

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-1
May 22, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Ed Santamaria

Public Speaker(s)

Karelia Martinez Carbonell

Agenda Item E-1 [11:45 a.m.]

Personal Appearance by the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables regarding the historic White Way lights. (Sponsored by Commissioner Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The next item is time certain 10:30 am.

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Commissioner Keon: Happy birthday.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Personal appearance by the Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables regarding the historic White Way lights. Commissioner Lago. Commissioner Lago left. It's his item. Hello.

Karelia Martinez Carbonell: Hi. How are you? Well, my name is Karelia Martinez Carbonell. I'm president of the Historic Preservation Association. I'm here with Pat Button, who's one of our board members at HPACG. And I'm here -- I was not present at last Commission meeting, May 8, and -- but I do want to thank Commissioner Lago and, of course, all Commissioners and the Mayor for being -- actually voting on allocating the amount of money that -- in the budget for the conversion from FPL to the City, which was \$350,000.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I say something or -- and I'm sorry that Commissioner Lago is not here. But I live on North Greenway Drive. And if I let my house deteriorate to the extent that I see those poles...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Having deteriorated, I would be cited. I would be fined. I would be whatever.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: FP&L has let those poles deteriorate to that extent. Why didn't we fine FP&L? Why don't we make them responsible for upkeeping their own posts or their own facilities?

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Well, that's a wonderful question, and that's a question that I get -- we get all the time. And it goes back to this convoluted relationship that the City and FPL has had since the beginning, which was, you know, back when they were first commissioned. So, yes, I believe that FPL has been -- has let it -- they've...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we let...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Been neglected, but then the City hasn't been...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The City Attorney...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: A steward of their own landmark.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can we explore the possibility of fining and making FPL restore those to the initial condition?

City Attorney Ramos: I can look into it, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you?

City Attorney Ramos: Sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think it's embarrassing. It's disgusting.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Yes. Well -- and the -- this here -- and I just want to -- because this is something I wanted to bring the last time. This pole debris was there for almost a month. The City knew about it. Public Works new about it. They sent a work order to FPL. It took -- and I basically stopped looking. Eventually, it was picked up. Now, this is picked up. There's still --

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there's no light on that. And FPL -- and what they've done in the past is once those lights don't work, they will remove them. And that light was right in front of the library. That's where our marker was, which, unfortunately, was hit over the weekend and actually it broke in two, and now we don't have our marker, even though the City, you know, will, you know, work with us to replace it.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And just as clarification, we alerted Karelia Saturday morning when we had a photo of it and we also committed to replacing it. And thanks to Parks & Rec, they quickly removed it from the safety component of it. So, we're aware of the sign. We acted swiftly and we also said that the City would replace, at City's cost, the sign.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Thank you. So, but anyway, it's been really, you know, lots of sad news. But as you can see, you know, this is FPL -- this is, you know, whatever that means. But we're -- you know, we're concerned that that light may not be there because it does happen maybe overnight. You know, they take it down. The City now does, you know, get some message that the light is coming down, but that's a shame. That's another -- that's one less light. So, you know, just as a, you know, as an update. The Dade Heritage Trust has put these lights on their endangered list for 2018. What that means? It's basically just an awareness that these lights, you know, did make the list. The present budget -- again, I think the last budget when it was presented -- and I wasn't here -- but you know, there -- the \$350,000 is obviously needed for the conversion. I think that has to be imminent. It has to be ASAP, as far as, you know, a timeline to acquire and have the City actually take possession. Because as long as FPL is in the mix, we will continue losing. Now, as far as how many lights are up, I believe the City continues to mention there's 77.

Commissioner Mena: No.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: There are 21...

Commissioner Mena: I think, at the last budget meeting, we got an updated number from Dona. Forty-five.

