

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-4
September 13, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Finance Director, Diana Gomez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item E-4 [10:22:21 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City of Coral Gables, Florida relating to the provision of fire protection services, facilities and programs in the City of Coral Gables, Florida; reimposing fire protection assessments against assessed property located within the City; for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2016; approving the rate of assessment; approving the assessment roll, and providing an effective date. (Fees have not changed from the prior year).

Mayor Cason: E-4.

City Attorney Leen: Mr. Mayor, Item E-4 is a Resolution of the City of Coral Gables, Florida relating to the provision of fire protection services, facilities and programs in the City of Coral Gables, Florida; reimposing fire protection assessments against assessed property located within the City; for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2016; approving the rate of assessment; approving the assessment roll, and providing an effective date. (Fees have not changed from the

prior year). This also is a public hearing item. Once again, this is the opportunity for the property owner to come, and to contest their specific assessment. This is also known as the Fire Fee.

Mayor Cason: Any speaker cards?

City Clerk Foeman: No Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Cason: Close the public hearing – discussion?

Commissioner Keon: I only asked one question of Finance. Does the Fire Fee go into a special fund or does it go into the General Fund? I sort of flipped through the Budget Book and I'm sorry, I didn't look, so that I'd be able to identify that.

Finance Director Gomez: It goes into the General Fund, but it is used for certain allowable uses relating to fire protection services, that's all accounted for in the General Fund.

Commissioner Keon: The garbage fees are put into, or do they just go into the General Fund too?

Finance Director Gomez: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: The garbage fees also, so all fees are just included.

Finance Director Gomez: For the most part, all fees.

Mayor Cason: The Fire Fees...certain size of the buildings, and all that too.

Commissioner Keon: And they have very specific uses.

Finance Director Gomez: Parking Fees go into parking, because it's Enterprise Funds; sanitary sewer; certain funds that are Enterprise Funds it goes into those funds, but most other service fees and special services go into the General Fund. We don't have a lot of special revenue funds, or things like that.

Commissioner Keon: OK, but when we are looking at the work that needs to be done, and the replacement of the Public Safety Building, and whatever, those fees can be used toward that, is that right?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We'll have to check. We have been approaching the Public Safety Building under a different funding source, but I appreciate your question.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Thank you.

City Attorney Leen: Typically, what happens is the funds come in and we have to spend at least that amount of funds on these areas that are allowed by law, because these funds are a special

assessment, so its saying that these individual properties receive at least this amount of specific fire service to the City, we use a formula like any special assessment, and that thing can be assessed, and then we have to use at least that amount on those areas that are required by law.

Commissioner Keon: Right. You know, I'm always concerned with fees. We often impose fees, because we don't want to affect tax rates, so I'm always concerned that when we charge a fee that the revenue collected from that fee goes specifically for what we charge the fee for, and it's hard to follow that in a budget unless the fees are in the Enterprise Funds: it's very easy to follow it and some of the other fees it's more difficult. We know of garbage, we know we subsidize that heavily too, but I always have a concern with the Fire Fee that we know exactly, that we are not just, it's just not an opportunity to...other funding.

Mayor Cason: Its only \$5.80 a month, so it's pretty low.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: If you would like, we can give you a breakdown of what we use the Fire Fee last year, and how we intend to use it this year.

Commissioner Keon: It isn't really a matter of how you use it, because I'm sure you use it. It's just what is the general -- what are we not funding out of the General Fund?

Finance Director Gomez: With the Fire Protection Fee – fire protection services is a much larger number than what this fee brings in. This is a very small percentage of what we could use this fee for.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Finance Director Gomez: I don't remember the percentage right now, so since we are using "X" number of dollars for fire protection services citywide, this helps to pay for those fire services that are allowable.

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely – but fire protection services are part of the shared cost of government that people pay for when they pay their taxes, the same as police; garbage is a fee, they pay for what it cost us or almost what it cost us, and its affected by the tipping fees, and its affected by a lot of other things, so we know then that we know how those funds are used, when the Fire Fee is just an opportunity to be able to collect additional revenue, so that the General Revenue can be used elsewhere, that's always an issue with fees.

City Attorney Leen: We do call them fees, but they are effectively special assessments, like if you categorize them, they are really special assessment.

Mayor Cason: If you look at page 5 on this, there is a list of 38 tiers depending on how big it is, and what you pay.

Commissioner Keon: Right. My issue or my – I think it's a policy issue, is that if we charge a special assessment, when we charge a fee to ensure that those are additional funds that go into serve that particular whatever the fee is related to, that it's that, and it's not that it's a planned funding that normally was paid for out of the General Fund.

Mayor Cason: You can come back then to us next or a future meeting, and let us know on that issue where it goes.

Commissioner Keon: We can talk about that. To me that's just an ongoing issue with fees.

Mayor Cason: We have no speaker cards, right?

City Clerk Foeman: No Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Cason: So we'll close the public hearing. Any more discussion? Do we have a motion?

Commissioner Keon: I'll make the motion.

Commissioner Slesnick: Second.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Keon makes the motion, Commission Slesnick seconds – City Clerk.

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

(Vice Mayor Quesada: Absent)

[End: 10:28:15 a.m.]