

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item – Mayor’s Comments
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
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item [9:25:12 a.m.]
Mayor’s Comments

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Now we have Mayor’s Comments. And, I’d like to announce that given my latitude and the authority given to me by our ordinances, I’d like to make Commissioner Lago as the new Vice Mayor for the City of Coral Gables.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Congratulations.

[Applause]

Commissioner Mena: Congratulations.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to say thank you to the Mayor for acknowledging and giving me the privilege to serve you as your Vice Mayor and I want to thank my colleagues on this City Commission Meeting

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[Date]

Commission, Commissioner Keon, Vice Mayor Quesada, Commissioner Mena, our City Manager, our City Attorney and our City Clerk, which will be retiring soon and has done an exceptional job, not only in the City of Coral Gables, but he's done an incredible job representing this community. So, I just wanted to thank you and I hope to lead over the next year as your Vice Mayor and thank you for this opportunity. Thank you.

[Applause]

C-1: Item C-1 – Donation of Antique Maps. I have in my office and in the hallway antique maps of the Americas, showing South America and the Caribbean, etc. etc., Mexico and I'd like to donate those to the City to have them placed in our Sister Cities room at the Museum. That's the one donated to the City of Coral Gables and we had refurnished, redone that room in order to make use of it and I'd like to donate those maps and I think there's a resolution accepting the donation is called for.

Commissioner Mena: Do we vote on that?

City Attorney Ramos: It's not required, if the Mayor would like a vote it is permissible, but it's not required.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Quesada: Thank you Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The next is a philosophical discussion and I've been here longer than many of you have been alive, I mean, I've been here since pre-World War I, I feel; and I'm troubled by what I see in the City and maybe I shouldn't have announced it as a philosophical discussion, but we have a tendency to discuss things over and over and over, years discussing things. After listening to the last Commission meeting, we discussed sidewalks and I remember in the 80's we were discussing sidewalks and the 90's we were discussing sidewalks when I was Mayor the last time and I bet in 2030 when somebody else is Mayor we will still be discussing sidewalks, and things just don't get done, like traffic calming. Every city around us, West Miami, Pinecrest, Miami, you name it, every city around us has traffic calming installed, the City of Coral Gables doesn't. Is it conversation from the county?- maybe, but we have the county's approval now as of last month or two months ago, and I wonder when we are going to start installing those traffic calming devices, which our people desperately called for. We are still not anywhere near installing them now and I think that's wrong. I think that's wrong and I think that we, the City Commission is not doing our job by insisting that we will get those things done. Issues that have been around for 30 years or more – traffic calming. Why does every city around us have it and we don't? I was standing out there at the ceremonial part of this and I looked at City Hall and it

looks beautiful, its clean, but for two years I insisted on the prior City Manager and the prior City Administration to clean this building and it took a very specific directive by this Commission to do something that made perfect sense, which is clean a historic building. It was filthy and it was awful and it took a specific directive, why do we not get things done? Also, I think sometimes we concentrate on details and not on the big picture. I was thinking of the Quest Academy, which is a new school that's going to come in downtown Coral Gables founded by Linda Eads who was the person who founded Mast Academy, and Mast Academy was considered one of the top ten schools in the country, and she is doing this at no cost to us in downtown where we need schools for our kids. Fourteen percent of the students in Coral Gables High are from Coral Gables. We need schools for Coral Gables kids and we spent two hours discussing biking and two or three slots in the streets let's focus on big things. Let's focus on getting things done and stop arguing, stop discussing. We've spent more time on the scooters and whether we can ride them or not, than we have on many, many important issues, and I think that's wasteful I think that's ridiculous, frankly, if I have to...not the scooters are ridiculous and not the discussions are ridiculous, but let's come to a conclusion and stop discussing minor things. I want to get things done and I want to see traffic calming, I want to see sidewalks – did we do sidewalks or don't we do sidewalks, let's stop discussing it. Bicycles – I think bicycles come before us once every...however long it is, we vote it down in Riviera or approve it in other places. Let's get things done in Coral Gables and that's my saying.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The next item is C-3: Resolution appointing Billy Urquia as the City Clerk for the City of Coral Gables and approving a salary and benefits package as set forth in a resolution in your package. Is there a motion or a discussion?

Vice Mayor Lago: So moved.

