

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D – Mayor’s Comments
February 23, 2021
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 Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item D – Mayor’s Comments [Start: 9:25 a.m.]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Chief stay up here. I’m going to skip approval of minutes and the Public Comments and go to Mayor’s Comments. Chief, we are as everybody knows in election period, the election is less than two months from now, and allegations have been made about the inadequacy of our police department. How we are severely under compliment, and how we don’t have the latest techniques and the latest whatever. I’m going to put on next week’s agenda a very comprehensive study of what we are doing, our new Police and Fire Headquarters, but I’d like you to address, please, having heard Sergeant Nguyen and Sergeant Rodriguez and the wonderful job they do, to prevent crime and to capture criminals in Coral Gables. Tell us about the compliment and are you up to staff, are you under, are you – so that a lot of misinformation that is being passed around is corrected. Will you tell us about it?

Chief Hudak: Sure. I’m kind of surprised, because I was really feeling good about myself, because the department is plus three right now for police officers. So, as we have some retirements coming
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within the next month, we already have people in the Academy. We, for the first time that I can remember as an officer here over 30 years, we have nine people going into the Academy next month. My biggest problem right now is finding a place to park all the police cars, because they can't take them home until they are off probation. So, we have eight coming out now, we have another nine going in. We've had to add more training officers to keep moving this along. So, staffing-wise, when the police is concerned, is not an issue, and I will be very frank with all of you, it is giving me the ability – if somebody is not doing the job that we think they should do, it's my responsibility to separate from that individual, and we have done that. So, we are at plus three.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Plus-three.

Chief Hudak: We are at plus three right now, but I've also that is taking into account that I have had to dismiss several people, both in the Academy, and also in Communications, and if they don't live up to what you all demand of the police department, and I expect of the police department, I'm not going to do that. Communications – we have, literally we have five vacancies, we've had to make some changes there, as we continue to look at the staffing, but that does not mean calls don't get answered. That is built into our budget. We have officers that can answer certain calls, which we do, and staff at that, and as people go on light duty, as we have communications, I believe Major Lawrence who is over that right now, Major Pedrosa, who was on that, they have a staffing issue that we do that. We were training call-takers that were waiting to go into the Academy. So, we will find those five people and the right ones.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But that's in Communications.

Chief Hudak: That's in Communications. Police officer-wise, we are up three. Now those are in the Academy, there is a bunch coming out and then there is nine more going in, but we've started to fill up our specialized unit patrol, and I know we have a conversation coming up on marine patrol. I can't tell you the last time that I've been in front of you that I was able to say, I'm three over because the Manager allowed us to go three over in anticipation of the upcoming retirements. So that sir, is simply not the case in the police department.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Chief.

City Manager Iglesias: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, we've over – what we are doing is making up for the retirees and so, we have a net of three plus positions now. So, as they retire, they will be immediately replaced with those positions. So, I don't believe we've ever been there before.

Chief Hudak: In 30 years I don't know if we have ever been allowed and had been over hired.

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Stay up there. Just like Chief Hudak highlighted the great work of his colleagues, I'd also like to highlight the fine work of our police department lead by my friend Chief Hudak, whose been there since 1964.

[Laughter]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Chief Hudak, we are fortunate to have you leading the department and the more than 300 dedicated team of professionals. Its great that for the past couple of years we've been maintaining a full compliment of officers on the force. It is also great that you have a new home, our new state-of-the-art Police and Fire Headquarters and that the Administration is committed to the highest standards of training. Training of our officers is critical, so that situations can be de-escalated. Chief, since joining the department more than 50 years ago, you have held numerous positions and risen through the ranks while serving in multiple capacities in most of the operating divisions. I feel fortunate to have worked with you throughout the years and to have seen how you have developed as a great leader. So today, I'd like to recognize your leadership and commitment to Coral Gables, and it gives me great pleasure to present you with a Key to the City.

[Applause]