area. But if that's not the will of the Commission, it's perfectly fine. We move on. Madam Vice Mayor, you want to say something?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, again, I was just going to go over the traffic calming that has been built into this project. And I think it's been very thoughtful what's been done. We've been working on the speed detection signs now for over a year. They're now approved, so those can be put in there, too. Statistics show that over 80 percent of the drivers that see that those signs are flashing because they're exceeding the speed limit, slow down so those can be put in there as well. The addition of the curbing that I suggested around the bridge was to avoid exactly what you complained about, about someone going into the water. I made the motion because I think it's time to stop kicking this can down the road and ignoring what's necessary for public safety. I've used sidewalks in tighter areas such as on Granada or around San Amaro near the university while riding my bike when the traffic is moving through there. Right now, the traffic is unimpeded by anything. We need to lower the speed limit. We need to put the speed radar signs in. The median

dividers do work, okay, because it gives that visual cue that the street is narrower and it helps separate the drivers, avoids head-on collisions and slows things down. But we have a motion; we have a second. Let's go ahead.

Commissioner Menendez: Real quick, Vice Mayor. Hermes, what traffic calming measures have been approved and what is the timetable to have them installed in that area?

Public Works Director Diaz: So, it hasn't been approved. The traffic calming measure that we were working on was the median that you see on the plans. It's very schematic. What you see here, it basically creates kind of like a separator to divert the driver's attention and make sure that they can, you know, as they approach the bridge. And that's what we were looking to install. It has not been approved, even though we sent several iterations to the County because the overall - - the final set of drawings, the sidewalk will impact it. Now if the desire is not to move forward with the sidewalk, there's nothing to keep us from continuing to now go over the County and finalize the drawings without any sidewalks and getting that moved forward.

Commissioner Menendez: So, these efforts by the City to get the County to approve traffic calming measures were created, the initiative, because of the sidewalks?

Public Works Director Diaz: That area was always something that was brought to our attention, that it was necessary. We're talking about putting that kind of a median before and after the bridge. And you know, the curve makes it a little bit of a -- it's a difficult place for traffic calming. So -- but when we go to the County, right, the sidewalk, we just -- you know, you're going to put the sidewalk -- if you put the sidewalk against the back of the property, it doesn't matter. But if you're going to put it against the roadway, it's all blends into the County wanting to see that so...

Commissioner Menendez: But whether -- whether the discussion on sidewalks -- and I understand it's been going on for a while, regardless of -- let's say we never had discussions on sidewalks, the City was going to approach the County about traffic safety...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: In that area.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: And another thing, it's also like, for example, reducing the asphalt width. You know, that tends to slow people down as well, so that was something else that we were potentially looking at. Because ultimately, the pavement is in really bad shape.

Commissioner Menendez: I think what you described we have on Granada, when you go from Bird Road towards Blue Road, when you approach the bridge, there's a...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: Right.

Public Works Director Diaz: Obviously, every location is different because of the geometry of the road, but something along those lines. What you see in the plans right now is a very close, what it will look like. Obviously, again, that's not the final design. It has to be finalized, but we could go ahead and proceed with that, something to that effect, regardless of whether we move forward with the sidewalk or not.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Let me offer some clarity. Nobody on this Commission is opposed to not -- to having sidewalks. I think everybody here wants a sidewalk and they just want it to be a safe sidewalk. So, just to clear the air there.

Mayor Lago: Can I ask you a quick question before we vote? Just a simple question, just for the record, please, I think it's important. If we install -- if we move in this direction, not saying we move in another direction and we put the sidewalks behind the trees. If we install the sidewalks as proposed, as balloted, for four out of the five, I want to be correct, four out of the five residents approved it, is this a safe engineered approved objective?

Public Works Director Diaz: It will be in accordance with all applicable engineering standards.

