

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-5
June 13, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
Deputy City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant Public Works Director, Jessica Keller
Sustainability Specialist, Matthew Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

David Bates

Agenda Item G-5 [0:00:00 a.m.]

A discussion regarding interactive solar installations by FPL such as solar trees on Miracle Mile, Giralda Avenue and other locations throughout the City.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Discussion regarding interactive solar installations by FPL, such as solar trees on Miracle Mile and Giralda, and other locations.

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Agenda Item G-5 – Discussion regarding interactive solar installations by FPL such as solar trees on Miracle Mile, Giralda Avenue and other locations throughout the City.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you, Mayor, if I may. This is just a quick and informative moment. I had the pleasure of taking my two young daughters to the Children's Museum that just opened up in downtown. If you have not gone -- I know it's a little difficult over the weekends because it's packed, but it is an incredible experience, if you have children, to see what the Frost Museum is. It's something incredible. And you can walk over to the PAM, through a promenade, and really enjoy -- there's a spectacular new show that just opened up in reference to the Jorge Perez Collection. So, you can enjoy both of those museums and make it a great weekend, but it's spectacular. I saw at the museum that there was these solar panel installations, which are solar trees. And, if you remember -- I know that Commissioner Mena and the Mayor were not here -- I had a young woman who was a student at Carrollton -- her name is Salman (phonetic) -- she is the son (sic) of a pretty prominent architect here in Coral Gables. And, she had an idea of installing these solar trees throughout Coral Gables in parks. And, she talked about what the attributes were and, you know, how it would offer you an opportunity to charge your phone. It was a potential SOS option if someone got into trouble. And, it was just an overall place where somebody could sit and enjoy some shade over a solar panel with a bench. It's called a solar tree. I'll get you a copy of that so you can kind of look into it. FPL has incorporated something very similar at Frost. I'm not saying that we have to use it, but I wanted to bring FPL here kind of just to show you what they're doing. Maybe we find an option for it or maybe we push FPL, as we always push FPL, to do something more modified. And, I know that our staff, Jessica Keller and Matt, wanted to give maybe an opinion on this issue. Do you want to talk about it really briefly?

David Bates: Good morning, Commissioners. And, thank you for letting me speak to you this morning. My name is David Bates. I'm with FPL, and I'm the solar developer who developed the project there at the Frost Museum. Not only the solar trees, but we also have the solar terrace on the roof. But, one of the products that we were looking for trying to bring to more of an urban environment is something called a solar tree. Because, one of the things that's good about this particular type of product -- it has a small footprint --, but it can provide something very nice

in an urban environment, which is shade, that a lot of people like to use. As well, on the ones that you saw at the Frost, there are other products by the same company as well. One of the things that we were looking for is something that was aesthetically pleasing, also would fit our wind codes. So, when we were looking at different types of products, it was really narrowed down to a few. And, the one that you saw at the Frost was one of them. There's another one, however, that has a little bit more of an architectural flair to it. It's a little bit more curved, but it also can incorporate chargers in it as well. So, a cellphone charger or a laptop charger, as well as a little table. And, in the area that you may be interested in along Miracle Mile or Giralda, these are areas with a lot of restaurants, potentially places where pedestrians are walking. That option could be incorporated into something like that as well. But, we have actually met with Matt Anderson in your sustainability group with the City, and we are very interested in finding locations within the City that are pedestrian friendly, that are areas of great civic pride, and areas in which we can locate this without a lot of shading.

Commissioner Lago: Do you have pictures here or...

Unidentified Speaker: We -- yeah, we have some pictures.

Mr. Bates: I do. Is there a way I can...?

Unidentified Speaker: We can pass them out. They're not necessarily -- we didn't...

Commissioner Lago: No worries, no worries. This is just a brief introduction.

Unidentified Speaker: Yeah, just so you could see what they look like.

Commissioner Lago: And, I wanted to build consensus amongst my colleagues. And, I know that Rhonda probably wants to speak also, which is great. I just wanted to build...

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Commissioner Lago: No, no. I wanted to just build consensus on this issue and potentially talk also about the solar terraces, which can be an option for existing garage buildings, where the top floor, instead of it just being -- that nobody wants to park up there, we could potentially do some sort of terrace where it's covered parking and, you know, FPL -- I would love to have FPL as a partner of ours, and then make that building similar to my home, where we're not paying electricity.

Mr. Bates: Well, you'll see in there as well, I did incorporate some solar canopies that can be placed on the top of a parking deck as well...

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Mr. Bates: And, could take advantage of that area...

Commissioner Lago: That's what I meant, canopies, not parking.

Mr. Bates: And provide shading. So, not only the solar trees, but when you can put it in an area where there is, again -- it's unshaded, so there won't be a large building on the south side of it, floor canopies could work very well. In addition, one of the things that -- I'm not sure if the City is doing a lot of efforts in as well, but along with the solar canopies, we are looking for areas we can incorporate electric vehicle chargers as well, so another opportunity.

Commissioner Lago: We passed legislation -- just so you're aware --, so there won't be any solar fees in regards to permits if we do adopt this.

Mr. Bates: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: But, you're talking about doing this out of the kindness of your heart, right, because you love Coral Gables and South Florida so much. So, like what is -- since -- why is everybody laughing? Just kidding.

Mr. Bates: We do.

Commissioner Lago: So, what is -- what are you interested in doing? What are you doing with other municipalities?

