

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-3
November 13, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-3 [6:06:30 p.m.]

A discussion on County signage requirements for traffic calming initiatives.
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: H-3.

Vice Mayor Lago: I have a very brief PowerPoint presentation. I know that we are working on signage. I know that Assistant City Manager Santamaria is here. I'd like to see if we can get that PowerPoint presentation up. I have some great photos to show you. Here we go. We'll make this really quick. As you can tell, we have some signage here that just shouldn't be in these locations, makes no sense. And what I'd like to see is, from staff, is getting this expedited. Look at the amount of signage there that you see. You think people are going to miss this crosswalk? Do you think you are going to miss this crosswalk? You think you are going to make the decision to smash through a tree. Look how much signage – look at the crosswalk.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm sorry, the one in between is a small one, in comparison...

Vice Mayor Lago: There are five or six signs. Look at this; look how many signs in this area, crosswalk; stop; no parking anytime. Do you think we should have a sign that looks like that in the City of Coral Gables?- they get better. May use full lane versus may use half a lane; no parking anytime, that's working very well, working very well. This is a good one too. One, two, three, you can't even see the trees to the extent of signs that you see there – may use full lane again. What does that even mean? The bike can use the full lane versus half a lane? Look how many no truck signs you have, just in case you missed the first one. Do you think any delivery driver is going to observe that? So here we warn you that there's a stop sign ahead, but obviously, you can see the stop sign, so you don't need the warning. Here also you have a speed bump ahead, speed hump. No dumping allowed, because dumping on the floor, so that one is working out well. That's on Bird Road, by the way; and then you have no parking and no parking. So, you can either have the new modern sign or the old sign. So, I show you these because this is just a very small kind of...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's called visual contamination.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes or visual pollution. So, I tell you this because we've been having this discussion for two or three years. I know that we hired a consultant to do a review of our current signage, but in the words of our esteemed Mayor, it's time to actually get this done.

Commissioner Mena: I agree.

Vice Mayor Lago: It's time to not talk about it anymore, because it seems that they are putting up more signs than they are taking down. What's the plan? Talk to me. I'm going to do a ride-along next week with our Chief and I may start taking them down myself.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Good evening Commissioners, Mr. Mayor, Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager for Construction Operations. We are in agreement that there is an excessive amount of signage in the City of Coral Gables on our rights-of-way, and we are doing something to counteract that. Number one, this year we were funded for right-of-way asset management program, which includes a video capture of all the signage in the City of Coral Gables, along with other right-of-way assets, along with G.I.S. coordinates to facilitate an analysis. I do agree that some of these signs do not require analysis. I'd be happy to remove those if you provide them to me.

Vice Mayor Lago: You are going to make me drive through the City.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: No....

Commissioner Mena: I want you to have somebody on your staff drive around and do this and use common sense.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We can do it. As a matter of fact, we did start doing that and we haven't removed a lot of signage throughout the City.

Vice Mayor Lago: Let me give you an example. I should have taken more photos, but I just ran out of time over the weekend. What I need you to do is, if you see a no dumping sign or a no parking sign and there is another sign within five feet of it, just use common sense, like Commissioner Mena says. Take one of the signs down. Some of the signs are 30-plus years' old that were put up there by owners of homes that don't even live there anymore. Like for example, if you see a sign there that has five signs that point at the crosswalk, is there really a need for that? Do you need to have them on both sides – five, six signs. Why don't you have two signs that basically say, listen there is a crosswalk coming. Do we need to have a sign notifying...

Commissioner Quesada:...the County forcing us.

Vice Mayor Lago: But, the problem is the County forces us to have them for a certain amount of time and they get left there in perpetuity. Do you need to have a sign that says, get ready there is a stop sign coming? When you can see the stop sign.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Commissioner that is a very good point. I don't know why that stop sign ahead sign is there. Perhaps it was....

Vice Mayor Lago: Why do we need that sign, no truck. You are telling me that FedEx and UPS don't go down that street?

Commissioner Keon: I think its big commercial trucks, not trucks that service.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: When you have low-hanging limbs which...

Vice Mayor Lago: You are telling me – I'll give you an example. On my street on San Amaro, you are not supposed to drive 18-wheelers a school and sometimes it happens, not because a school says hey, let's send 18-wheelers down San Amaro, because people just get lost or it's a first-time driver, it happens. So those signs, they don't stop anyone, they don't. You are telling me the person needs to be notified there is a speed hump ahead, it's not.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Well that's a different story altogether. That one is regulated by Miami-Dade County. That's traffic calming. We are working with Miami-Dade County as you know, we are also grouping up with other municipalities to see if we can reduce the number

of signage that is associated with traffic calming, but when we have an interlocal agreement and that interlocal agreement has details that they approve and those details that they approved for construction include the signage. There is very little that I can do, I install the signs and work towards removing them.

