

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-10
July 9, 2019
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
Chief Information Officer, Raimundo Rodulfo
Public Affairs Manager, Maria Rosa Higgins-Fallon

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-10 [3:02:09 p.m.]

A discussion regarding the City's use and management of social media accounts and the Zencity platform, including a discussion regarding the necessity of a staff member dedicated to managing both. (Sponsored by Commissioner Fors)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: G-10 – Commissioner Fors.

Commissioner Fors: Yes, very briefly, like we know we are running out of time, not running out of time but short on time. I wanted to just bring to the Commission's attention, just have it be something we think about as whether we have or need an employee dedicated to, not only social media, specifically in terms of news dissemination or possibly even notices and dedicated to monitoring Zencity. What I've discussed with the City Manager, I believe we have 7 to 8 employees already in the Communications Department. I probably would not be in support of adding an additional employee, given that we already have seven or eight.

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City Manager Iglesias: We have eight part-time employees which is equivalent to six fulltime employees, plus one supervisor, so that would be seven, plus MR (Maria Rosa) is eight.

Commissioner Fors: So given that most people are increasing getting their news from social media, rely on social media, especially during emergency situations or natural disasters, and the fact that we have this excellent platform, Zencity, allows us to monitor activity on social media and get ahead of issues, I thought that we might want to look into or at least consider and hear from Ms. Higgins-Fallon on whether we want to dedicate an employee just to this, or reassign duties to have that same effect, and by the way, this came from a meeting with the Communications Committee where this was one of the points that they specifically asked me to have the Commission think about at the next meeting.

Ms. Higgins-Fallon: Good afternoon, Maria Higgins-Fallon, Public Affairs Manager. As you know, I'm in charge of the Communications Division. One of the main things that we do in addition to ENEWS, website content and media relations is social media. You are aware that we have a very strong presence on Facebook, as well as Twitter. We are trying to implement additional communications to next door. Right now, I monitor and manage it, with the assistance of Michael Rocha, who you have seen posting videos. He takes care of Facebook Live and then the team of part-timers, which is eight part-timers and they are dedicated to post information, to post videos and whatnot. So, currently the discussion that was held at the Communications Committee last, Commissioner Fors was present. They brought up the idea that maybe because of the ongoing social media presence that the City would consider a full-time position. So, we fall under the City Manager's budget priorities and his vision, so its just up for consideration and discussion here at your convenience.

Commissioner Fors: Pretty much every employee of the Communications Department checks in on social media or participates in social media?

Ms. Higgins-Fallon: So, there is a difference on how they work. The eight part-timers that assign stories and videos and they could be like a 30-second story to like the IT video that we just produced was a little bit longer. So, they are in charge of producing the video and post the video. So, when you talk about social media monitoring and managing, it's the conversation that goes beyond what is being posted. There are a lot of inquiries from the public about every kind of things, so its 24/7 monitoring, because they expect an answer on social media. So, we've been doing that consistently, assuming that as among our duties. There are instances, for example, when we have emergencies and we have hurricanes that we have to intensify that. So, the eight part-timers produce a lot of content that we, in addition to what we put on Coral Gables Television, we post on our social media feed. So, I think that the discussion that the Communications Committee was having with you was, with addition of the Zencity platform and public input that maybe because

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of the ongoing influence of social media that there may be a need to put in additional resources, but you know that's a discussion that the City Manager has.

City Manager Iglesias: Raimundo, the IT Director who can discuss the Zencity program that we've implemented, along with public input.

Information Officer Rodulfo: The Zencity system is analytics, so it looks at the citizen engagement and interaction and the public sentiment and using new technology with...for future intelligence and machine learning. It learns different behaviors in the City in terms of what is normal, what is not normal and then it analyzes the sentiment and provides an inside report. It provides a report about any topic. You want to track about transportation, they can track any public sentiment about transportation or any other topic; and it can also aggregate data from our social media platform and provide insight on different topics. So, it's a new tool that also works together with the new citizen engagement tool that Public Affairs deployed with public input, because public input is able to engage the citizens directly with the...service, for example, and all the data can also be analyzed through Zencity.

Commissioner Keon: So, is what you're asking is that staffed enough to be able to do that and get the information we need?

Commissioner Fors: Correct. If its sufficiently staffed and do you believe that it can be accomplished, if you believe we need a dedicated person or I understand subject to being able to afford it, and do you think it would actually require an additional employee or could duties be realigned, is that feasible to have a person that's more dedicated to Zencity.

Ms. Higgins-Fallon: So Zencity is a platform that we share with everybody in the City. I know that IT also monitors, and so we kind of combine his personnel, my staff and everybody else that has access to Zencity. So right now, we just initiated that maybe a month ago, so we are in the initial stages of how we are working it through. The beauty of Zencity is that it alerts you when there is, for example, fake news or...misinformation. A good idea of having eyes added at all times is that you can intercept that. So, we haven't had an incident where we had to intercept something that was fake news, because it hasn't happened to us. So, at this point, we're managing what we've got. Would there be a need in the future? For example, right now we've got about 14,000 followers on our Facebook and another 15,000 on the Venetian Pool Facebook. We are growing our Twitter audience. We are right now at 2,900; and we are also trying to grow our Nexo audience, which is about 6 to 7,000 subscribers. Would there be a point that there are so many eyes that are talking to us that we are going to need additional resources? I think we are at an earlier stage right now that we don't know that yet, but it's a possibility that social media its where the communication is

happening, especially with the newer generation. So, it's something to consider and it's something for discussion.

City Manager Iglesias: One of the issues with Zencity and some of this new technology is it has artificial intelligence, so we can go out and get our data in many platforms, put it in one platform, which makes it easier to analyze; and that's something that the IT Department is working very heavily on. You also have PIO's that work with Police and a PIO for actual Fire. So, I do believe for right now, I think, we adequately assessing everything and hopefully with the new technology it will be easier to manage all social media. All that social media through the artificial intelligence that is provided by many of these programs which are getting better and better as we go.

Commissioner Keon: That means less people though, not more.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. Anything else?

Commissioner Keon: Can we come over to IT and see how that works. Can you show us how that works? If I just come over and you could. I don't even tweet. I have no idea. I don't do any of it. I quit posting on Facebook years ago.

City Manager Iglesias: We'd be happy to show you everything Commissioner.

Information Officer Rodulfo: We can do a demo.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Thank you. I'd rather just talk.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

[End: 3:10:42 p.m.]