

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-2
August 27, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Arts and Culture Specialist, Catherine Cathers
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item 2-2 [0:00:00 p.m.]

A Resolution approving funding of \$250,000 from the Art Acquisition Fund for a temporary public art exhibition by Rafael Barrios and for the permanent acquisition of the artwork "Pause." (unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 5 to 0).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, 2-2, resolution approving art acquisition for Rafael Barrios temporary exhibit for Art Basel and then the acquisition will become a permanent part of our art inventory. This is a unanimous recommendation of the Cultural Development Board, 5-0.

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Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Good morning, Mayor, Commissioners. Catherine Cathers of the arts and -- Arts and Culture Specialist, Historical Resources and Cultural Arts Department. Can we have the PowerPoint? Although, I am not sure that we have it. So, I think I'm just going to talk through it, if that's okay. You have a copy of it in your packets. So, you had already approved us working with artist Rafael Barrios for this year's Art Basel and Miami Art Week. And so, this is the proposal of the actual artwork that we're going to be doing. My apologies. They were not able to get the PowerPoint up. So, we are asking the Commission today for approval of the temporary exhibition of the monumental sculpture Pulse -- I'm sorry, Pause. And that is for -- right now, we're working with the Public Works Department on getting it installed for the temporary, two to three months outside of City Hall in the triangle area that is along LeJeune and Coral Way. And then we also are going to be doing an outdoor sculpture, a smaller sculpture at the Coral Gables Museum, along with an exhibition within the museum that will consist of about 13 artworks. Those artworks are going to be all new artworks. They're currently being produced in France and in Panama. They'll be displayed on both low pedestals, high pedestals, responding to natural light, so some of the pieces will be installed in the windows to work with the interaction of life. There will be mobiles and there will also be wall pieces. We don't have images of the pieces that will be exhibition space, but we're very excited about that, as well as the artist. We are also asking for permanent acquisition of the monumental sculpture Pause, and then eventual relocation to that to the north of Ponce de Leon Park, which is on the north end of Ponce. And that, of course, we're not dedicated to acquisition, but that is a site that we thought would work well and was a recommendation by our boards.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is an artist that was in New York's Park Avenue for many, many months and has been exhibited worldwide. And I think it would be a wonderful acquisition and a wonderful way for us to participate in this year's Art Basel like we have in the last several years.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes. So, the acquisition of the sculpture is \$165,000. We're asking for additional funds for the exhibition and marketing support, and also, the relocation of the sculpture after the temporary installation.

Commissioner Mena: So, from the Art Acquisition Fund, though, correct?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: I was going to mention the same thing, Commissioner Mena just stated right now. And I want to be clear we put that on the record. There was a lot of misinformation. People think that this money is coming from taxpayer dollars.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No.

Vice Mayor Lago: But it's not coming from that.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Correct. It is coming from our private development, Art in Public Places and private development.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right. And it's coming from private developers, yes.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: And the second point that I wanted to make -- if you would indulge me. Sometimes when I drive by the Hank Willis Thomas sculpture -- because I want to make sure that in perpetuity we keep them in pristine shape. I'm going to be honest with you. I don't -- I know people are using them. They're meant to be used. I know that we were seeing some of the paint come off. I want to make sure that we're giving the necessary attention to that sculpture.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yes, we...

Vice Mayor Lago: The maintenance is provided. Because we've already been through this in reference to the sculptures at Ingraham Park. Yeah, and we had some issues there where we actually were -- we refinished those sculptures and brought them back to life. But I need to know that staff has all the necessary tools to make sure that we, again -- we're acquiring artwork, and I know that when they're in the private right-of-way, that they're responsible. But for example, these types of sculptures, the last thing I want is to have a sculpture that we acquire and it's...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Correct.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: We feel the same way.

Vice Mayor Lago: In horrible...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Absolutely.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: That was an instance...

Vice Mayor Lago: Shape.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Where we got them as a temporary...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Exhibit and then went back and acquired them permanently, so the paint on it is really for a temporary exhibit. But we're working with the artist and his representatives now to make sure that it's -- the paint can be permanent. And we're going through that with the contract...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: The maintenance contract.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And we actually already have the quotes to do that -- that work. And we will be relocating some of those benches so when they are deinstalled from their present locations, they'll be taken out, fully restored and then placed back again.

