

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-3
October 24, 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
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Landscape Services Director, Brook Dannemiller

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item: G-3 [12:00:05 p.m.]

A discussion regarding potentially changing the trees along Granada Groves Court
(Sponsored by Commissioner Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's go onto the Granada Groves Court trees – Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: Very briefly. I wrote you a memo on October 13th and I sent you some photos along with a breakdown of all the residents that live in that neighborhood, it's about 30 residents. They signed an entire petition which I have here, if you would like to see it. Their issue is a very simple one; living on Granada Grove Court they are thirsty and dying for some shade, they have no shade on that street and after speaking with the Landscaping Services Director for the City of Coral Gables, I was notified that they were in line or spec'd to receive Silver Buttonwoods, that was included in my package, there is minimal shade. Now after speaking with Peter Iglesias, I had a discussion with regards to what are our options here. I understand the FPL is a hindrance on this issue, because they have some powerlines that are

running near the street, but I don't think we should leave it at that point. I think that we should move in a direction where all the residents are calling for shade trees, I think we need to find some sort of viable option that benefits a community. I don't know if it's extending the swale onto the street, away from the powerlines, but again obviously, moving the powerlines is going to be a big issue. So there has to be an answer here, and Brook and I discussed the issue when we met this past week, but I think there has to be an option and I just wanted to make sure to put it on the record, so that they had their fair shake at it.

Commissioner Quesada: I'm just looking at the street view of that street now and it's an exceptional number of powerlines on that street, more than any other street I've ever seen in the Gables actually.

Commissioner Lago: Very tough – they are in a tough situation, they are in a bind. But one thing I talked about, again, it's just me talking, I haven't talked to staff about it, maybe it could be a one-way street, then you could extend the swale. There are different things that I think that we could do to offer a little bit of shade, but when you look at the photos that I provided you here in reference to the buttonwoods, it really is not addressing their concern.

Vice Mayor Keon: But, there are some trees that can grow up to a maximum of like ten feet that still won't provide shade or pedestrian shade, I mean they shade the sidewalk, they probably don't shade the home, but they do shade the sidewalk for people walking on them, is that acceptable or they want the home shaded or the sidewalk shaded?

Commissioner Lago: They just want some shading. Brook, you've met with these residents, right? - would you mind coming up one second? Thank you sir.

Landscape Director Dannemiller: During the tree succession project in 2015 over on the street, there is only about a half-a-dozen spots where there is enough overhead space where there are no wires that would impact the trees. There are two Royal Poincianas in two of the spots, the other one the residents didn't want larger trees, because it was unanimous. We have at least one resident on the street that we were going to put Poinciana there and she requested it to stay as a Silver Button one. The main issue is overhead wires. If we can get rid of those from the main line going down the west side and then all the wires are crisscrossing to the houses on the east side. So, we could change out the species to a different medium size species like a...or Green Buttonwood, or even maybe a Bridal Whale. I think it would give it a little more space shorter trees, but it would be about ten feet tall, they would interfere with traffic, because it's a very narrow street. They need something that's kind of skinny and upright if you are not going to do anything with the overhead wires.

Commissioner Lago: I know you got this, but I'll repeat it just for the record. On Thursday, September 14, 2017, team City officials, the residents of Granada Grove Court in Coral Gables hereby respectfully request that our Mayor and City Commissioners consider the removal and replacement of the few remaining Silver Buttonwood trees that survived Hurricane Irma. We ask that they be replaced with floral live oaks. Best regards – they signed it. Again, maybe live oaks are not the option, obviously, because of the overhead powerlines, but like the Vice Mayor stated, maybe we can offer them, maybe we can have a Town Hall meeting, not a Town Hall meeting, but we can have an onsite meeting with the residents, or invite them here and show them options of what...

Commissioner Quesada: Commissioner, I'm supportive. I think we should have staff meet with them to discuss that, the details.

Commissioner Lago: Want to do a resolution to support?

Commissioner Quesada: Yes, whatever we need to do.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think like a Cassia, how tall does Cassia go? - do they go out too wide?

Landscape Director Dannemiller: There are a couple of species that might be able to grow tall and skinny. The swale is about 8 feet wide, so you can plant a medium size tree, Oak or Mahogany would be way too big, it's really the air space.

Vice Mayor Keon: Right, but there are some flowering trees also that are pretty.

Commissioner Quesada: It looks narrow. It's going to be tough; it's going to be real tough to change.

Landscape Director Dannemiller: And there is also parking; people need to be able to kind of park in there, so a big trunk would also...

Commissioner Quesada: They just might be geographically restricted from really doing much more.

Commissioner Lago: When you are on the ground, let's say at 11 o'clock, 11:30, unbearable heat, there isn't a shade tree in sight. So, I'm going to make the motion as per what we just discussed and directing staff to come back and basically meet with the residents and I'll be there, if any of my other colleagues want to attend.

Commissioner Quesada: Maybe pick one of the residents to meet at one of their houses so it's easier for them, maybe walk the neighborhood with the residents just too sort of figure it out is probably the best way to do it.

Commissioner Lago: There is an attorney in the neighborhood who's been really adamant.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's very good. You made a motion?

Commissioner Lago: Yes, I made the motion.

Commissioner Quesada: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. All those in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Opposed. OK.

[End: 12:05:32 p.m.]