

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items 2-1 and 2-2 are related
January 14, 2025
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant City Manager, Alberto Parjus

Public Speaker(s)

Doug Yoder
Maria Cruz
Irene Hegedus
Eulois Cleckley
Levi Meyer
Gonzalo Sanabria

Agenda Items 2-1 and 2-2 are related [11:19 a.m.]

A Resolution of the Waterway Advisory Board recommending the City Commission amend the City Zoning Code to include notice to the Waterway Advisory Board of waterway properties seeking a variance related to the waterway or requesting conditional use.

A Resolution of the Waterway Advisory Board recommending the City Commission object to the water viewing area project at the US-1 bridge as part of Miami-Dade County's Underline Project; and requesting a 90-day extension to the U.S. Coast Guard to allow sufficient time to respond to public notice.

Mayor Lago: Okay, moving on to time certain 2-1, 2-2, time certain for 10:30 a.m.

City Attorney Suárez: These are the resolutions of the Waterway Advisory Board.

Mayor Lago: Yes, give me one second. Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Suárez: So, Mayor, these are resolutions of the Board. They're not necessarily on for your -- you know, you don't need to take action on them, but the resolutions that the Board adopted. 2.1 is a resolution of the Waterway Advisory Board recommending the City Commission amend the City Zoning Code to include notice to the Waterway Advisory Board of waterway properties seeking a variance related to the waterway or requesting conditional use. And 2-2 is a resolution of the Waterway Advisory Board recommending the City Commission object to the water viewing area project at the US-1 bridge as part of Miami-Dade County's Underline project and requesting a 90-day extension to the US Coast Guard to allow sufficient time to respond to public notice. I believe there's a representative.

Mayor Lago: Yes, and there's also public comment. Obviously, we're going to have our esteemed members from the Waterway Advisory Board. Welcome, neighbor, how are you doing?

Doug Yoder: Good.

Mayor Lago: Good to see you.

Mr. Yoder: Good, Mr. Mayor and Vice Mayor and Commission, Mr. Manager. My name is Doug Yoder. I live at 4800 Alhambra Circle. I'm the chair of the Waterways Advisory Board. I'm optimistic that our items can be resolved as harmoniously, I might say, as the previous item. Though it would have been a good opportunity for you to apply the principle of singing for your supper. We have two items. The first one is resolution of a recommendation that we made back in July and this board recommended some refinements regarding development or redevelopment on the waterway and public notice. And the conclusion of that discussion is the resolution before you today that recommends changes to the Zoning Code to notify residents within a thousand feet of a development that involves either a zoning exception or an unconditional or a conditional use change for the property in question. We kind of weighed the pros and cons of either being providing more coverage or less coverage and that's where we came out on that issue. Obviously, if over a period of time it turns out that it needs to be modified, it certainly could be. So, if there are any questions regarding that, I'm happy to...

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Commissioner Castro: Yeah. So, instead of amending the Zoning Code, what I could do is draft a resolution directing staff to notify the Waterway Board. Would you be okay with that?

Mr. Yoder: Yeah, I think so.

Commissioner Castro: Okay.

City Attorney Suárez: So, we can bring it back next meeting, Commissioner?

Commissioner Castro: Yes, please.

Mayor Lago: That's fair. Thank you, sir. Anything else for the good of the order?

City Attorney Suárez: He has -- he has number -- he has Item 2-2.

Mayor Lago: Just want to make sure before we move on to 2-2. Yes, sir.

