

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Virtual Meeting
Agenda Items G-10
July 14, 2020
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
Assistant Director, Jessica Keller**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-10

A discussion regarding notice procedure for traffic calming community meetings.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fors, Jr.)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Next item G-10, notice procedure for traffic calming community meetings.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you Mayor. This is probably a good example of something, but for the Sunshine Law, we would have just called everybody up to discuss, but we don't have that luxury. The agenda item stated it a bit broadly, but I think I'm going to narrow it down. And it concerns the community meeting we had for traffic calming Zone No. 2. Apparently, we found out after we did it that not all folks in Zone 2 had received notice. I believe Vice Mayor Lago investigated and determined that it was about 600 folks in some of the buildings on Biltmore Way that had not received notice. My immediate reaction was to do the community meeting over again. I did speak to staff about it, as well as the City Attorney's office, and frankly, they have compelling reasons for why the benefits of redoing it over for this oversight in notice to the particular residents in
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those buildings don't outweigh the benefit of just moving forward and trying to improve on whatever it is that caused that error in the notice procedure to occur. I had been approached, I'm sure many of you have as well, by residents in the Biltmore Way Building, Cheryl Gold is one of them. There was one other one and her name escapes me now, who have been saying that they feel disenfranchised by missing out on the Zone 2 meeting. I really just want to put an end to it and make a decision amongst us all as to whether we are going to do it again or we are not going to do it again. I spoke to Assistant City Manager Ed Santamaria about it. Two of the most compelling points for cutting our losses and not doing it again that he gave me was the fact that there is a cost to doing it again, and perhaps above all, the potential delay of doing it again. I know traffic calming is something that this Commission worked on for a long time to reach that Memorandum of Understanding with Miami-Dade County, that took a while as those types of Memorandum of Understanding do, and that there are a lot of residents in those areas who are waiting with baited breath for their traffic calming. So, delay and cost are two big reasons for me in reconsidering redoing it again, but I'd like to hear more about it today and have everybody else weigh in as well.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner Fors, let me just say that it is not one of the requirements for the noticing. Two, its Traffic Zone 2 and Biltmore Way will have its own meeting concerning the design of Biltmore Way. Three is that a lot of these sites, these small streets are off Biltmore Way and will have very little impact on the folks on Biltmore Way, and in addition to that we have a very, very good website that has a lot, all the requirements and that meeting is also there on video. So, I do think that the impact on Biltmore Way is minimal and they will have their own meeting. So for all those reasons, I don't believe that we should postpone traffic calming and I do believe that we should try to get that work done and I don't see why we should not go out and solicit voting from those local streets, which would probably be more impacted by Biltmore Way than Biltmore Way by those local streets, and continue with our traffic calming efforts, especially since we've got some issues with the pandemic and issues as far as what kind of meetings we can have at this time.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Ed do you want to say a few words?

Director Keller: I think Ed Santamaria was going to say a couple of things.

Commissioner Fors: Go ahead Mr. Santamaria.

ACM Santamaria: Yes. I'm happy to contribute to the conversation. This was a matter of a simple oversight where unfortunately, 603 residents that live on Biltmore Way buildings did not receive notice.... we are correcting and moving forward. Did they suffer any damage because of this? I don't believe that to be the case. As Peter mentioned earlier, Biltmore Way and traffic calming on Biltmore Way will come along with the Biltmore Way streetscape project still under development. So, part of the meeting that we have with the different zones for traffic calming involves that input, as to what's going on in front of your house or along your street or in your general neighborhood.

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Those meetings are basically just to express what the process entails. Basically, it talks about what traffic improvement components are available and how this is going to play out as traffic calming in the particular zone that's discussed is going to be handled for the benefit of those residing in that zone. So, Biltmore Way really will have its own traffic calming as a function of their own particular project. Moreover, to say that the information should be once again conducted or communicated in the way of a manner of a meeting really discounts the fact that there is a website that we have and its very robust, it has all the information. It includes a video tape of that meeting; it also includes the presentation and its something that all residents can refer to. So, we don't really believe that given these conditions that having another meeting is really necessary. And I'd like to turn it over to Melissa de Zayas who is a senior transportation engineer for the city. She is the project manager on traffic calming, and Melissa can go ahead and kind of walk you through the website that we have which is very robust. I'm not aware of anyone else that does this, to this level. I'm very, very proud of the work that's been done. So, with that, with your permission Melissa.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

ACM Santamaria: I think she is muted. You have a microphone on your computer? No, that's a problem.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That explains it.