Vice Mayor Lago: And I understand that. But, let me give you an example and I think Commissioner Mena brought this up a while ago. We install these beautiful palm tree off of LeJeune on the south side of U.S.-1 near Hardy.

Commissioner Mena: On Hardy.

Vice Mayor Lago: On Hardy, excuse me, it's an abomination, to be honest with you. You don't even see the beautiful Royal Palm, it's a Royal Palm right?

Commissioner Mena: Canary.

Vice Mayor Lago: Canary Palm, thank you. You can't even enjoy the beautiful Canary Palm, because there are these signs that, I think are eight feet tall that cover the entire structure.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Again that's in accordance to design standards.

Vice Mayor Lago: But, do you think that actually stops anybody from smashing into...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But, there are others where the sign is three feet off the floor and half the sign of sign up there with trees in the middle of the circle.

Commissioner Mena: I haven't told you all, because it's not "frangible" is that the term you guys used.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Right – "frangible."

Commissioner Mena: Meaning what?- that is you crash into that tree obviously you are going to be severely injured.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: If you crash into the tree it's not going to break away.

Commissioner Mena: But, that's true of a lot of other trees that we don't have any signs for...there are a bunch of mature trees that have been there for a long time.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: See the traffic circle is different, because when you are driving down a street...

Commissioner Mena: I'm talking about traffic circles...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: [Inaudible]

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That is a County decision to make and that's within the framework of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devises, now we are going to work towards reducing what signage is required out there and that's one of the things we are looking at.

Commissioner Mena: Is this the national one or local one?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: This is the national one.

City Manager Iglesias: This is FHA – Federal Highway Administration. However, what we are going to be doing in setting up discussions with the Assistant City Manager is, getting a progressive consultant, traffic consultant firm to go back to the County and look at what they are proposing and fight them from a technical point of view.

Vice Mayor Lago: Let me ask you a question then, because I did a ride-along, not a ride-along but I went to see Key Biscayne to also analyze their speed humps and their signage. They have a reduced amount of signage in Key Biscayne. I know it's a little enclave and they don't have the amount of cut-through traffic that we do, but they still have to abide by certain restrictions the County puts on them. Do they just get away with not putting...?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do they have to have traffic calming devises?

Vice Mayor Lago: Oh, yes they do, they do and they have concrete ones; and they have concrete ones with speed tables. They are getting away with certain things there and I hear the excuse that's always give is, well you know its Key Biscayne or they are just playing by their own rules.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: No, I'll give you a different explanation not an excuse. That may have been installed years ago, I understand it may have changed and evolved and the County...

Vice Mayor Lago: How does the County even know if it was installed today or it was installed yesterday?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: They are supposed to know.

Vice Mayor Lago: They don't keep records.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: They are supposed to know.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What about traffic calming in South Miami and West Miami and Miami and Pinecrest?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Well Mr. Mayor those cities do have traffic calming and I know that I've driven through parts of Dade County where the signage is less than what should be there and I'm not really sure if the County is aware of this. So, I think the question is whether we go rogue or we work within the system.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, we go rogue.

Vice Mayor Lago: We go rouge. We go rouge on the Commission floor; we take a vote on it. I make a motion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Is there a second?

Vice Mayor Lago: We've been talking about this for how long? - I'm sorry Commissioner, but we've been talking about this for how long? It's not your fault. I'm not taking it out on you. I'm just saying it gets to the point where how much worse is it going to get, and then now we are putting traffic calming. This is my last point and I'll be quiet, I won't say a word. I didn't bring this up to have a long drawn out discussion. I'm getting contacts – I'm getting contacted from residents who are telling me that they are not going to accept the traffic calming initiatives. They are going to vote no, because they don't want the signage. So, they'd rather have people speeding in their neighborhood instead of having an additional ten or fourteen signs in a neighborhood. I mean how crazy...

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: I find that very, very peculiar on the part of these residents.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You want to say something.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: It's their choice, it's their choice.

Vice Mayor Lago: I know.

Commissioner Mena: You show me a crosswalk like that, that has on the right, on the left in front of the crosswalk, then another one facing the same direction on the back of the crosswalk. You are telling me the County requires that?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Yes sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK, that's absurd. I would love to challenge that.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And I agree. I agree that its excessive and what I'm saying is that we are challenging it. We are going to be working with other municipalities...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: When – when – when....

Commissioner Mena: It's like pulling teeth.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Mr. Mayor right now the Blue/Bird area, the Blue/Bird area is going through the balloting process.

Vice Mayor Lago: They are going to vote; I'm going to tell you the numbers right now, because I've spoken to all of them. They are going to vote no; and it's going to be 95 percent they are going to vote no. As a matter of fact, they are going to vote 100 percent no against traffic calming and they have fought for it for three years, because they don't want to be inundated with signage everywhere.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: So, maybe the traffic calming wasn't that important to them. They are saying they have safety concerns; they are saying that they need to back up at the driveways...