Mr. Yoder: Okay, the second item you've already had an introduction to in the citizen presentation by Mr. Bamberger regarding the proposed pedestrian bridge adjacent to the US-1 bridge crossing the waterway. And some of our members, along with Mr. Bamberger (phonetic), who met with us last Wednesday regarding this issue, noticed that in the -- the Coast Guard notice for comment, there appear to have been errors in the description of the existing vertical clearance between the bottom of the bridge and the mean high-water level at high tide, which determines who can get under the bridge and who can't. He said he was 5'8", I'm 6'4", so you can see that's a -- that would be a problem. And so, the recommendation of the Board is that the City request the Coast Guard to extend the review period so that at our next meeting we can formulate a recommendation for your consideration for the City. I've also been in touch with the County, which is actually doing this Underline project, including Transportation and Public Works, which is the agency involved, the agency that handles resiliency for the County under Environmental Resources Management in the Mayor's Office. And there is a little bit of confusion, I think, or uncertainty about how County policy affects vertical clearances over waterways or the bay to contemplate the effects of sea level rise over the life of the asset that you're thinking about. Obviously, it is much more efficient to anticipate and design for sea level rise that's going to occur or is likely to occur when you're building it than it is to go back and try to do something about it later. So, I think there is an opportunity here for addressing that issue more broadly. One of the things that our board tries to do is to increase public access to the benefits of the waterway, whether navigationally or just views. So, I think, at least in my opinion, the Board is not objecting just to conceptually to the idea of a pedestrian bridge. We had two concerns. One, the vertical clearance issue. The other in the descriptive materials that were provided and published, they showed a picture of somebody fishing off of this pedestrian bridge. And the City has a policy of not permitting fishing from bridges because it's a safety hazard for people who are navigating the waterway. Actually, I think

at least one of our board members has actually been hooked as a result of that. And the County's policy does in fact say that fishing should be done from designated catwalks, which would be from, in this case, the side of the waterway, not from the bridge. A third point is that even now the City's Marine Patrol only has one boat that can get under the US-1 bridge. And so, there is a safety and health issue associated with these vertical clearances that is part of what we should be concerned about. So, with that said, I would just request your authorization, your approval, and we will continue working with the Coast Guard and the other agencies and come back to you with a recommendation for a City response to this proposal.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I do not own a vessel. I do not live on the waterway. But I think it's very important that when we have advisory boards, that we listen to them. I'm not sure that we do this all the time, and we should, because they know what they're talking about. The previous gentleman that was in Zoom was very good at pointing out what the issues could be. This gentleman that just spoke also did a good presentation. We need to listen to our people, our residents, the ones that pay our taxes, and let Miami Dade and other people handle their business. We do have to defend our people and these are the people that you need to listen to. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, I know we have a representative from the County here, and I do have a number of questions, so if you're available.

Irene Hegedus: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Yeah, that was going to be the next step.

Ms. Hegedus: Before I start, Eulois Cleckley (INAUDIBLE).

City Clerk Urquia: Ma'am, can you please speak on the microphone? Thank you.

Unidentified Speaker: Eulois Cleckley is with us today. He is the new CEO of the Underline, if you have any questions as well.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, actually, if you both want to come up, maybe we can do this more efficiently, and whoever has the requisite knowledge can respond.

Mayor Lago: By the way, if I may, Madam Vice Mayor, I just want to recognize this individual who I've had the pleasure of meeting with on multiple occasions and I've known Irene for over a decade. As Irene mentioned, he's the new -- he's the new director of the Underline, correct? That's your title, is that --? I want to say it...

Mr. Cleckley: CEO.

Mayor Lago: CEO, I want to be -- I want to be clear.

Ms. Hegedus: And previous director...

Mr. Cleckley: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Ms. Hegedus: To Public Works.

Mayor Lago: I dealt with him at Public Works on many occasions. A professional. We're very lucky to have him here at the Underline. I've met with him already on two occasions, just to give you a background on how responsive he is. And this is a benefit -- so the community understands who they're dealing with, I met with him one time for breakfast and then we had a conversation about issues that were, you know, just garbage and waste and graffiti that were plaguing the Underline in certain areas on 37th Avenue. We met; two weeks later, those items were addressed. So, it's a testament to both of your hard work. Thank you for listening. Thank you for engaging from some of the issues that the residents have been sending us. And also, David from the Mayor's Office also was engaged. We did a walkthrough with him. We were able to address a lot of the garbage that was -- that was thrown throughout the Underline from -- starting from Le Jeune all the way to 57th Avenue. So, thank you. I just wanted to preface that and give them a little bit of credit because they're working hard already in the background, and sometimes, they don't get enough credit for all the hard work they do.

Ms. Hegedus: (INAUDIBLE) joint venture that is designing and constructing (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: And just real quick...

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, you're filling some very big shoes.