Director Keller: No. She has a microphone. I think she needs to be unmuted by someone else.

City Clerk Urquia: She is unmuted. It's on her end.

City Attorney Ramos: She may be able to try calling in.

Commissioner Mena: Looks muted on the participants list.

ACM Santamaria: No, she's live. Melissa maybe you can call in on your phone.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Where does she call?

ACM Santamaria: She calls into the zoom meeting.

Director Keller: If you want to, I can go through the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you?

Director Keller: Okay.

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ACM Santamaria: Billy, will you set up to share Melissa's screen on the website.

Director Keller: I'm sharing my screen. Can you see it?

ACM Santamaria: Yes.

Director Keller: I just want to make sure that Melissa gets full credit here, because this is really her baby and she would be able to go through this much better than I can, but I will do my best. As everyone knows the City Commission has been working on the multimodal transportation plan since 2016, and the citywide traffic calming was born out of that initiative. And so, I'll skip right ahead to the implementation. This is what the website actually looks like. The city has been divided into five zones. You can click on the various, you can click on the zones. Here we have the process for traffic calming, and this is the process that went through the multimodal transportation planning meetings citywide since 2016. You can see the actual process and how long it takes for us to implement any of the individual traffic calming measures here. Here you can see the various traffic calming devices that are in the MOU that the City Commission approved. This is what an existing speed table looks like. You can find this example on Giralda or Aragon Avenue. This is what a speed cushion looks like. This is located on Solano Prado; and here is an example of a traffic circle that's been approved by Miami-Dade County. This is not located in the City of Coral Gables, and what we want to point out is that the traffic circles that you see in the north Gables, they do not meet current standards of Miami-Dade County, so they will look a little bigger than what you are used to seeing in the north end of the Gables. Here we have – you can jump straight to Zone 1 public workshop. All of the information that we typically, we get a lot of public information requests about is all located here. We have the sign-in sheets, presentation, all the comment cards that were received by the public. We also have a sample ballot of what the ballot will look like when it comes to your home. And up for discussion what we are talking about here is, this is an example of a ballot is what you will receive.

Commissioner Fors: Is this a good example of range of potential traffic calming measures that can be taken on a particular street, in other words, is there a lot to choose from or given the criteria that your street meets, you really only deciding whether you want a speed cushion or you don't want a speed cushion.

Director Keller: That's a good question. There are only a limited number of traffic calming devices that can be streamlined through the Miami-Dade County process. So, we were generally favored those in many locations because it would not need to go through the long process of review with Miami-Dade County. But speed tables and speed cushions aren't always appropriate traffic calming devices for every single street. So, in situations where we need geometric changes to the roadway, that's a little bit longer process, where we have to go through Miami-Dade County.

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Commissioner Fors: And another point that Mr. Santamaria made to me was that this sort of dovetails off of what I just mentioned is, that these traffic calming meetings, I think in terms of scope and discretion, do they differ greatly from the type of community meetings we would have from a streetscape or are we dealing with more of a blank canvass of various different things we can do on that street that are more permanent and more transforming?

Director Keller: The community meetings that we are holding right now, they are a reflection of all of the work that was done two, three years ago. So, this is – we are presenting the feedback from residents over the past number of years. You understand what I’m saying?

Commissioner Fors: Right. So, you are not taking feedback at these meetings.

Director Keller: Of course, we are taking feedback. We are presenting – when we get a concern brought to our attention they are speeding on our street. What we are presenting is the mitigation to address that speeding if the street actually qualified. This is the opportunity for residents who have been engaged in this process for a number of years to actually say, okay, I recommended that you have some sort of traffic calming installed here and this is what’s being proposed. So, they get to see what it is that they had recommended at any point in time in the past four years.

ACM Santamaria: Also, its an opportunity to discuss how the process works. Not everyone is familiar with this process. You saw the flowchart, its kind of complicated, but once you have the public input and once you have the...process, things kind of simply in that there are very few steps left to go before you start.