Vice Mayor Lago: On my street on San Amaro, have you seen what it is to live on San Amaro and just pop your head out to the left and to the right. I probably have 40 signs visible from one traffic circle to the next. It's crazy.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And we are working towards reducing them.

Commissioner Mena: Who puts the signs?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Well it depends – some of the signs are county installed and some of the signs...

Commissioner Mena: On our streets, on local.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Stop signs typically are the County. If its traffic calming, we install them as part of our projects.

Commissioner Mena: Like “no parking,” “no dumping.”

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: “No parking,” “no dumping” those are ours.

Commissioner Mena: Crosswalk.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Crosswalks are the County.

Vice Mayor Lago: How about ducks crossing, ducks crossing?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That’s an interesting one.

Vice Mayor Lago: Anti-crossing. There’s one on Granada, it’s a good one if you want to see it, on the Granada bridge on dry land telling you Manatees are crossing. It’s probably a 30- year old sign you can see it there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I vote to keep that there.

Vice Mayor Lago: I swear to God. I swear to God, Manatees crossing near the Presbyterian Church.

Chief Hudak: Before we start removing signs and again, I’m talking specifically about the yellow signs, we need to make sure that we do our due diligence to make sure because, like the crosswalks signs, San Amaro, after the Commissioners part, its two lanes; and I believe the letter of the law is one warning sign for each lane, which is why...

Vice Mayor Lago: What about the third?

Chief Hudak: Well the third one on the backside if you are coming...doesn’t make any sense at all. I understand and I see the same pollution that everybody else sees. To your point Commissioner about the tractor trailers; everybody is delivering tractor trailers these days. We have tried to enforce it on the “no through trucks,” part of the issue that we have that we can enforce it is once they have a lading address where it’s something in that area, it’s not a violation of the statute.

Commissioner Mena: I have less of a problem with “no through trucks.” My problem is, sign ahead...

Vice Mayor Lago: Speed bumps, speed bumps, speed bumps.

Commissioner Mena: Sign behind you, sign coming up ahead again.

Chief Hudak: And that’s the same thing you see – when they are yellow signs; so yellow signs are cautionary signs, white signs, like in speed limit signs are the actual enforced street signs, so when you are getting off a ramp on 826, the first thing it tells you in the yellow sign is 30 miles an hour to hit the ramp. That is not the ramp speed is 30 miles an hour until you cross that white sign. From the enforcement standpoint that’s what we look at.

Vice Mayor Lago: If you go to San Amaro once a month...

Chief Hudak: I go to San Amaro every day.

Vice Mayor Lago: So you know this very well.

Chief Hudak: Yes sir.

Vice Mayor Lago: When you go down San Amaro once a month you will see car tire tracks right through the circle, the main circle in front of the park on UM, the arboretum.

Chief Hudak: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Somebody on a monthly basis, basically just drives right through that park and there is directional signage there that, obviously doesn’t aid them to go around the circle, and every single time that they knock those signs down, somebody puts them right back up. The directional signs don’t work. Its either you go right or you are going to smash into the tree. The options are real simple. So why do we keep putting them up?

Chief Hudak: And we’ve had with some historical Maynada, we almost lost somebody coming over the bridge to the other side through a tree.

Vice Mayor Lago: That’s different though that’s a bridge.

Chief Hudak: No, no, but they hit a circle. They hit a tree, a non-frangible tree in the circle, I mean this was years ago on midnights, so it was a lot of other things that you can take into consideration. Lighting of the circles.

Commissioner Mena: I hear you.

Chief Hudak: And I'm...to the signs.

Commissioner Mena: But, do you really think that person wouldn't have crashed into the signs too?

Chief Hudak:...The speed limit signs, I wouldn't have to hire additional traffic officers.

Commissioner Mena: You drive straight into a tree.

Commissioner Mena: I hate to invoke Darwinism, but...you have to have a certain level, I get it, but at some point it's ridiculous. The signs on Hardee are the biggest ones in the City, that's new. Is that like a new requirement, because I've never seen them that big. The ones that are on the....

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We are looking at the very least to reducing.

Commissioner Mena: Its almost the size of that TV.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: The chevron sign – I saw pictures of them.

Vice Mayor Lago: I don't even see a tree behind it.

City Manager Iglesias: I think what we want to do is we want to have the minimum amount of signs required by the federal administration for the road involved. If the County wants more then we need to fight them to...

Commissioner Mena: And the last part of the equation for me, I'll just say, is the condition of the signs on my street. I think there is one in front of Peter's house, right? Just signs that are like – just in a total state of disrepair. Somebody's got to be responsible on your staff for going around, identifying those, replacing them.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor if I may, I would like to take out my Commissioner Initiatives, I don't have a need for that anymore, take that out from every single agenda please, and I would like to include on every agenda a recap in regards to signage, I would like to swap that please.

[End: 6:23:00 p.m.]