Mr. Cleckley: Absolutely. And just -- just as a point of note. So, definitely appreciative of the opportunity to work on this great project. As you know, our founder, Meg Daly, is the catalyst behind the Underline, but we are progressing and getting ourselves together from an organizational standpoint to make sure we're delivering a fantastic asset for not only South Florida, Miami-Dade

County, as well as the City of Coral Gables. So, I'm available if there are any questions, and we look forward to resolving this issue today.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm bringing you up there, and I'm sorry to hit you cold, but this has been an issue for some time. And I'm going to loop in two issues here. We're not just talking about the bridge. We're also talking about the kayak launch, which is the County's responsibility, which is why I called the County on it. Assistant City Manager Mr. Parjus and I had Zoom meetings with the team at the Underline and also with the County about whose responsibility the kayak launch was. A preliminary design was sent to us and my immediate comment was apparently someone never went to the site to look at the topography because instead of putting it on the side where the topography is easier to put in a kayak launch, they put it on the opposite side of the embankment, which would require, you know, a lot of equipment or blasting through the rock right near where the support beam is for the rail itself. I asked, you know, for various edits on that design, including allowing parking because people that come with, you know, some of this kayak equipment don't want to be parking three, four blocks away, dropping off expensive equipment and then come back to find it gone. The bridge is a concern. The County's bridge is a concern. I have kayaked down the waterway from one end to the other. And you know, it's a great way to inspect the underside of the bridge itself, the existing US-1 bridge, because you're so close to it, you can see it up close. And I agree if we're going to put in something new, we need to address -- you know, if you can't paddleboard down there now, water levels are going up. I've been here long enough to see water levels go up. We need to address those things. And it's more than just the height of the bridge, which then brings in the Underline itself. Because in order to have a bridge, it has to be accessible. If it has to be accessible, you have to have sufficient space for slope. Okay? So, you're going to affect the design of the Underline there. I don't expect you to have answers here today. I want you guys to go back and meet with your team and with the County and come up with answers. Because it was at least two years ago that -- and Mr. Parjus might have a better memory than I do of that, that we've had this teams meeting, and I've had some follow-up. And there was a funding issue with the County because the County's supposed to fund the kayak launch and design the kayak launch, but I see a large disconnect that's going on between the County's team and the Underline in making sure that this is designed to work. Because in order to have the parking there, you have to redesign the entire intersection area to have a safe place for people to pull in, park, and you know, launch from. It would only be a limited number of parking spaces, but I haven't seen any responses from the County. So, can we set up a meeting to...

Mr. Cleckley: Sure.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Dovetail in both of these topics, as well as US-1 bridge? When is it planned to be replaced? When it is, what are the recommended heights? You know, we're going to be doing a Cocoplum bridge this coming summer. Let's not build it twice, let's build it right, is one of my messages to you.

Mr. Cleckley: And I'll defer some of the technical questions to Irene who represents the County, but absolutely we want to make sure that the Underline is coordinated well, not only with the City of Coral Gables, but also with the County and our County partners, which we've been doing throughout the duration of this project. I know that there's additional conversation around the access. You know, today's item is specifically with regards to the pedestrian bridge, which we'll provide some clarifying points on that. But to both of those items, we can definitely have a conversation with you, make sure we're all on the same page and progress with the project. I think the most important thing for us is that we are tied to funding requirements and obligations, and we would like to stay on track with respect to the timeframe and the schedule for the project. And so, what you hear today is a request for, of course, not only providing the clarifying points, but also making it clear that we don't feel like that it's important, or we don't feel that it's imperative that we ask for a delay to the process of the comment period for the Coast Guard, because there's been a ton of outreaches that have occurred specifically for the pedestrian bridge and we want to ensure that we keep the project on track. But I'll defer some of the technical aspects of that to -- to our County representative, Irene.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right. I mean, I don't know that we need to defer the project, but we need to take a good hard look at where we're at. Because we're not just talking US-1 bridge. You also have a bridge with Ponce, okay, that continues down the waterway. So, there's a multiple bridge issue, and then somewhere along the line, we have to have the timing to do it. What height are we going to build these bridges at again in the future? They might be not replaced for 10 years, you know. So, we have to have a comprehensive conversation. I'll make myself available this week if you want to get together and see if we can iron out those details.

Mr. Cleckley: Okay. We can help with that. Some of the other bridges, of course, are County property and the like that requires additional coordination, but I'm sure the County is willing and open to have those conversations as well.

Ms. Hegedus: We are. Let me address really quickly the kayak component. It's not part of the Underline. This is something that the residents of Coral Gables have come in droves, actually, to the eight different public meetings (INAUDIBLE).

City Clerk Urquia: Ma'am, can you speak into the microphone, please?