Mayor Lago: But it's -- but I'm asking if it's safe, just like the University of Miami...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mayor Lago: As the University of Miami has it all the way around the campus, in a residential neighborhood where thousands of people use it every day. I just want to make sure because, again, whether we move in one direction or not, it's perfectly fine. Hopefully, I think it's important to connect two blocks of sidewalks to a bridge in an area that has a lot of traffic. But I don't want to scare people.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, when you work on a design, you have a palette of things, right? There's an option that is preferable.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, of course.

Public Works Director Diaz: And then you have other options that are feasible given the...

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: Constraints.

Public Works Director Diaz: Constraints, right, and the constraints could be many.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, trees, ADA, everything.

Public Works Director Diaz: So -- correct. So, obviously, the preferable option would be absolutely to put it against the sidewalk, against the back of the property.

Commissioner Castro: So, what would be the safest option?

Public Works Director Diaz: Oh, absolutely. Put it back against the sidewalk would be the absolutely ideal option, 100 percent.

Commissioner Menendez: Behind the trees.

Mayor Lago: 100 percent.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right, but it wouldn't be behind the trees. It would be through removing some of those trees.

Commissioner Menendez: The safer option is not against the road.

Public Works Director Diaz: It will be correct. The preferable safer option will be against.

Mayor Lago: We can play with it all day. We can say safer versus safest. When they laid down miles of sidewalks at UM, the decision was put it in an area where it may not be the safest, but it's still safe, correct? Is it still safe? Yes or no?

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: It's still safe, and we're able to save some trees. We're able to have more green space, we were able to do certain things and again, at the end of the day, it worked out well. In this case, we don't have the votes, we're still going to take a vote on it, but at the end of the day, we live to fight another day and we move on.

Public Works Director Diaz: We will proceed with whatever option the Commission decides to. Our job is to provide to you what are the -- you know, your option is, you know, one option has these are the consequences, that option, these are the other ones. So, all we're looking for is direction.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk, we have a motion and a second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: No.

Commissioner Fernandez: For the reasons that I stated earlier, I don't think this is the safest option. No.

Commissioner Menendez: Safety concerns, no at this time.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 2-3)

Mayor Lago: It is a safe option as stated by staff in front of us and on the record. Thank you for everyone who came today. I appreciate staff's work over the last few years. Again, we will deliver something in the future, hopefully. At least we start with traffic calming and we re-asphalt the area.

Commissioner Fernandez: Now, I would like to make a motion directing staff to present the third option that should have been presented at the time, which would be the safest option for pedestrians.

Public Works Director Diaz: We can do that.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect. I'll second that. Can you do me a favor also with that motion?

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Can we also --? We have to present that to the residents, correct?

Public Works Director Diaz: That will be your choice.

Commissioner Castro: We have to.

Public Works Director Diaz: That will be your choice.

Commissioner Castro: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: I think we should present it to the residents.

Public Works Director Diaz: That's your prerogative.

Commissioner Castro: I'm always for residents and hearing their input, but we need to separate two things that are very important. What they want and their safety. And I think safety comes first.

Mayor Lago: Okay, can I -- may I ask you a question? I agree, safety first. But you should present to the residents where to knock down certain trees in their neighborhood, correct?

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: We should do that. And again, they should have some say on that. If someone came to me and told me, Vince, we're going to knock down two oak trees in front of your front yard, I'd say, let's find a way to see if we can avoid that because I really enjoy those oak trees. It's a beautiful site. Again, I think it brings our property values up. I think it saves a ton of electricity, my property. And I think it's something that, again, it's just what our city is defined on. You know, our canopy, it's one of our many, many defining, you know, defining characteristics. So, I don't have a problem going to a third option or a fourth option or a fifth option or a sixth option. But at the end of the day, we also got to show where the trees are going to be cut down and what's going to happen.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, we can come back if that's the desire of the Commission, we can go back with that option, we can bring it to attention and then maybe at that time you can make the choice of, you know, again, all we're looking for is direction.

Commissioner Fernandez: How quickly can you come back with that?