Commissioner Lago: Forty-five.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Okay, which is a map that our organization created which we shared...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, okay.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: With the City. So -- and there's one outlier. There's one light out in front of -- on the side of St. -- Church of the Little Flower, which I don't know -- you know, but that's one extra light. So, needless to say, the budget, you know, is going to be a little less because the original budget was 77. Now, it's basically 45, maybe another ten. So, it's about \$100,000 less, I think. I guess our request now moving forward is that we -- that our organization continues to be part of this timeline. I sent an email out to Commissioner Lago and some of the staff. I never heard back after the May 8 meeting about a meeting to -- and I think that was one of your requests, I think, at the May 8 meeting is have them come back -- have staff come back with a timeline as far as conversion and restoration. So, please, I just implore that, you know -- we're really monitoring these lights and as we all celebrate art and we're happy, you know, that we have this wonderful program, Art in Public Places, this was our founder Merrick's -- he was the original proponent. So, the City, you know, is the steward of these landmarks. Unfortunately, FPL is involved. But as stewards, please make sure that they are protected.

Commissioner Mena: And we...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: We reiterated that request at our budget workshop recently. And I know I communicated to you that I want to say all four of us at the budget workshop, it was in our top ten list of priorities. So, staff understands that they're supposed to come back to us with a plan. And we've asked them to evaluate locations, whether these can be consolidated on University, if there's a cost benefit to doing that or not and really get their hands around it. So, it's certainly, I think, all of our priorities to make sure this gets done and it gets done right.

Commissioner Lago: Karelia, like we...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: We've -- I think we've talked probably two dozen times since the last Commission meeting. I told you this is going to get done, okay.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: I've been in conversation with Mr. Santamaria. The money is there for the conversion. I think that's the first critical thing. The plan is -- obviously has to be worked out in the sense of how are we going to consolidate all of these lights. Are we going to leave them where they are? I'm not privy to that just yet. My main focus was to make sure that the conversion happens and that we salvage whatever lights are in bad condition. This is a simple issue about historic preservation. And I agree with you wholeheartedly. I think this Commission agrees with you. We're going to get this done. Because if we lose any more lights, again, we're losing part of our history. We're losing a little bit about what defines what Coral Gables is about. And this Commission, as a whole, has stated -- and this is an incredibly important project to them. This is a critical project to them. So, I just ask you to continue doing what you're doing. You know, we've been in contact. This is going to -- this is on the front burner item. We're not going to put it to the back. We're not going to forget about it. The money is there to

do the conversion. Now, the next step is, after we do the conversion is actual restoration. Pushing FPL -- I know the Mayor has good intentions. I think it's going to be very tough, to be honest with you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, very tough.

Commissioner Lago: It's going to be very, very tough. I think we're going to have to handle this issue ourselves if we want to get the job done correctly. So...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Well...

Commissioner Lago: I appreciate all the pressure and all the knowledge that you're applying and bringing this issue before us because I think if it's not now, it may not be never.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Karelia.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Thank you. And I just want to thank the Commission for making that allocation.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, we have...

Commissioner Lago: And are we going to get -- are we going to get that update that I requested maybe at the next Commission meeting?

Public Works Director Santamaria: For -- on the White Way lights?

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Yes.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you, sir.

Public Works Director Santamaria: For the record, Ed Santamaria, director of Public Works. I'd like to add one more thing to what was just discussed. We do have a commitment to budget this work, but we won't have the funds available until next fiscal year. So, I just want to have realistic expectations that the work won't start until the next fiscal year. And the first part of the work, as has been stated earlier, is to get the underground in.

Commissioner Lago: Well, Ed, if I may -- and through the Manager, and if my colleagues will chime in. The money's going to be there because we're going to allocate it, as Commissioner Mena stated. It's four of us -- I know that Commissioner -- Vice Mayor Quesada couldn't be here, but I know that if he was here, he would have made it a priority also. This is going to be allocated and the fiscal year is around the corner. We're -- you know, we're right there almost. So, is there any planning that we can start working on now...

Public Works Director Santamaria: Absolutely.

Commissioner Lago: So that when we have the monies in place, we can make sure that we don't skip a beat and that we save all this time in between the funds being allocated.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Yes, Commissioner. And that's the whole aim of providing you with a plan.

Commissioner Lago: Okay.

Public Works Director Santamaria: We are definitely embarking on that. There has been some discussion as to perhaps narrowing the area that would be considered the White Way, maybe restricting it just to University. These are all things that have to be fleshed out. But we do have a plan in place. That plan is to get the underground in. Once we have the underground in, we can start taking possession, circuit by circuit, with an agreement by FPL, and then, eventually, we'll get to a point where all of them will be restored. But what we can't do -- because of the Code considerations that have been discussed previously -- is take them on and take on the associated liability.