Ms. Hegedus: The residents of Coral Gables have come in droves to all of the public meetings that we have had requesting the kayak. The kayak launch pad is within the City of Coral Gables. It is -- it is not within our right-of-way. A tiny little portion, maybe, but mainly it's right next to US-1. My understanding from talking to Roads and Bridges is that it is an unpermitted, illegal, kayak launch pad. However, our Parks Department has a program, and it has identified this area under the Blue Way Master Plan. And we would love to move forward. In fact, they were looking for funding to try to build it, but the funding was stopped because of the districts and municipalities, the boundaries of -- can we do a project and start improving, for example, Coral

Way -- Coral Gables bridges. The answer to that was no. As of two weeks ago, we are requesting that the FDA add an incidental use, another incidental use to the agreement that we have with the Underline because our land is federal. We also have a memorandum of understanding, and we have a maintenance agreement with you, with the City of Coral Gables, that allows to actually build within your right-of-way. So, in the future, if the kayak wanted to be enhanced or created and permitted correctly, at least it can be part of an Underline project that comes after the fact. And then there will be exhibits attached to that that will identify whose responsibility for the maintenance will be. Now when the kayak launch pad came back, even before the Underline meetings took place with the community, we had a lot of meetings with the City of Coral Gables. Put signage, no parking. We put the signage, no parking. Take the signage, people are just screaming. We took the signage. And then the kayak start happening. We have meetings with Parking to try to take an area off your right-of-way, Coral Gables right-of-way, along Ponce de Leon, to start creating parallel parking along the street to allow for parking. Right now, there's absolutely, we cannot maintain the area because when people park, they pretty much destroyed all of the grass and all of the vegetation that is trying. The other component is that right now people were parking too close to Riviera Drive, which creates a safety issue. That is one of the reasons why it was looked at moving the kayak launch pad to the south, to the other end. There will be more land available on that end. You are very constrained. Not only do we have the intersection and the crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists on that intersection, not too length -- too much length between the street and actually canal itself, but on the other side there is plenty more land to be able to address some parking, drop-off areas and some of the other features. But this is a Parks -- Parks and Recreation and Open Space project. However, we are trying to facilitate the inclusion of this project in the future as part of the Underline as an authorized incidental use permit like we did with the dog park for the City of Coral Gables. So, I hope that addresses some of this.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We need to sit down with the drawings. We've been waiting for a long time for a response from the County.

Ms. Hegedus: Yeah, but you've been dealing with Parks, right? Because I would like to know...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mr. Parjus.

Ms. Hegedus: Where to go to help facilitate.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Would you care to share your recollection of when the last time we had a meeting and when we were expecting a response. The last thing I heard is we were supposed to get in some revised drawings, and we never received them.

Assistant City Manager Parjus: Good morning, Vice Mayor and Commissioners, Mayor. Yeah, you're correct that approximately two years ago we started conversations with the Underline for the canoe launch and the kayak launch and there were some issues concerning what you have mentioned. First it was funding, then it was location, but we never got a follow-up from the Parks

Department because they were doing some redesign, and they were trying to allocate some other areas. And the Vice Mayor brought some issues of accessibility and safety for the equipment, but we -- that was it. We never got any further.

Ms. Hegedus: Yeah, that's about the same time. So, it is -- I know it's the Parks Department's. I know that they were hiring a designer. I know that they were looking at funding and all we needed to do as part of the department was to create an interdepartmental agreement, which was done and signed. So, this project was moving forward, but it stopped because of funding.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. Let's have a meeting about this and the bridges.

Ms. Hegedus: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, we don't have to delay the Underline, but we can expedite the Underline.

