

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-2
January 28, 2025
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Alberto Parjus

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Arts and Cultural Coordinator, Catherine Cathers

Public Speaker(s)

Meg Daly

Agenda Item G-2 [11:32 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving the long-term loan of five Jean Ward sculptures to The Underline for installation within The Underline, Coral Gables Section, (unanimously recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel, approval/denial vote: 7 to 0, and the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 7 to 0); authorizing the City Manager or his or her designee and City Attorney to negotiate an agreement with The Underline and any other required entity.

Mayor Lago: We'll move onto G-2, time certain for 11:30 a.m.

City Attorney Suarez: G-2 is a Resolution of the City Commission approving the long-term loan of five Jean Ward sculptures to The Underline for installation within The Underline, Coral Gables Section, (unanimously recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel, approval/denial vote: 7 to 0, and the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 7 to 0); authorizing the City Manager or his or her designee and City Attorney to negotiate an agreement with The Underline and any other required entity.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

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Arts and Cultural Coordinator: Good morning again. We have a presentation here. So, Jean Ward, just to tell you a little bit about her. The Underline did approach the City of Coral Gables with a request to place five Jean Ward sculptures currently in the city's public art collection within the Underline section of Coral Gables. So, a little bit about her. Jean Ward was an important Florida artist of the post 1950s and had a significant connection to the University of Miami before passing away at the young age of 45. She was a Professor of Art at Miami-Dade College, a graduate of the University of Miami. She worked in sculpture, ceramic, and multi-media. Her works are in the collection of the Oakland Museum, Museum of Art in Fort Lauderdale and Miami-Dade College among others. She was featured in an exhibition at the Lowe Art Museum in 1977 and received the Florida Individual Artist Fellowship in 1983. Her husband, William Ward, was a University of Miami Art Professor and also a sculptor. The Jean Ward Sculpture Award was established in her name at the University of Miami to recognize one student annually in the field of sculpture. The award is funded through the Department of Art and Art History and continues to be an honor presented as part of the department's annual exhibition. So, the pieces that are in the collection were donated. In January 1995, seven steel sculptures were donated through Parker Thompson on behalf of the New World Festival Committee by the artist's husband, William Ward, and five years later for additional steel sculptures were donated by the artist Rebecca Garretson. So, Parker Thomson, a prominent Coral Gables resident, was a great admirer of Jean Ward's work and facilitated seven of the ten donated sculptures after the artist passing. Mr. Thomson is the father of Meg Daly, founder and Executive Chair of The Underline. Meg is here today and will speak after the presentation. And following her father's example, Meg Daly is a strong proponent of the Arts and has facilitated nationally recognized public art program with permanent and temporary artworks proposed and placed along the Underline's ten miles of linear park space. Right now, we currently have three sculptures installed at Ingraham Park that require restoration; three are restored and in storage; one is installed at Pittman Park, and we have three Marquette's in our department. This is a list of the proposed works for a long-term loan; three of the proposed sculptures are the ones in Ingraham Park and have been previously identified for removal and extensive restoration, including engineering and construction of new bases. Two of the sculptures have been restored are in storage and all five pieces will require repainting to black and keeping with the artist's original intention and as recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel and Cultural Development Board. I'll quickly go over the pieces proposed and the ones remaining in the city proper. So, the images on the left are the piece at the time of acquisition, donation, and on the right, the current condition. So, you'll see they are in pretty poor condition. The mounts will also be redone. So, these two are in Ingraham Park. So, this one has been restored and would be painted black again. Also restored and then the final one which is also in Ingraham Park; and then the pieces that are remaining in our collection. So, these are the pieces that the prints have been restored with the intention of placing it back at the Coral Gables Branch Library and then Tuxedo, which was also restored and is placed in Pittman Park and then the three small marquettes that are in our office. So, the Underline is requesting installation of the sculptures in the Rockridge Plaza within the Coral Gables section of the Underline, close to the entrance of the University of Miami. So, this is a plan view of the working drawing for the Rockridge Plaza, and the two pink circles are where the groupings of the sculptures are proposed, we are proposing and have recommended that the pieces are sited in two groupings as if in conversation, following the intent of the artist at the time the works were created. And finally, just closing with the rendering of the plaza and you'll

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notice it also has a performance base included. Both the Arts Advisory Panel and Cultural Development Board enthusiastically embraced the proposal and are recommending approval. Meg.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Great to have you.