Commissioner Quesada: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I want to speak very highly of Billy. He has experiences and very, very well trained by our departing City Clerk and I look forward to him serving for a long time.

Commissioner Quesada: Is this Walter's final roll call?

Commissioner Keon: No. December.

City Attorney Ramos: December will be.

Commissioner Keon: So Billy knows what's coming.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just getting some continuity, right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If he was going elsewhere and not retiring, I would have invented episodes in moral turpitude, so he wouldn't be hired and taken away from us, but that's not...The motion has been seconded, will you call the roll please.

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Commissioner Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Congratulations.

Vice Mayor Lago: Congratulations – well deserved.

[Applause]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The next item has to do with donated art, CIFO, the big foundation has donated art to us and again, this is part of the philosophical discussion I had before having to do with our getting bogged in the details and not looking at the big picture; and we acquired the Carlos Cruz Diez sidewalks, which gave us world fame and brought Art Basel to us for the first time in history and we decided to acquire two of the crosswalks at a cost, not to the City, but with Art in Public Places of \$168,000, which was approved unanimously because that is world class art in Coral Gables and our committee turned that down, because we may have had to spend \$18,000 in maintenance, may have. I think that's ridiculous. This is world art and possibly we wouldn't have had to spend it and I offered to – I would raise the \$18,000 either to refresh the art, they didn't want to do it, until finally after three-four meetings, months past, it was approved. Here we have this donated art by a world class artist and again, the Art in Public Places Committee said, no, because kids may get into it. Kids may get into anything. Kids may climb trees. And, if we put it in the right place and I would suggest the park at the corner of University Drive and Segovia where there are no kids playing around, but it is a high traffic place. I would suggest that we place it there and I think it's wonderful, it would be a feather in the cap of Coral Gables. Anything else? Any comments please?

Commissioner Keon: On which one?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: On C-4.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, on C-4. I'd like you to take – I have an item; I have H-1 on to bring it back for consideration. I wondered if you would take that at this time.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm sorry, I can't hear you.

Commissioner Keon: I'm sorry, Commissioner Quesada. I have item H-1 on the agenda that maybe we could take it at the same time, because it deals with the same issue. The reason that I put it on is that having voted on the affirmative side at the last meeting, we could bring it back to this meeting for reconsideration; and I did so after I heard from some members of the Cultural Advisory Board and also in speaking to Dona, it was my understanding that the item was going to come on this agenda, but was brought up again during Mayor's Comments, which you certainly have the right to do, at a prior meeting. But, what we didn't have was the item from or the minutes from either the Art Advisory meeting or the Cultural Board's Advisory meeting. Although the Art Advisory Committee did recommend that you accept it, they also recommended that it be placed in a covered area, because of the material and because of the design of the structure and potentially a risk that it may be of harm to anyone in the community if they happen to, if it was in an open space that was easily accessible. You know my kids or somebody who may not recognize nor realize the value of this piece of art, so they ask what it was that it be, if it's not suitable for outdoors then it should be in an indoor space, that was the Art Advisory Board; and then the Cultural Affairs Board again, their recommendation was that it not be accepted for all of the same reasons and not in any way that it denies the value of the art nor their gratefulness to the...for making that piece of art available to us, but it dealt with the actual piece of art and now there was maybe another piece of art that could be placed instead. So, I think that if you are going to (1) if we are going to talk about when I saw that you are turning that way is going to be set, both of these groups have advised that it be indoors and I know, I really don't know that much about it, but I can tell you what the material...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It is an outdoor sculpture.

Commissioner Keon: Well, I don't know that. We have two advisory groups that I think because they are advisory groups, I would owe them the respect of at least allowing them to speak to the issue when we are deferring from what they have to say, and I'd like to hear from Dona on it too.

Commissioner Mena: Commissioner Keon the Cultural Development Board actually passed a unanimous motion...

Commissioner Keon: To not receive it.

Commissioner Mena: To not receive it at all.

Commissioner Keon: That's what I said, yes; and they also made the point that it should be indoors and in the same way it's the same issues, but you know, they are an advisory board, I think as a piece of art agreed that the artist was a significant artist and the work will be an important piece of work. As I said, no one is denying the value or the recognition of the artist or the quality of the artwork.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I hope not.