Ms. Hegedus: So, in terms of the bridge and the clearance that has been brought up, the code requires that you cannot be any lower than the lowest bridge. We need to make sure that we point out that this is to increase pedestrian and bicycling safety. We are not affecting boaters now, in 10 years down the road, it's the same condition as you have now. However, I don't know who made the statement that it would be at the same height. The statement was made that it would not be any lower than that height. And the lowest bridge is the US-1 bridge, and we are adjacent, right adjacent to it. Our bridge, in fact, is three feet higher. So, it is not that it's lower or it's at the same height. So, based on the information, and this information actually has been confirmed via surveys, so it is not that we just took a drawing, and we took the dimension on that. Several times we have gone to the field and surveyed to find out. To give you an idea, we're going to be -- we're going to be 3.3 feet higher than the US -- and US-1 is the lowest bridge that you have. So, we're going to be 3.3 feet higher than the lowest number, and 2.6 feet higher than the Ponce de Leon bridge. So, we're not lower, and we're not at the same height. So, whoever is saying that we were going to be at the same height is not correct. However, the code does allow you to be at the same height, but we're higher. We cannot make it any higher for several reasons. One of them, proximity, and you mentioned this before in your comment, proximity to Riviera Drive and ADA accessibility and ramping. So, it requires a lot of space to create a slope. The second one, we are in our right-of-way. We are in a Rapid Transit Zone right-of-way, right next to and under the Metrorail guideway. We cannot go too high without compromising all the clearance safety features. So, that's one of the reasons why we have bring it up as high as we can bring it without compromising safety zones along the Rapid Transit Zone. About the area, there are no discrepancies on what we provided the Coast Guard. So, the Coast Guard will have to see whether their advertisement was correct or not. We submitted the documents to the Coast Guard in October. They asked for a lot of information. They asked us to eliminate a lot of the (INAUDIBLE) on the documents. It was resubmitted in December. They noticed on January 5th or 6th, and they had a 30-day commenting period until February 5th. So, again, I strongly urge you not to allow for that extension to take

place. Let's look at the, and I mentioned this before, but the overall use of the viewing platform. I have not seen any single image showing somebody fishing, that we have generated anyway, somebody fishing out of the bridge. We are willing -- and I believe it is a strong and very good approach to sign the bridge, just like Coral Gables does, providing for no fishing, no diving, no jumping. It is just a safety issue. And it was really -- the viewing area was supposed to enjoy the kayak launch pad, which is not in place right now. So, eventually, the two projects, and if you see the Underline drawings, you will see an integration of the kayak area and how we're incorporating the path, the landscaping, bicycle and pedestrians. Let me see, was there anything else? I think that those were the points that were made on the statement. And if you have any questions on those?

City Manager Rojas: If I may? What would be helpful when the meeting is set with the Vice Mayor and staff is visual drawings and photos so that we can actually look at all the options that you're talking about. So, if you could do that.

Ms. Hegedus: Could I -- could I pass this along?

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, I mean, I don't want to delay this meeting any longer.

Ms. Hegedus: (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Anderson: I just -- let's get together.

Ms. Hegedus: Like I said, this has been under our drawings since day one. We have had eight public meetings. These are the same documents that we provided. But however, this does have the structural information.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I appreciate you. Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

City Manager Rojas: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, Madam Vice Mayor, we have a little bit of documentation here. We've seen some of this before. We have recommendations from one of our boards. What would the Commission -- what is the will of the Commission in regards to moving forward so we can get the project -- you know, we've been waiting a long time for the project. We've heard some of the -- some of the heights that are -- some of the misinformation that was corrected.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm going to suggest this.

Mayor Lago: What do you -- what do you want to do?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm going to ask the County and our staff to set up a meeting, have a member of the Waterway Advisory Board there to be informed, but do it as soon as possible. I know Mr. Yoder is retired at this point, so he is very flexible in his schedule.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I have additional members of the public who want to speak on this.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect. Perfect.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Levi Meyer.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Levi Meyer: Good morning.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Meyer: Can everybody hear me?

Commissioner Castro: Um-hmm, yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mr. Meyer: Very good, hi. I was unable to attend in person today, but I'm glad I was able to chime in via Zoom. I want to thank everybody, including the Commissioners and the Mayor, for taking their time, and including members of the Underline and Miami-Dade County, for being present for this meeting, and Mr. Yoder and Mr. Bamberger for their commentary as well. My name is Levi Meyer. I'm a resident of Coral Gables, a resident of the Coral Gables Waterway, a boater, and I am a member of the Coral Gables Waterway Advisory Board. So, I speak today mostly as a citizen. I learned of this bridge a little over a week ago. So, you know, and I found that to be true for most members of the Coral Gables Waterway Advisory Board and dozen of my fellow neighbors who live and are affected specifically by being west of this US-1 and Ponce de Leon bridge. Initially, the US Coast Guard's notice, which is what brought it all to our attention, even though this has clearly been in discussion for -- for many years, it was the first time it was brought to our attention, which I think brings point to our initial resolution about including the Waterway Advisory Board in these types of actions so that we can make comment on it and bring our level of expertise to the subject long before we get to this point. The US-1 bridge is too low.

