

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items G-5
November 9, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-5 [Start: 5:05 p.m.]

Discussion on the funding and implementation of the Parks Master Plan.
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Mena) (Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

Mayor Lago: Item G-5, Commissioner Mena and Commissioner Menendez, discussion on the funding implementation of the Parks Master Plan.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't know if Fred is outside. Oh, there he is – or Diana or who is running point.

City Manager Iglesias: Our Parks Director will be presenting.

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay. Just to frame it very basically and then I'll let Fred run. The idea is we now have the Parks Master Plan, obviously there is a lot in there. We'll work through what specific items we do or don't want to incorporate over time on any given park, but we think that if it's going to get done that it would make sense for it to potentially to be a referendum type of item with some sort of general obligation bond. And so, this is an attempt to start that discussion and get the ball moving to the extent there is any chance to get it on a ballot a year from now. That's

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the goal, if there is support for it, but the idea would be to have it on a November ballot when you have, obviously a) more turnout for an election; and b) so its not a Coral Gables election season issue, but just a standalone substantive issue. There will be a lot of details that need to be discussed. We are not going to resolve this all there today. It's a lot of money. There's a lot of moving parts. There's a lot of discussions, but we wanted to start the discussion so that if there is at least a will to move in that direction, staff can start working on that so we can stay on track; And obviously, if at any point between now and then, somebody is not comfortable or wants to pull the plug on it or doesn't think it's the right move, we can revisit that. But if there is any chance of it being on that ballot, we should get working on the fundamentals of it. So that's just to frame the discussion.

Commissioner Menendez: We had a couple of Sunshine meetings on this matter with staff and Commissioner Mena, Vice Mayor Mena, and Commissioner Anderson participated, I think, Commissioner Fors you jumped in. Its interesting. We spent most of the day, like was mentioned about parking and this is about parks, and I remember, believe it or not, Que Pasa USA 1978, the slogan was, "Parks Yes, Parking No." So, I'm for parks. There is a finite timeline, as the Vice Mayor said. We are coming upon the holidays, obviously through the end of the year, and its important to give staff a directive to move forward in the process so we don't lose any ground. Part of the discussion was that perhaps in January we could have like a Town Hall community meeting to inform the community with greater detail, as we gather the detail about the vision, about the plan, and obviously if it goes to referendum, which I think is the proper way, in my opinion to go, its going to involve the community. So, we want to engage them early. But this could be one of those opportunities for, not only city as a government, but opportunity for the community at-large to leave something that last generations after generations. The impact that it will have on your kids, your grandkids, and your kids further on down the line, and really elevate our city to a place that very few communities, especially in Florida are there. So, Fred if you want to add to the Master Plan or any.

Parks and Rec Director Couceyro: Both of you gentlemen summed it up great. I had 100 slides that I was ready, I'm just kidding. We did have this initial discussion when we brought the finalized Master Plan and I think the direction, the Commission the time is to look to the next step, which was funding. We've had our two Sunshine meetings. We are very, as we do with all of our park projects to make sure that the public is informed and we determine whether this is something that is a realistic goal for the entire community to move forward, and as the Vice Mayor said, the Master Plan does have substantial improvements over a longer period of time. So, it will require funding that could be accomplished through the voter referendum and have to see through public input whether that's something that we move forward with, and I think it's a combination of public input meetings, and then, do we want to look at having someone help us with the survey, so we get a real accurate picture of certain questions that we ask the community to move forward. So, we have been starting to talk through that and we continue to work in that direction to get a set plan as to how we do it.

Mayor Lago: Would you like to come back in the next Commission meeting a plan so you can present to us?

Commissioner Menendez: You want December or January, what's best for you?
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Parks and Rec Director Couceyro: January. December is a little crowded.

Mayor Lago: The next election is in November.

Parks and Rec Director Couceyro: I know.

Mayor Lago: I want to make sure you have enough time to get on the ballot. You've got to get on the ballot a certain time.

Parks and Rec Director Couceyro: When's our next – its December 6th?

City Clerk Urquia: December 7th.

City Manager Iglesias: December 7th.

Commissioner Menendez: Will it make a difference if the directive is just move forward as if we are going to do referendum at the end, the community will decide, help us decide what we're going to do, but does it slow you down doing December or January instead of December?

Parks and Rec Director Couceyro: There are a couple of things that we probably need direction, especially if we are going to go and ask for funding for a survey or something that is budgeted so we would need. So, we can go to December; we can come up with a preliminary framework as to the public input process part of it, and that is kind of what we need before we move forward. I think that's the most important part of the plan. I just need to present what are the possibilities and how much it would cost us to do that and the different ways that we can do it.

Commissioner Menendez: My only comment is, going forward we are so much in communication with community groups, civic groups, organizations, neighborhood associations. I hope that they all come together and support this cause, because this really goes to the heart of what community is about. So, I don't want this to be carried by any one, two, or three people. I hope we get the support that this type of project deserves. So, I'll make a motion giving the administration directive to move forward in this process, and then obviously come back in December. So, I'll make a motion to give the directive the administration move forward on the referendum, pursuing a referendum and I don't know if there is a second.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll second it.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

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City Manager Iglesias: And we will come on December 7th with the outreach initiatives.

Vice Mayor Mena: Listen, we had a very productive Sunshine meeting, just kind of talking through obviously there is not a plan yet, just kind of like talking about different issues and challenges. It's a lot of money. It's a lot of money. Its an unprecedented amount of money really in the city, and it has financial impact, economic impacts we have to consider, but also obviously does a lot of great things.

Mayor Lago: Major quality of life definer.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, we are going to have to work through those issues, frame it the best we can, but look, at the end of the day, the idea is let the residents decide on a referendum. I think we are working towards that goal then its just a matter of the best way to present it, to get the real facts out there and clear information, which is a lot of information and then kind of go from there. That's the goal.