Preservation Officer Spain: Could show a PowerPoint of the piece, because I don't know whether you've actually seen that. The artist name is Fredy Alzate Gomez, a Columbian artist, the title is "Vacuus," which is Latin for "To be empty." That's a piece – these are very large tubes, they are fiberglass cast of the gold mines in Columbia and their subject that the Columbian economy is based on the exploitation of the landscape, so this is about the mountains being actually woods. And so, as you can see they are fairly fragile and they are very large, over seven feet tall in this configuration. They are actually separate pieces bolted together, which is something we'll have to figure out. This is a close up of the fiberglass and showing the edges which is – they are very sharp, so there is a concern about children playing on them. Both the Art Advisory Board and the Cultural Development Board had. So I just wanted you to see that. Happy to answer any questions. It was the intent of staff to have this on the October meeting. We were asked by the Mayor to put it on in November, which we are happy to do, but the idea is that for me, my staff and my job here is to make sure that whatever decisions you make are done, you make informed decisions. So, I just wanted to make sure that you had all the facts before you. It's not for me, it's not so much whether you accept it or not, it's just the process needs to be followed.

Commissioner Mena: Obviously, we weren't aware of, I certainly wasn't aware of these votes that were taken by these committees last meeting; and obviously, I haven't seen the piece in person, I've seen the photos. So, I don't know how -- it's hard for me to evaluate if it's dangerous or safe. I understand the point. I guess my question is, one thing is to just accept it, it's being donated; another thing is where it goes, which I think is a bigger and more important question that plays into safety maintenance, but also, I think neighborhood input. I don't want to just arbitrarily pick a location and place it there and then have the neighborhood say, well, did anybody check with us?

Preservation Officer Spain: The Art Advisory Board wanted to be involved in that, location decision. I think that if we accept it, we'll have to put some type of barrier up, so that children don't climb on it for their safety. The fact that its fiberglass, it will at some point deteriorate, I think, on the outside. Obviously, the best place to be indoors, we just don't have an indoor location right now for it.

City Attorney Ramos: So Commissioner, you have already voted to approve, so no action today would mean we've accepted it.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

City Attorney Ramos: And, then a separate vote could be taken about the process for where it goes. If you wanted to change a vote, we need a vote for reconsideration and then a separate vote for the underlying item on the acceptance of the sculpture.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Commissioner Keon: They have the item on. I would like to reconsider it, but I don't know that that means to reject it. I think it means to discuss it and to find a suitable place for it.

City Attorney Ramos: Commissioner if you'd like to make a motion to reconsider, that motion should come first.

Commissioner Keon: I'd like to make a motion to reconsider so that we can discuss it.

Vice Mayor Lago: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Vice Mayor Lago: We are open for discussion.

City Attorney Ramos: Yes.

City Clerk Foeman: Commissioner Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Mena: We are just discussing the item.

Commissioner Keon: I think we have to have a motion to be able to...

City Attorney Ramos: This is just a motion to reconsider.

City Clerk Foeman: Commissioner Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No

(Vote: 4-1)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I will tell CIFO that we reject this sculpture and this is the very last piece of art that I'm going to suggest that it be donated to the City of Coral Gables. I've never seen a more negative attitude than our Arts Council, including the \$18,000 maintenance on this one and that's fine. That's the pleasure of the Commission and the City and I will accept it.

Preservation Officer Spain: So, just a little bit of background on those committees.

Vice Mayor Lago: If I may just one second, I want to respond to the Mayor. Commissioner Keon, I don't think this is about rejecting the artwork and I agree with Commissioner Keon. I think Commissioner Mena and Commissioner Quesada agrees also, I don't want to head in that direction. I just want to make sure that if we do acquire this work that we give it the necessary respect that it deserves. Dealing with the fact that its fiberglass, it's going to deteriorate, not maybe tomorrow, maybe not in a month, maybe in a year or two, it will deteriorate eventually, just like a boat if you leave it outside. There is constant maintenance that needs to be done. It is fiberglass at the end of the day. And also the issue of safety is a major concern, so we need to find the appropriate way to display this work and do it with justice; and Commissioner Mena made a very good point and that is the issue of finding the appropriate neighborhood that approves this work and that wants this work in their backyard. The last thing we need is a situation where we have residents who are up in arms in regards to a sculpture in their backyard that could be considered a safety hazard. I do want to accept the work, but I want to find the appropriate location for it. I don't think we are being that drastic in regards to saying no to CIFO. CIFO is a great community partner, they do a great job in regards to the arts. I just want to make sure we find the appropriate home for it.