Ms. Daly: Thank you, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. I didn't realize how emotional I would get. Give me a second, sorry. This collaboration is so personal to me. When I told my dad about the idea of the Underline twelve years ago, I told him I had this crazy idea and he said, that's not crazy, its incredible, and we are going to do it together, and he was my partner until he passed away eight years ago. I am so sorry. I spoke about my parents the other night and didn't fall apart. But he complained to me all the time about the Jean Ward installations and he said, I want them to be seen and they are not being seen, and that art was very personal to him, and when this opportunity came up to collaborate, to put these artworks on the Underline, it was like a dream come true for me, to be able to sort of honor my dad and his gift and give it back to the community in an incredibly meaningful way. The Underline currently has nine art installations. Last week we had 81,000 visitors in one week. People seeing art, seeing all the experience in the great programming we are having, but the place that this is sited is unbelievable. Its right in front of UM, its across the street from middle school, its next to an elementary school. If we can continue with this exposure to the community and the partnerships that we've been able to embark on, between the City of Coral Gables and The Underline, I just think its magical. My father, for those of you who didn't know him, he was as tenacious, no, I can't say, I'm as tenacious as he was, because he was one of the most tenacious, most committed people I know. His passion for art was personal. As you know, he was the founder of the Performing Arts Center, so it wasn't just physical three-dimensional art, it was also performance art, and I'm asking you to help me continue his legacy through this incredible story. The place that this is located is running through a nature trail, right in front of UM, next to an outdoor classroom and a performance area. So, this story of modern art and nature, I think, I just can't think of anything more exciting. I'm joined by our curator, Rena Gitlan, who is part of building this magic. I really want to thank Ms. Cathers for helping us bring this forward to the Commission and I just want to, I just can't express how excited I am. I get excited about a lot of things, but this one is just like magic and thank you so much for the opportunity.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Meg.

Ms. Daly: I can sit down.

Mayor Lago: Sit down whatever you'd like. Do we have any other further comments from staff.

City Clerk Urquia: From staff, I'm not sure, but not from the public.

Mayor Lago: Anything else. We're good.

Commissioner Castro: I love this idea. Who'll be maintaining the sculptures?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Maintenance. Who is maintaining was the question.

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Arts and Cultural Coordinator: Yes, we will be addressing that in the agreement, but right now, we are proposing that the Underline included as part of their maintenance with the other artworks, and they are aware of that.

Mayor Lago: If I may. First off, I had the honor of, not only knowing Parker Thomson, but spending a lot of time with him. When Meg came to this Commission and I'm the only Commissioner left here who was there, we took the project of the Underline as a true commitment to elevating the quality of life, not only in the City of Coral Gables, but also elevating Miami-Dade County, taking it to the next level. Talk about the Beltway, talk about the Highline, those are projects, transformational projects that have changed the paradigm of how business is conducted and how people live in communities. Meg, you are amazing, amazing. Last time we were together, I gave you credit for delivering on a vision, on a vision that, I'll be honest with you, and I've said it before and I've said it in public when we cut the ribbon a few years ago, I didn't believe you. I didn't believe that this project could be accomplished. We wrote the legislation together. We pushed this thing through, but you were the driving force, and your father is a true Renaissance man, not only an exceptional professional, respected amongst his colleagues, a visionary, but what he's accomplished in this community not many people come even close, and he didn't do it for any other reason but for the community. It was not about him, it was not about, it was a job, he didn't make money on it. He did it because he believed in Miami, Miami-Dade County, he believed in Coral Gables, and he truly, truly, truly envisioned a better community via a vehicle of giving back. So, I want to commend you as I always do in public for your commitment, for your family's commitment, for your husband's commitment, because he's been with you through all these crazy ideas and something that I mentioned to him yesterday, and he laughed, he laughed about it, but you deserve all the credit. You and the board and the board members that are here with you that have pushed this through, the sponsors, Ken Griffin, everybody who has put their money where their mouth is and delivered on a visionary project that will raise property values, will address issues of transportation, will beautify the City Beautiful, and it will be an amazing amenity, an amazing amenity that will deliver. One of the things that I want to ask my colleagues, we are not here to really talk about this, but I'm going to bring it up anyway. There is a pending piece of programming that I'm working on, on delivering for the Underline and I asked my colleagues to engage in this conversation. Should not just be the Mayor, should be everyone moving forward, contact our exceptional partners at the University of Miami and let's deliver, let's deliver on a skate park. A skate park is something that Meg and I and Les Pantin has been working on for a long time. I think its important to have that. A lot of residents have been asking for that, especially a lot of young kids, have been asking for that in our community and I think it would be great for us as a community to urge the University of Miami, which is considering potentially partnering on this scope of work. We ask them to join us and engaging in this opportunity and delivering on that. The City of Coral Gables is putting forth \$7 million dollars, not taxpayer money, of impact fees with in 1,000 feet. I wrote that legislation. Again, this is a transformational project, and the Jean Ward sculptures are a part of programming, culture that is going to be unseen, never before seen in Miami-Dade County, and I'm looking forward to that and I just want to thank everybody who's involved in the Underline. I want to thank the staff, our staff, who has been working on it, all my fellow colleagues, all my past colleagues that have been working on the Underline and we are right there at the beginning of it, and it's been a long time coming, but you, you and your team deserve