The US Coast Guard notice very clearly stated that it would be at the same height as that bridge. We've later gotten communication from US Coast Guard noticing us that that was done in error and that there is a sort of variable somewhat of a three-foot higher clearance. Although again, we have yet to see and get any clarity on that via any specific plans. The plans that have been presented to us, and I can share those with the members of the committee in here, do clearly show at the viewing point that there is a man with a fishing rod. So, even in their own drawings, it does show that there will be fishing. But the reality of fishing is that you're going to see that at any bridge, you're going to have people fishing. And you can put no fishing signs, you know, you can put notices as to the fines that may come -- that may be applied, you know, whether that's time in jail or fines, whatever it is to ward off fishermen from fishing off of active waterways and creating a danger. But the biggest concern I think of the residents here is the height clearance. And to match it to the lowest point doesn't seem like we're worried or concerned about future proofing against sea level rise. When we're talking about close to \$3.2 billion being invested in the state of Florida to help future-proof us against sea level rise, matching it to a bridge of the past does not seem like a viable solution when we should be concerned with matching it to the future. As it is, as Mr. Yoder mentioned, the City only has one marine vessel that's able to somewhat barely clear that bridge, and again, that's tide specific. And quite frankly, it's just insufficient. So, while we can't necessarily raise the bridge of US-1 or not in the immediate future, but I think that's something that's going to have to be addressed at some point, there -- there's an opportunity now to plan a bridge that is resilient against the future that would allow not just boaters, marine and safety patrol, fire safety patrol, Coral Gables municipal boats that go in to maintain the trash that comes out at the end of Riviera by Coral Gables High School to pick up and remove that trash, Zoning to go in and check for violations and impediments of the waterway and safe life and safety issues. All of these vessels need to clear it, not to mention that it's a historical matter here. The Coral Gables waterway was dredged in to provide gondola rides to the Biltmore. Those gondola rides today would not be able to pass as they would stand and paddle through the Coral Gables waterway at the current height of this bridge, at the US-1 bridge, even adding three feet. So, I really think that, again, while nobody on the Board seems to have an issue with it, and nobody I've spoken to as a resident of the waterway seems to have any issue with providing a pedestrian bridge, even though one already exists at Ponce de Leon, but to provide an enhanced pedestrian experience for bikers and runners and walkers to be able to clear this waterway, I think everybody seems to have a very, very strong opposition to building it at the current heights that are being proposed. And I think that the City, the County, and anybody else involved should be listening to the members of their advisory board, to their residents, and worried about the safety, not just of the people crossing over the waterway, but the people that need to cross under the waterway as well. So, I do urge the Board to reconsider. I do urge the United States Coast Guard to reissue a correct notice clearly stating what the bridge height and clearance is going to be because they have already admittedly said that they erroneously put that notice out. And so -- and I think that we need to notice people that are affected by this to give them sufficient time to give professional comment and make sure that we're building a bridge of the future.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Gonzalo Sanabria.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Gonzalo Sanabria: Good morning. Gonzalo Sanabria, 944 San Pedro Avenue. I do live on the water, and I know the area quite well, and I've also been involved with the County on a major project right now as we speak of the Underline. So, I know it can be difficult dealing with the County. I know that they have a lot of resolutions, a lot of regulations, a lot of processes, but the bottom line for Coral Gables at this time, and before I get there, is I commend Chairman Yoder and the Waterways Advisory Board, all of them are very concerned members that have put forth this resolution, which I hope we adopt unanimously. But the bottom line in this is very simple. It is out of scale. It is intrusive. It's overexaggerated in the way that it's planned. It also makes it virtually impassable for any vessel to come to the rescue of -- let's say -- let's say a boat catches on fire west of that bridge. Let's say a pollution occurs because of an overspill of fuel. Let's say an unfortunate person hits a pier or piling in a jet ski. You know what? You do all that, all these things happen, and there's no way that we can rescue those people in the water; Fire Rescue, our Coast Guard, our Coral Gables. Pollution that starts there at the west of the bridge, it makes its way all the way to Biscayne Bay. This is not a small item; this is a very large item. So, I urge your participation in encouraging the proper pedestrian crossway, not one that is excessive and so densely exaggerated. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor?