Commissioner Mena: I get irritated by what just happened to be perfectly honest, because the reason we are discussing this again, and to go back to the philosophical discussions about why we talk about things so many times is because this was brought up last time at our meeting, it was not on the agenda. We were told we were receiving a free piece of art, we said sure, and now we find out after the fact that there were committee meetings wherein one of the committees voted unanimously to reject it. So, obviously we need to reconsider and discuss it. I don't think that's offensive to anybody. I think that's the appropriate thing to do and you know I'm not going to be held hostage by some sort of adverse reaction to that. I agree with Commissioner Lago. I think there are issues with the location and the maintenance that we need to work through. Again, I'm perfectly happy to accept the piece of art and then work on location through Dona and the appropriate committees, again with neighborhood input, because we've been down that road before and I don't want to go down it again. I don't think there is anything inappropriate about that.

Vice Mayor Lago: With an understanding Commissioner Mena, that if we accept this, we have to budget accordingly. We've already had issues with significant sculptures that have significant value, especially the ones in Ingraham Park, which should be known as Quesada Park, that those sculptures, again, you drive by them today, they need work, they need constant attention, that's steel, painted steel. You are talking about fiberglass and I'm not a boater, but look at a boat, if you don't pay the necessary attention it's going to eventually start to deteriorate. I don't have an issue with accepting the work, but we've got to budget accordingly to make sure, because the last thing I want is for CIFO or for anybody who is in the arts or anybody in this community to say listen, that looks terrible, it's a poor reflection, not only in the City, but on staff for not planning and that's not appropriate.

Commissioner Keon: I don't want to see a piece of work of that quality and of that artist be in a place where it deteriorates and isn't honored and isn't cared for in the way that it should be. So, I would certainly accept – so I would ask all of you how do we, I think if we can and we can find a suitable place to place this art that's indoors and meets the needs of maintaining this piece of art, so that there aren't kids climbing on it and it is respected as a valuable piece of art, then we should accept it. If we can't find that, then we should thank them graciously and move on. So I don't know how we – that's my fear. So, I would rather do -- I don't know what the process is, but I'd rather turn it back over to them to do that and as them to come back to us.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: [Inaudible]... I will refuse the donation...The fact that outdoor things have to be maintained is a logical thing, I mean it's natural. I just mentioned in a different context City Hall. It has to be cleaned every so often and it has to be maintained every so often – look up. Look at that...on top of the leak, fine I will tell them that we are not interested.

Commissioner Mena: That's not what anybody said.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well that's what I said.

Commissioner Keon: I don't think that's what's been said and I think if you look at outdoor parks and sculpture gardens around the country, generally things that are placed in sculpture gardens are made of materials that generally don't require that level of protection in order to maintain the integrity of the sculpture when its meant to be a long term piece of art within your collection. You know as opposed to be a temporary installation of some sort that might be taken a part or whatever, but if it long term...I think the piece of art is beautiful and I think the underlying message that that piece of art gives is a very strong and a very important message as to what has happened to our landscape, because of mining and because we have exploited resources and whatever else. I think it is a very important message and I would like to see that messaging whatever included within however the artwork is set.

Preservation Officer Spain: I would rather ask the lady at CIFO whether it would be able to withstand the elements outside when we were there visiting it and she said that it could go outside, I just need to tell you all that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: She said that it could go outside, because that is an outside piece.

Preservation Officer Spain: She said that it could go outside. I'm not sure if it's an outside piece. It was inside the gallery and of it inside installation, but she said it could go outside.

Commissioner Keon: But what will happen to it if its outside. I would like to make the motion that we turn it back over to – it's not, not acceptable.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I will not accept that motion. It was offered to me and I offered it to the City of Coral Gables and I don't want to go back in the hands of the Art Council...

Commissioner Keon: I know Mayor. With all due respect, I can make a motion that you don't accept, you just vote no. I can make the motion.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It was offered to me....