Vice Mayor Lago: And my final point, you know, to Commissioner Mena's comments, there's this common misconception -- and I've spoken to some of the residents -- that these monies for Art in Public Places can be used for something else.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: No.

Vice Mayor Lago: They cannot be used for anything else. This is for either acquiring artwork or for having temporary art exhibits. That's the whole point, to bring culture to the City of Coral Gables, in turn, drawing people to the city and, you know, moving forward.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we are establishing a wonderful reputation of us being an art city in Miami-Dade County. And I'm very proud of it. And this is done -- I emphasize your point -- without using taxpayer dollars, so it's very, very good.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Mena: Can I -- really quickly, just to dovetail on Vice Mayor Lago's first comment. I just want to make sure when we're arguing it as a permanent acquisition like this. I don't know anything about our acquisition contractual terms and things like that. But whatever we can do, you know, from my perspective, if we're going to purchase an expensive work of art from an artist

that's going to be placed in a prominent location in our city, you know, we have some issues that'll be discussed later about maintenance and things like that, but you know, what sort of warranties do we get that assuming we do all the maintenance in the agreed upon fashion in which it should be done that the work of art will withstand the elements in South Florida which we all know are challenging, you know, between the sun and the rain and everything. So, to me, if you're going to pay to acquire something and put it out in the elements and there's an agreed upon way to maintain the piece and you do that and it still doesn't hold up, I have an issue with that. So, I just want to make sure that we're dotting our i's and crossing our t's on that front and really evaluating what representations and warranties these artists and/or their representatives make to us as far as the ability of the piece to withstand the elements.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: But that's a very good point. They provide us with the maintenance of -- that's part of the contract with them. We need to look at what it says about whether or not what they're telling us to do and if we do that whether or not there's any kind of recourse after that.

Vice Mayor Lago: Dona, because, for example, right now we're seeing that with the flowers from the Alice Aycock, the issue of -- the leaves are actually losing color. We're seeing that happening.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: We contacted her about that. She came down.

Vice Mayor Lago: And we're going to have to face that reality at some point in the near future.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We've contacted the artist and?

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Yes, we did.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: And she doesn't have a problem with it. She came down, looked at it. She said it was fine. And in her maintenance, I guess, it said that it would fade a certain percentage.

Vice Mayor Lago: But for example, a sculpture of this magnitude...

Commissioner Mena: But if that was understood at the outset...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: I don't...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Right.

Commissioner Mena: Have an issue with it.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Right.

Commissioner Mena: But I think those things need to be fleshed out at the outset; everybody have an understanding of what sort of natural wear and tear can be expected. We should be comfortable with whatever that wear and tear...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Right.

Commissioner Mena: And if...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Correct.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Most...

Commissioner Mena: We do everything we've agreed that we're going to do to maintain it and it still doesn't hold up, there's a problem. At that point...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: That's...

Commissioner Mena: Not to get too lawyer-y on it, but at that point, it was a misrepresentation to us about the ability of the piece to withstand the elements in which it will be placed.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Right.

Commissioner Mena: So, I just want to make sure between Miriam's office and your office that we negotiate whatever we can to be protected. Because the last thing I want...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Commissioner Mena: Is for us to do everything Vice Mayor Lago suggested, and the thing is still...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Right.

Commissioner Mena: Not in good condition in a few years.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Particularly, down here.

Vice Mayor Lago: For example...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: It's so hard.