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to -- I still am going to suggest a meeting, we put this back on in the next meeting in January because all the points that have been made by our Waterway Advisory Board are indeed true. This is a very low bridge on US-1. We need to future proof. There are ways with switchbacks to address some of the ADA issues. Let's get around a table and have a constructive discussion about this and not try to kick it down the road for another decade or so because there are a lot of concerns there. Our Police and Fire launch from that -- what's indicated here as an existing kayak launch. It really is not an existing kayak launch because there's no good place to turn to park there. You have curbs in the way. So, unless you have a four-by-four-wheel drive vehicle, getting there is not feasible. You have to stop in the middle of the road, put your flashers on, take your kayak, unless -- unless you have a truck. It's just not feasible right now. So, I'm going to ask staff to coordinate a meeting, and let's see if we can roll up our sleeves and get this done. Both the bridge and the kayak launch design needs to be put in stone so that we don't design something and then have to tear it all up again, okay?

Commissioner Menendez: If I may, through the Mayor? Clearly, we have competing concerns. We have those that are dedicated to safety on the waterways, who have experience, who live what Coral Gables offers. We also have the competing interests or concerns about what happens on land, which is ADA, accessibility, also the ability to folks to be able to get out of harm's way because of traffic. The Waterfront Advisory Board, if I'm not mistaken, their next meeting is February 5th. And along the lines of what the Vice Mayor was saying, I would love very much, like very much to add that meeting for your team to have -- attend that meeting, the February 5th meeting. We meet again February 11th, Commission meeting. I think right now we're so far apart in terms of what is the best path forward, I think it makes it very challenging because both sides have very strong arguments, and both are valid. I think we need to regroup again and have a discussion and then have the Waterfront Advisory Board come back to us after you meet February 5th, and then that way, hopefully, at that point, we can all agree on a path forward.

Mayor Lago: Anything else for the good of the order? Mr. Yoder...

Commissioner Fernandez: I concur with Commissioner Menendez on this. I would add would it be possible to have a special meeting of the Waterway Advisory Board to go along the lines of the Vice Mayor to have this come up before next Commission meeting so that it doesn't take another month before there is a resolution to this? I would ask for the Clerk's Office to try to coordinate a special meeting of the Waterway Advisory Board with the folks from the County and the Underline so that we can have this come up at our next Commission meeting and see if we do need to take action. Obviously, there are a lot of concerns. I, myself, wasn't aware of this issue until it was brought to my attention when we did agenda review. So, this is something that it's not just that the residents have been involved. Members of the Commission also were informed as to what the issues were. And it's not the only issue. We had issues with access to our fire station just a few block -- I guess, like a block down, and that was never addressed by the County or by the Underline. That was kind of just left up in the air. So, I would like to see a resolution that is forward thinking and that does address the concerns that are brought -- have been brought to our attention not just by the members of the Waterway Advisory Board, but also by the residents who have attended today.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, just...

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: A point of information for the Commission. The next meeting of the Waterway Advisory Board is currently scheduled for February 5th, which is prior to our first Commission meeting in February.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: So, it gives time for them to meet.

Mayor Lago: First off, I'd like to thank Doug, Mr. Yoder, and his -- and the entire -- all of the body, the members of the Waterway Advisory Board. Thank you for working with us. I've spoken to many of the members of the Waterway Advisory Board, Levi Meyer, Manny Chamizo, yourself, and I've spoken to a lot of residents that live on the waterway -- live on the water for the last year in regards to this issue. And thank you to the County. You've been very accessible. We've met. We've had conversations on this issue on multiple occasions. This is not a new issue. This is an issue that's been -- been, you know, front and center for some time. Now, it's just coming to a head. So, everybody in this community has been very aware that this was going to be an issue that we have to deal with. There was eight public meetings in regards to what were the plans, and this was part of the scope that was addressed. So, like the Vice Mayor said, I think it's an opportunity for us to come together and find a solution. Again, I don't think the solution is going to be that easy because it's a very costly situation that we're in right now. And the Underline has been a 10-year project in the making, so we have to find out a way that we can hopefully find some common ground and bridge this gap, okay? So, thank you, and I look forward to the board meeting with our -- with our colleagues in the County, and I appreciate all of your hard work. And thank you for being here. It means a lot to us. Thank you so much.