Assistant Public Works Director DeZayas: What is the option that we are looking for for clarification?

Public Works Director Diaz: (INAUDIBLE).

City Manager Rojas: While they're looking for that, can I make just some observations? We'll look for the third option. Again, and I don't recall it, but we'll look for the third option and we'll move forward in trying to enhance the reduction of speeding in that area, aside of whatever happens to the sidewalk issue. We'll do that and if we can't find Option 3, we'll get together and maybe try to develop what other Option 3 would be, but we need to bring it to a landing.

(MULTIPLE PARTIES SPEAKING IN UNISON)

Commissioner Fernandez: Well, I will -- I'm going to amend my motion and second. My motion is going to be instructing staff to present the third option and continue with traffic calming on the premise that the sidewalk will not be adjacent to the road.

Public Works Director Diaz: And we can come back the second meeting of October, if that's okay with you all.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Commissioner Castro: I have a quick question. Deena, do we provide notice when we take off a tree?

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: Yes, when we do a tree removal permit, we post the permit on the tree for public viewing for at least two weeks. However, if the tree is larger than 16 inches diameter trunk, which most of these are, it comes to you, the Commission, first before we proceed to even post the tree removal permit.

Commissioner Castro: So, there you go, Mayor Lago. I think that really completes your concern that the residents wouldn't have been noticed or they're not talking about (INAUDIBLE).

Public Works Director Diaz: We don't send notices to...

City Attorney Suárez: To be clear...

Public Works Director Diaz: Individual property owners.

City Attorney Suárez: Yeah, to be clear, Deena...

Mayor Lago: So, let me -- let me just give you a little background. I wrote the law that she's talking about. So, you know, I would like for residents to know when you're about to cut down large specimen trees like that. Again, the sidewalk can go all the way in the back against the property line. It's perfectly fine. I don't have an issue with it. I don't. I just think that when you start cutting trees down, you're going to cut down some pretty massive specimen trees. You want to have the input of the residents on that front, especially when they're healthy trees. They're healthy trees that are not injured. If you tell me it's an unhealthy tree that has an issue and you want to mark it and then you can wait that time and people come out and say, listen, let me explain to you why that tree is unhealthy and you show them the report, but if you're cutting down a tree, I think of this magnitude, I think we should notify them. It's my opinion.

Commissioner Castro: And I agree (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Lago: But I know that law you're talking about because I wrote it.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah, exactly. So, we do notify them.

City Attorney Suárez: Can I just clarify though, the item doesn't come to Commission automatically. It's -- the information is provided to the Commission, just so we're clear.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Attorney Suárez: It's up to an individual Commissioner to put it on the agenda.

Public Works Director Diaz: The way it works, we send it to your attention. If by the next Commission meeting, no other Commissioner decided to take up the item, then we deem that as approved and we move forward.

Commissioner Castro: It's a two-week process, correct? It's a two-week process, right?

Assistant Public Works Director Bell-Llewellyn: If there's still objection by the Commission to remove a tree, then we will process the permit and post the permit card actually on the tree, a bright pink card wrapped in plastic, and leave it there for really a minimum of two weeks, sometimes longer, you know, and give people plenty of time to see the removal.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, on that same vein, remember the Poinciana tree where the City had it posted, and it was for the purposes of the park. And I received complaints from residents, and you were going out to revisit it because the tree was posted. And you know, this tree canopy's near and dear to the heart of these residents, so we can't place everybody out of harm's way all the time because even ours will go, you know, into a person's property. But I can tell you before I had curbing on my corner, I had people going through my yard all the time, which is why I recommended having curbing in that last block as you approach the bridge to create a directional buffer from people going into the water or hitting the bridge or hitting the pedestrians on the sidewalk and meandering the sidewalk in that area. So, we've taken our vote. You have a motion to go ahead. I will second that one as well. And let's -- let's move forward, okay.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Move on to F-1. Thank you, staff, as always.