Vice Mayor Lago: Like Commissioner Mena mentioned, the elements. You see a beautiful sculpture like this -- I'm not very familiar with the artist -- but if you look at a sculpture like this and you see the colors that they're using, these colors and the elements here in South Florida, the salt, I mean, it's going to be a tough situation I promise you in a year to a year and a half getting beaten down every single day by the sun. We're going to be back here in this Commission or we're going to get an email -- this Commission's going to get an email from residents saying, hey, listen -- just like the Alice Aycock flowers. You're seeing that they're starting to look a little bit worn out.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: The Art Acquisition Fund cannot be used for routine maintenance, but it can be used for extraordinary maintenance.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: So, you know, if ten years down the line these things start to fall into disrepair -- and they may -- that money is available for extraordinary maintenance, so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And it's...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: We need to tighten up the...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Yeah. And I just want to say, just realistically, most pieces that are painted pieces have about a five- to ten-year lifespan, depending on what the paint and the method is. And that's been being expanded because of technology and the way that these materials have progressed through time. So, we work with conservators. We're working with a conservator when we do the pieces for the Hank Willis Thomas benches. So, it's not uncommon for a piece to need that type of treatment after about five to ten years.

Commissioner Mena: But I -- you know, I think that should be a significant factor in the type of pieces that are selected. If we know that pieces that are painted in certain colors and things have less of a lifespan, then frankly, I'd rather -- if we're going to spend money on these pieces and put them in public, I'd rather see them last. We've all...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Right.

Commissioner Mena: Listen, all of us have traveled to places all over the world where there have been outdoor public pieces of art that have withstood much more than five to ten years and were designed to age in a certain fashion that is acceptable. So, if you're telling me that these types of painted pieces don't have as much of a shelf life, maybe we should be going the direction of pieces that do. Again, I'm no...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: The piece has a shelf life.

Commissioner Mena: Expert on art.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: It's the preservation of them. Just like with a building, you know, you still need to clean your building. You need to make repairs as they come up. So, it's similar to other pieces of property.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Note taken, and do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Keon: I think it was moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it. I think someone already moved it. I'll move it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Vice Mayor Lago: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Keon: Are they ever going to get the Alice Aycock flowers, the mist working on those flowers?

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Yes. Yes, we -- you know what we had to do? We had to go back to the gentleman, the company that made it, and he's going to be maintaining it. We have...

Commissioner Keon: So...

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Have a contract with the manufacturer.

Commissioner Keon: When will the mist be able to be turned on? When are we going to...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: We're in the very final stages of -- it's already gone through Procurement. We're just waiting for that last little piece of signed paperwork, and then he'll be able to get out there...

Commissioner Keon: And then...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Hopefully, within the...

Commissioner Keon: It'll be on?

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Next month.

Commissioner Keon: I mean, I think once the mist is on and it's wet and it has -- you know, it's in its entirety, it will look better than it does currently just sitting there.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: Yeah.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And we're also working with...

Commissioner Keon: It will look better.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Public Works to have greater illumination on it, so that's...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Progressing as well.

Historic Preservation Officer Spain: (INAUDIBLE)

Commissioner Keon: I asked you, I don't know, two meetings ago about doing something for the Coral Gables TV on contemporary art pieces. Somebody showed me something that you did, which wasn't at all what I had asked you to do. But I asked you -- ask is that on all of the contemporary art pieces, that you put together a program or -- for Coral Gables TV, not just for YouTube, but for the TV that will be shown that talked about or explained each of these pieces. Now, there are about -- many, many, many people in this community that certainly do understand it and do see it. But we have a lot of people as we move from what has traditionally been considered art, which is fountains in the city, into more contemporary art who are troubled by this. I think that if people would know the story of the piece and understand it, it will make it easier as we go forward in our art acquisition.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: You're absolutely right.

Commissioner Keon: So...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: And CGTV has spoken with us about that piece being kind of an introductory piece so now we can do dedicated pieces to individual pieces, just as your -- as you...

Commissioner Keon: When will you do -- when...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Suggest.

Commissioner Keon: When would you anticipate doing the introductory piece as to the Hank Willis Thomas thought bubbles? I mean, people -- I've had a lot of people say to me, oh, it's made such a nice bench. And I say, well, it's more than a bench.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: It is.

Commissioner Keon: You know, and...

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: We'll talk to CGTV and arrange it.

Commissioner Keon: Please.

Arts and Culture Specialist Cathers: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: Let me say also that we have an engineering firm that will take a look at the art to make sure it's stable and it's resistant to hurricanes...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

City Manager Iglesias: Since it's exterior.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.