

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items H-1 and H-2
November 9, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Arts & Culture Specialist, Catherine Cathers

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Items H-1 and H-2 [Start: 12:26 p.m.]

H-1: A Resolution of the City Commission approving artists for public art proposal submittals associated with the new Fire House 4. (Unanimously recommended by the Arts Advisory Panel approval/denial vote 7 to 0; Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 5 to 0).

H-2: A Resolution of the City Commission approving a temporary exhibition of the sculpture “Mars” by Julio Larraz at the Coral Gables Museum.

Mayor Lago: Moving onto items H-1 and H-2.

City Attorney Ramos: H-1 is a Resolution of the City Commission approving artists for public art proposal submittals associated with the new Fire House 4.

Ms. Cathers: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. At the request of the Cultural Development Board to include artwork at the new Fire Station 4 location, the Arts Advisory Panel met on May 26th to discuss the project and on June 23rd when they met with the project architect and Fire Chief. The Arts Advisory Panel recommending using a limited competition through

City Commission Meeting

contacting a short list of qualified artists and seeking their interest in developing a public art concept proposal for the new Fire Station 4 Building. At that time the panel also made a motion recommending an overall project budget of \$100,000. On August 25th, panel members discussed artists and made a motion recommending five artists and a proposal fee of \$1,500 per artist. On October 19th the Cultural Development Board reviewed the project and the Arts Advisory Panel's artist recommendations, including an additional artist recommended by staff. Three of the artists stated their interest in developing a public art proposal. They are Cara Despain, Ana Samoylova and Onajide Shabaka. The three artists live and work in the Miami area, have exhibited extensively, have been accepted to multiple residencies, are award winners and have practices that address the environment. The Cultural Development Board is recommending approval by the Commission to move forward with the next step of inviting the three artists to present and prepare proposals. Once the proposals are submitted, they will be available for the public to view and comment on before making a recommendation to the Commission. Funds for this process of \$1,500 per artist are being proposed through use of the Art Acquisition Fund and in fulfillment of the Miami-Dade County's Art in Public Places ordinance.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. What action do you need from us right now?

Ms. Cathers: Approving resolution to move forward with the proposal process and the \$1,500 honorarium.

Mayor Lago: On the five artists, correct?

Ms. Cathers: Three.

Mayor Lago: Three. Who were the artists again?

Ms. Cathers: Cara Despain, Ana Samoylova and Onajide Shabaka.

Mayor Lago: And due to the tight constraints of the site, its something that we are looking at potentially being on a wall of the building, because there isn't much of a location.

Ms. Cathers: Yes – absolutely. They've had extensive discussions about that. It could be potentially on the building itself, which the architect is aware of and is encouraging of. It could also be there is a small planter area that could be used for a possible sculpture and the panel and board wanted the artist also be free to recommend. It is a tight spot.

Mayor Lago: So let me ask you a quick question. Let me just propose something. We spoke about lumping together three potential locations for Art in Public Places. If this does not work with these three artists, I want to make sure that we could potentially also include maybe this fourth monies into the bucket so we can potentially bring before the Commission an exemplary work of art that could come from our downtown or something.

City Manager Iglesias: That is correct Mayor. That would be the Minorca Parking Garage, Fink Studio, and 427 combined into 427.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: And we could combine this one also if it doesn't work out.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think that's an interesting idea.

Mayor Lago: \$100,000 here, \$200,000 there, I'm just saying.

Vice Mayor Mena: That site is so limited and frankly, not – there is pedestrian traffic just from the school and whatnot, and some of the commercial nearby, but its kind of an odd property for public art anyways.

Ms. Cathers: It has its challenges. That's true, so they've been back and forth.

Vice Mayor Mena: Generally speaking, because we say this to developers and I think we need to, if we are going to talk the talk, we've got to walk the walk. I'm not a huge fan of art being sort of on the building, the public art. I prefer for it to be something more accessible. We've given people grief over that at times. Obviously, there are exceptions to the rule, but I think that's a very interesting idea and the only question I have is, do we want to move forward with a proposal and a process and kind of – I don't want to lead people down this path to a project if we are going to pull the plug on it and try to consolidate it.

Mayor Lago: Now that I know I have a little more support, obviously as a result of the Sunshine, we can't have these conversations, that's a great thing about the Commission. I'm willing to lump us in and make this a fourth project, so we can do something incredible on Biltmore Way. I have an idea of something that I want to present and following the protocols that have not been followed before, but I'm following them now. I'm visiting the Arts Advisory Panel, Council, excuse me, I've already done it once and I plan on going before them again, I've been doing some leg work in regards to a world renown artist that I want to bring here, we can hopefully acquire one of the works, and I'll be presenting that hopefully in the next few days to staff, so that they can present it to, we can set a date so I can go on and hopefully present that. So, I think this \$100,000 is significant amount of money, it will go a long way, and I think that also it will be less maintenance when we have four pieces versus one piece and I think you can get something monumental that will be really inviting and be world class and potentially will get a lot of attention instead of having four pieces of work that require a lot of maintenance, require a lot of time.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I know it's a different sort of bucket, but there is already a public component to this Fire House with a park that we are integrating in the back as is, but there is already something for the community, obviously the firefighters and the Fire House if for the community inherently, but in addition to that there is a park already.

City Commission Meeting

[Date]

3

November 9, 2021

Agenda Items H-1 and H-2 – Resolution approving artists for public art proposal

Submittals associated with new Fire House 4; Resolution approve a temporary sculpture by Julio Larraz

City Manager Iglesias: Fire House Park.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes, Fire House Park, which I think is already something for the neighborhood and the community, it just makes all the more reason, and I just don't want to, forget about the honorarium, that's not a lot of money, but I don't want to lead these folks down a path to proposing something for this project if we are going to pull the plug on it.