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all the credit. You are a visionary, an incredible visionary. And your father, sorely missed. A gentleman, always a gentleman, hard-charging, hard-charging, but he was always a constant gentleman. So, thank you. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I just want to add to that. I think this is an amazing opportunity to, not only honor your father, but at the best location for this piece of artwork. As part of the visioning and fully supportive of the skate park issue is also safe routes to get to the Underline. Its part of the vision that I think our city needs to take and we can also partner with the county to get more safe routes to the Underline and our high schools and our university. So we do have a pending grant application out for design and engineering of sidewalks and bike lanes from between Bird and the Underline to get people safely to the Underline and I've also asked the county to do its part by completing the sidewalks on Maynada, it's a very wide piece of asphalt and marking where the bike lanes should go to try to keep the cars out of the bike lane and the bikes out of the car lane. I think we are going to do great things, and thanks to you and all your team members who tirelessly for now what, twelve years ago, been pushing this forward. It's a remarkable period of time that you've been able to get this done – twelve years and look how far you've come. It takes a village, and we can do it. Thank you for all you've done. So, I'm happy to support this and happy to move it.

Commissioner Castro: I'll second.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to add. Its wonderful when we discuss and we support a project, but when we have a project that brings the one that's presenting it to tears, because it connects family, it connects your life, it connects our community, it makes our support even more special, and I think your passion and what it means to you and so many others brings life to the project. It comes to life. I just want to say thank you for your love and your passion that you displayed, and you always display. Its much appreciated.

Commissioner Fernandez: And Meg, I must say, its only fitting that this is 30 years from the month when the city took these art pieces. We come full circle, and your father is watching you today is proud, no doubt.

Ms. Daly: Mayor, may I just say one more thing. I just really want to apologize for falling apart. I didn't see it coming and I want you to know that I respect so much each of you and thank you for being so gracious with me being so emotional. Its really personal to me and it's a rare opportunity for me to share publicly how person this is for me. I would like to add one little comment about the skate park. This is not Meg's idea and its actually not the Mayor's idea, the community is so vocal about wanting a skate park and no matter what we post on social media, there is always a comment back, when are we getting the skate park, and the answer is, we're working on it. So, we would love to find a way to collaborate on that moving forward. I'd also would like to show the respect that we have for each of you, we'd like to come back and give you a more robust update on the construction of the Underline, the three miles that are coming. So, hope to be on the agenda in the future for that and I just want to say thank you so much, but all of this is done through partnerships, its not done with one person. I mentioned the other night, I stand on the shoulders of

everyone before me and who work alongside me, I stand on your shoulders and thank you for allowing me to do that.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Meg. So, we have a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir, we do.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Meg.