Commissioner Lago: Right. I understand that. But when you talk about there's a plan in place whether they're going to be consolidated or they're not going to be consolidated, let's start working on that so we can build consensus. If the neighbors have to get involved, let's have a public meeting. If Historic Preservation -- let's get all that out of the way now so that we can say, hey, listen, the neighbors don't want to have a row of White Way lights because they don't - - they just don't want it, for whatever reason that may be or they do want it. I think it's, you know, a great amenity for them in the neighborhood. So, I'd like to get all that flushed out now, taken care of, approved so that when the money, the cash infusion comes in from -- in regards to the budget, we can hit the ground running. And if you need met to go to the County, if you need one of us to, for some reason, have to deal with an issue that deals with FPL, we're here. We're here.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: May I just -- when is the next budget? When does it kick in?

Commissioner Keon: October 1.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: So, October 1.

Commissioner Lago: And we have...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: We're almost...

Commissioner Lago: Our next budget hearing -- we have our next budget hearing July 7, I think, and Manager, our last workshop was not televised. I'd like to see if that workshop can be televised, if possible, so that people who wanted to maybe come in and just listen or chime in have the ability to do that because our first...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: So...

Commissioner Lago: One wasn't.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: June, August, September. Okay, we really only have three months.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: That's what I'm saying.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: So...

Commissioner Lago: It's right around the corner.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Talking about -- so, it really will go fast. I mean, there's summer. There's vacation time, all that. So, I, you know, just want to put it in -- reflect it in the minutes, I guess, that, you know, if there could be a timeline very soon so that we're all, you know, aware of what's...

Commissioner Lago: Karelia, that's why I've asked...

Commissioner Keon: I know.

Commissioner Lago: Mr. Santamaria -- for the next Commission meeting -- I'm putting on the record I want an update. I want it to be under one of my items in reference to a timeline. And I want Dona Spain, who is going to play probably one of the most important roles here outside of Ed Santamaria and Peter Iglesias in regards to the conversion. I need her engaged so that she's following the process, as she always is, but I want to make sure she's engaged here so we can save whatever time upfront via the appropriate planning. Because this is all about -- this is simple construction. This is planning and scheduling. There's nothing very complicated about this.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And the City Commission also talked about consolidating...

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The White Way area, possibly all of University so that lights that are currently on Riviera could be relocated so that you have one full boulevard of White Way lights as one of the options that they're looking at. And then we have a series of lights that are at the 72nd Avenue that we would also incorporate or introduce back into the boulevard.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Well -- thank you. But may I say one thing about Riviera? That's the original -- that has the most lights.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: It does.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: So, for the City to say let's transplant all these lights over to University does not really make sense because University -- there's hardly any lights. There's one light at one end, and there's maybe one light in the middle. And I think Riviera Drive -- we should keep it as the original corridor. And then...

Commissioner Lago: Karelia, you know what I'm...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Get into...

Commissioner Lago: Going to do because I don't want to get into that right...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: University.

Commissioner Lago: I don't want to get into that right now.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: No. I'm just saying for the record.

Commissioner Lago: I'm going to do whatever Dona tells me to do. How about that? Because she's going to look back and she has...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Okay.

Commissioner Lago: She's going to -- Dona's going to give a recommendation and I'm...

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Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Our...

Commissioner Lago: Going to do what Dona says.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Okay, but...

Commissioner Lago: How about that?

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Please include us in that conversation.

Commissioner Lago: But I -- you are.

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Oh, so then to wrap up this item, we'll be moving -- you're going to bring it back up in the next meeting?

Commissioner Lago: Ed's going to -- we're going to put it under one of my items to discuss. Ed's going to give us a timeline.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, but let's...

Commissioner Lago: Karelia, you're...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's go on.

Commissioner Lago: Included in everything.

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Vice Mayor Quesada: Alright. So, then there's...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Vice Mayor Quesada: There's nothing to vote on, so...

Commissioner Keon: No.

Commissioner Lago: Unless you want to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Vote on...

Ms. Martinez Carbonell: Thank you so much.

Commissioner Lago: Requesting a timeline.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, no, no, no.

Commissioner Lago: At the next Commission meeting.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll put it on the agenda as your item. Okay.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Thank you.