Mayor Lago: Can I get some support in regards to this and lumping it in and making it four projects into one.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm supportive of that.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor it would be a project at the City Hall Complex, would be an important project.

Mayor Lago: Okay. And I will be presenting, I will be sitting with staff and the Manager to present a work of art which is monumental, of an incredible artist who she is receiving international attention and there is some work available that we could potentially source for it to be considered by the council, and hopefully it will come forward with their approval. Anybody else have any other comments?

Commissioner Anderson: You have our support as I can see it.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'll make the motion if you need a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: Second.

City Manager Iglesias: And the motion would be to combine the art for 427, Fink Studio, Minorca Garage and Fire House 4.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir. We have a motion and a second on the floor.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: With that being said, I'll like to thank you and your staff for doing an incredible job. You guys are great, and I can appreciate and I know that over the next few years we are going to continue to build on our wonderful collection and put some really world class art here. So thank you.

City Commission Meeting

Vice Mayor Mena: And I don't know, by the way, if there is a better way for us to have this discussion before you do the legwork, because I am respectful of your time and the time of whoever went into identifying these artists. We didn't have this discussion before, frankly, and so I don't know, let's think about integrating that into the process so that we don't want you spending time on a potential project that we are then going to give you a different direction on.

Ms. Cathers: Thank you. I appreciate that.

City Manager Iglesias: We'll do that from now on Vice Mayor. The fact that we are combining is something new, but I think its great and we'll be looking at this in the future so that we can bring it to the Commission prior to the selection.

Vice Mayor Mena: You don't always have any way of knowing that that's going to be the direction, so its hard, I get that there is sort of a guessing game there. Obviously, this is a smaller project. It's a city project so we have control over what to do with the funds. Just keep that in mind. What I don't want to do is waste your time at all, and so I'm mindful of the fact that we are not giving you new direction and there is probably some work that went into this.

Mayor Lago: The issue too again, it goes back to we have limited.

Vice Mayor Mena: We can't talk.

Mayor Lago: We can't talk – and I'm visiting the boards and there is only so much that I know and that's why its great.

City Manager Iglesias: This particular one works very well because the Minorca Garage, we already have art at the Public Safety Building, which is right, and these two buildings are adjacent to each other, so when we have these synergies we will come back to the Commission to make sure that we address this combination of art in one location.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Let's move onto item H-2, a resolution of the City Commission approving a temporary exhibition of the sculpture "Mars" by Julio Larraz at the Coral Gables Museum.

Ms. Cathers: Good morning. We do have a presentation so the public can see the artwork. So this is – Miriam, do you need to read the...

City Attorney Ramos: The Mayor actually read it.

Ms. Cathers: So, the Coral Gables Museum approached the city with a request for a temporary exhibition of the sculpture "Mars" by the artist Julio Larraz. Coral Gables is presenting a retrospective of Julio Larraz' artwork for Art Basel 2021 and as their feature winter exhibition. The museum expressed an interest to include sculptures at part of the exhibition which was discussed with the Arts Advisory Panel and the Cultural Development Board. At the time of their discussion the selected artwork and location was to be determined. Both the panel and boards

City Commission Meeting

supported the exhibition unanimously, including outdoor exhibition of the artwork. So Julio Larraz is an accomplished artist, painter, sculptor, and draftsman. He was born in 1944 in Cuba. He exhibits his collections worldwide most notably as one of the most influential figures in Latin America and American art. I already mentioned the exhibition there. So here's more detail about the sculpture itself. It is a cast bronze oversized watermelon slice balanced on a bronze cabinet, and the artist large scale sculpture offers a vivid experience inspired by his paintings and figurative work, which you would see in the exhibition when it comes. Installation is proposed to be on the Museum Plaza from December through April. They are proposing to install it within the next couple of weeks and installed about a week or two after the exhibition. The sculpture will sit on its own weight and has been reviewed by staff for stability and the location. There is no funding from the city requested for this and they will be responsible, the museum will be responsible for its installation and maintenance.

Vice Mayor Mena: You literally just answered my question.

Ms. Cathers: So here's a little rendering of the piece on the Museum Plaza.

Mayor Lago: So, if you haven't had a chance, I'm familiar with Julio Larraz' work. My father owns a work by him. He is a world class artist that does a litany of different kind of mediums. He is represented by a gallery called Marlboro Gallery out of New York, and when you go to Art Basel and any other major fair in the world, you will see his work. His work is very different in the sense it's been exhibited all over South Florida, all over the United States. I've seen ones that are teacups, ones that are watermelon, ones that are – I imagine you have a bunch of different examples, but its again, some people may fall in love with it, some people will say, hey, its kind of childish, but its an interesting, he has an interesting quality to the work that I actually find very interesting.

Vice Mayor Mena: And really bottom line, this is not a city approved work of art per say, they are just asking because it's going on a public space.

Ms. Cathers: Correct. They are asking for a temporary exhibition of it.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, I'll defer to their selection of artist and the piece and...

Mayor Lago: And I ask you to have faith. It's a good artist that's going to bring good publicity to the city, and he has a good reputation.

Vice Mayor Mena: It is making me hungry, I'll say that.

Commissioner Anderson: On that note, let's talk food.

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Mena: I'll make the motion to approve it.

City Commission Meeting

Mayor Lago: Can we get a second.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Ms. Cathers: Thank you very much.