Commissioner Keon: OK. Well then, you know what, you should have it delivered to your house. I don't know what to say to you – deliver it to your home. If you want the address outside, it's not North Greenway, then we haven't lost it. We have continued to discuss it in order that we can find an appropriate place for it and accept it into the City. So, I would like to make a motion that we ask the Cultural Affairs Department to continue a discussion with CIFO and explore the placement of this art and come back to us in December and let us know if they have found an appropriate place and what the discussions with CIFO have led to. Then we can formally accept that piece of art or we don't find that place.

City Attorney Ramos: Commissioner, if I might suggest, I think it might be clear since the underlying Boards are not entirely in favor of it, at least one of them isn't, perhaps a resolution accepting the piece contingent on a place being found and that we get a report in 30 days.

Commissioner Keon: That's my motion.

Vice Mayor Lago: Would you also like to hear from somebody who is here from the Arts Advisory Board?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have here Betty Horowitz who wishes to speak – Betty.

Ms. Horowitz: Good morning.

Vice Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Horowitz: My name is Betty Horowitz and I'm a member of the Cultural Development Board and I just want you to be aware that we were asked by the Commission to consider during an October meeting, the donation of the sculpture that you just...Before this, the Art Advisory Panel met in September and was asked the same. During their meeting, the Art Advisory Panel was concerned with the challenge of maintaining the piece in an outdoor setting. They also voiced their concerns regarding safety from children playing outdoors. Their recommendation was to accept the piece and place it indoors in a protected environment. Then the Cultural Development Board met in October and concurred with the Advisory Panel regarding the challenge of the maintenance of this piece outdoors. In addition, the Board was concerned with the public response to this artwork. More importantly, and with all the sharp edges of the sculpture with safety. Our recommendation was to thank the foundation for their generosity and ask them to consider another donation as this piece would be difficult for maintenance, location consideration, and safety. I am concerned that after the Art Advisory Panel and the Cultural Development Board met and issued their recommendation, the Commission made the decision to accept the sculpture without having all this information we provided at hand. Most importantly, the Commission at that time did not discuss our recommendation in this forum. I have the privilege to be part of a great group of volunteers that first and foremost aim to pursue the best interest of the citizens of Coral Gables. When charged with a task, which we were, we all took the responsibility very seriously. Always making sure we follow due process. Whatever you may decide, we respectfully ask that you do the same. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Alright. I made a motion to...

City Attorney Ramos: I believe it's to accept the piece contingent on an appropriate location being found and directing staff of within 30 days to come back with a recommended placement.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: And also a detailed analysis, a response in regards to maintenance if possible, if you don't mind making that friendly amendment.

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely. Absolutely. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just would hate to accept this and then it just falls apart.

Commissioner Mena: A friendly amendment to that. I would ask that once a location has been identified that we contact the neighbors and understand...

Commissioner Keon: I would like to not take place in a residential neighborhood. This time we are not in the position and we haven't moved forward enough with the development of our arts programs and we haven't worked enough with the neighborhoods for them to be able to maybe accept those elements into the community at this time. Yes, I think we will. I think right now it's not there.

Preservation Officer Spain: I agree.

Commissioner Keon: If we want to continue the program, I really would not like to have such a strong reaction to it that it just stops it.

City Attorney Ramos: Ms. Spain, if you are going to have neighborhood meetings do you believe 30 days is sufficient time or do you need more time?

Preservation Officer Spain: You know it's the holidays.

City Attorney Ramos: Maybe 60 days is more appropriate.

Preservation Officer Spain: Probably better to have it 60 days only because there maybe people going away for the holidays. We need to reach as many people as possible. I certainly can try to bring it back in December.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Maybe you can come back and just tell us if you have found an appropriate place for it and then move on to us.

Preservation Officer Spain: Makes sense.

Commissioner Keon: And then if it's acceptable, the Boards have to have an opportunity to look at it. We know all of the information that we need in order to make a decision, then you can maybe go forward.

City Attorney Ramos: For clarity sake, I'd like to repeat the motion. It's a resolution accepting contingent, accepting the piece contingent on a proper location being found, a maintenance plan being put in place and neighborhood meetings being conducted. Staff will come within 30 days to talk about an appropriate location whether one has been found. If so, then 30 days after that staff will come back after neighborhood meetings.

Commissioner Keon: I made the motion. Commissioner Lago seconded.

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Commissioner Quesada: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And they will withdraw their donation. Thank you very much.

[End: 9:57:46 a.m.]