Mr. Bates: Well, so, one of the things that the solar trees are very good for, we currently are in the process of developing -- my group is currently in the process of developing on a large site over off of Krome, a 75-megawatt site, about a million panels that you'll see out there. The problem with those sites is that it's great, because it produces more renewable energy into the grid. However, a lot like, you know, IKEA in Doral -- if you've gone to IKEA in Doral, do you know how much solar that they actually have at IKEA in Doral? Well, most people have no idea, because you can't see it. So, it's on the roof. They don't talk about it. You can't see it. So, the idea here is along with the solar development that we're having in agricultural areas, we want to also put some in urban areas where people can actually see solar being used, solar in an urban environment, and you can also communicate the message that we -- FPL, as well as the City, is interested in sustainable initiatives and this is a partnership, so that we can bring renewable energy into them and show the usage of it.

Commissioner Lago: Can I get Ms. Keller to come up? Jessica, would you be so kind to come to the podium, please? Is there an opportunity -- along with Matt -- to potentially, you know, do both, not only expose people in using these solar trees, but also, hopefully, use like a covered terrace on top of our existing parking garages and take advantage of the fact that that's just sitting up there and no one's taking advantage of all the rays that are hitting the tops of those buildings?

Mr. Bates: Well, we'll need to look at the design of the building, just to make sure that they can hold the weight of an additional platform. But, if they're built to be able to do that, we can definitely look into that.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah. No, I mean -- yeah, we're talking about -- also about new garages on Andalusia.

Mr. Bates: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: So, this could be incorporated into that design. What is your opinion? What do you think of the City -- how could the City benefit from this, and what could make us even more sustainable? And not just look more sustainable, but actually make us sustainable?

Assistant Public Works Director Keller: Well, I mean, we're looking for those partnerships, absolutely. And, I am not the expert on aesthetics. I leave that to Ramon and Dona Spain, but the amount of energy that's being output by the trees is minimal. And, we want to take advantage of real opportunities. And if we can place them on our roofs, I think that we could come up with a clever idea to make sure that we're getting a lot of attention to show what it is that we're doing. I haven't been to IKEA. I don't know how it is that they're advertising it. But, I know we have a lot of smart people here who could figure out a way to advertise what it is that we're doing. Matt has a lot of ideas related to where we could be doing this, and I think Youth Center is one of those places where we have a lot of traffic and a lot of opportunities to educate everyone, children and adults alike. And, do you want to talk a little bit about that?

Sustainability Specialist Anderson: Good afternoon, everyone. Matt Anderson, sustainability specialist, with the City of Coral Gables. We did meet with FPL toward the end of March and were discussing the solar tree ideas. And we brought to them additional ideas of -- in our Sustainability Master Plan, we've targeted the Youth Center as a really good location to have a 140-kilowatt system, roughly, there at the Youth Center to offset like 15 to 20 percent of the

electricity use there at the Youth Center. So, I think that, with the amount of people that come through that facility, is a perfect opportunity as an educational mechanism to the community of showing the City's commitment to solar and promoting renewable energy, which is something that I know the City -- as Commissioner Lago has mentioned, we've waived City permit fees for solar. We've -- I know a few of our Commissioners have solar on their roofs. We want to try to offset the City's greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible. And, I think doing something like that on our Youth Center, looking at the parking garages -- I know that FPL has done projects, like in Broward County, at the Young at Art. You guys have done a 100-kilowatt system there at their -- in their parking facility. So, doing something similar, I think, in the City, you know -- the solar trees, they do produce, you know, 1.5 kilowatts, which, you know, is a relatively small amount, but doing something much bigger to like 100 or 150-kilowatt system, I think would offset a lot of what our electricity use is within the City. So, that's some of the ideas that we were speaking about with FPL.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Any more comments?

Commissioner Lago: I think we can do both. Does anybody have any comments or...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think it's a very good initiative, and I look forward to working with you on this.

Commissioner Lago: Do you need a...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Lago: Do you need a resolution? Do you need a vote? Do you need...?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No. I think it's...

Mr. Bates: We do have an agreement that I believe Matt has and just need to review that. And once we have that approved -- I don't know. Do we need to come back before City Commission to have that...?

Sustainability Specialist Anderson: I do want to look at that a little bit more, because I have had some conversations with some counterparts of mine throughout the other cities, and I know that some of them have very high back-out rates, like if you want to take the solar tree out, it could cost anywhere like \$20,000 per tree. So, that's something that, obviously, we want to analyze.

Commissioner Lago: Review it, get comfortable with it, but not only about the solar trees.

Sustainability Specialist Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: It's about finding...

Sustainability Specialist Anderson: Of course.

Commissioner Lago: Other options.

Sustainability Specialist Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: And, I think that Ramon Trias is not going to have an issue on the top of a parking garage where no one could even see it if we are producing, you know...

Sustainability Specialist Anderson: Correct.

Commissioner Lago: If we are reducing CO₂ and we're producing (INAUDIBLE)...

Sustainability Specialist Anderson: And, the opportunities that I know it's also been done in other cities, where you can have a solar canopy to that affect and then put additional charging stations hooking up to that, which we already have in our existing parking garages.

City Attorney Leen: If I could add something. The Commission's policy on this issue is no. So, what I'll do is I'll look at the agreement you worked out and I'll talk to the City Manager. Most likely, she could just sign it, but if we feel like we need to bring it to the Commission, we will, depending on the amount of financial obligations to the City.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bates: Thank you.