City Manager Iglesias: Let me say, in this particular case, Zone 2, you have the sign-in sheet there, the presentation, the video of the meeting of Zone 2. In this particular case, Biltmore Way, they will have their own workshop concerning their street. So, I believe that going through this website will be very informative and its an excellent website and really, as our ACM Ed has said, I don’t know who else is doing something like this for the residents.

Vice Mayor Lago: If I may add just one thing to the ACM’s comments or maybe ask him a quick question. Just to save ourselves the headache and all the e-mails and the additional questions and whether we were being transparent or not, wouldn’t it have just been better when we did a Zone 2 workshop that we just included these 600 and change residents, is there a reason for them not being notified. I just feel like notifying them would have just, maybe is redundancy, but I just feel...

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, I think it was just an oversight, however the positive thing is that, that oversight in that area is an area that will have their own meeting. So that will not happen again, but the point is, it was an oversight, it was not intentional.

Vice Mayor Lago: I know it wasn’t.

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City Manager Iglesias: We have a very good website that presents everything that happened at that meeting and they will have their own meeting at Biltmore Way. So, it certainly was not something intentional, it was just an oversight in the noticing. And also, remember these right-of-way issues that don't have to be noticed, we are going that extra mile in noticing everyone before doing it.

Commissioner Fors: Let me ask you a question. The folks that were not noticed eventually received ballots regarding Zone 2.

ACM Santamaria: No.

City Manager Iglesias: No. The ballots are for the individual streets and their area, Biltmore Way will have their own public workshop. So, they will receive what everybody – I think beyond that point they will have their own workshop because of the significance of Biltmore Way. So, you look at street by street and I will let Jessica comment on that specifically.

Director Keller: Yes. The City Manager said it is that the streets that are getting specific traffic calming measures, both on the traffic calming measures, and also, Biltmore Way that capital project has already started their community engagement. They've had their initial information gathering session. They also have a website specific to that project that reflects that community input. I'd also like to add that if the residents along Biltmore Way, you have specific concerns, they can always reach out to Melissa and they also may attend any of the other upcoming community meetings. We've had people from other zones attend other community meetings and they can speak to representatives at those meetings as well.

City Manager Iglesias: Biltmore Way is in essence their own project. We are looking at some of the issues there. We are also looking at our east/west communication, as far as some one-way streets. So, Biltmore Way is being looked at specifically for a number of issues there and its basically their own project. If we were going to miss an area this was actually the area to miss, specifically because of all the attention its getting because it is its own project and the fact that we have all this available on our website as far as Zone 2, they can certainly go to Zone 3, but I think they will be addressed individually for that project.

Commissioner Fors: Alright. I don't know if any of the other Commissioners have any other comments regarding this discussion matter.

Vice Mayor Lago: I do. I think you and I are in agreement that if we are going to embark on the traffic calming measures which have been so fruitful in our neighborhood here next to the University of Miami, I just don't see, even though we made this error, why not just especially in this time of Covid where we can do this online, offer people the necessary time to provide their input, if we missed them, even if it was obviously done inadvertently. It would just be an opportunity to cure that issue and move forward.

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ACM Santamaria: Vice Mayor there is nothing to cure.

Vice Mayor Lago: Mr. Assistant City Manager, I mean, I've spoken to two residents and they seem pretty adamant about the fact that we, again there was some sort of oversight. It wasn't intentional. I don't want to get far along in the process and then have this derailed because we didn't host an additional meeting. I just don't see – again, I don't want to give staff more work.

ACM Santamaria: I'd be happy to answer the questions that they might have, very happy to.

Commissioner Fors: Can we set up, like Vice Mayor Lago said, a zoom meeting for anybody who wasn't able to attend that day and answer whatever questions. It doesn't have to be a redo of the community meeting, by any means whatsoever, just a sounding board.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner Fors, what we want to do is not solely street calming, we want to proceed with street calming and the surrounding local streets and truly do not affect Biltmore Way. So, we will proceed with the local calming initiatives, in addition to that we will provide them with a zoom meeting for themselves. But I don't feel its necessary to stop our...

Commissioner Fors: I know. The last thing I want to do is to stop progress. I'm asking if we could have a zoom meeting that's not a community meeting without stopping the process in any way, shape or form.

City Manager Iglesias: Happy to do that, but we will continue with our street calming initiatives in all those local streets.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Thank you very much Commissioner Fors. Commissioner Fors anything else?

Commissioner Fors: No.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Your next item Commissioner Fors, G-11.