

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-7
May 20, 2025
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

Acting City Manager, Joe L. Gomez

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Finance Director, Diana Gomez

Assistant Finance Director, Paula Rodriguez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-7

A Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager to formulate a plan to eliminate the annual solid waste fee. (Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item F-7.

City Attorney Suarez: F-7 is a Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager to formulate a plan to eliminate the annual solid waste fee.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. So, this is something that I have been advocating for some time. I think the message residents sent this election was that they wanted relief. This is – we got about 35 percent of the way there last year, kind of at the last minute. So, I wanted to put this on here so that we can get staff to give us a plan to truly consider and see if there

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is a path moving forward going into this solid waste fee season, if we can get it accomplished. So, I'm asking for your support on this.

Mayor Lago: Is there any public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Trying to figure out how many years I've lived here. When we moved to Coral Gables, when we bought our house, we didn't pay for garbage, we didn't have to take care of the swale. The city would come, water it, mow it, take care of everything. We didn't have a fire fee, all that has been added through the years. I think what we're talking about people, retired people somewhere around from this morning, there are people that are really hurting in this city and the way we've done it is nickel and diming because that's what it is, nickel and diming, the fire fee and the this the that, that I remember the Mayor talking about retired people not being able to do this or that when we are talking about something before. This would be a good thing to do.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor. Can I get a motion please.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll move it.

Commissioner Castro: I'll second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I was going to second.

Mayor Lago: She seconded. Let me have Commissioner Castro speak first. Trying to follow protocol.

Commissioner Castro: I think this is a great idea. I think we took a great step last time we reduced the fee. I wasn't completely in agreeance with it, but now moving forward the money will come from somewhere and I think this is the perfect way to give back to the community without lowering the millage in a more fair way.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I was going to second it, if I can make a friendly amendment that staff needs to also look at, and I spoke with our Solid Waste, I should say I asked our Solid Waste Director to look at some options to help us reduce the cost of being able to do pick-up, such as, should we have an outside location where landscapers can put green waste which would then eliminate tipping fee if we can potentially turn that into bio-char or mulch, things of that nature. So, if we're going to take a look at reducing cost for homeowners, we need to holistically really look at reducing cost for homeowners by reducing the cost of this pick-up, because we have so much in the way of pass-through dumping that occurs in our city and if we have – there are very

few people that they do their own lawn anymore. So, this type of pick-up from the landscapers can be dropped off at a location, such as at 72nd Avenue, where we have a railhead and it can be trained on down, we will substantially reduce the cost that we have in our city and be able to control our budget a little bit more. So, I'm just going to go through some high-level look at some of the numbers that we're talking about. The trash and yard waste are almost half, half of our budget, and most of that is green waste. So, if we're not tipping that we will help bring down costs substantially. So, I think we need to have a holistic look at this in order to bring down cost and we can pass those on to residents who then have their landscaper drop it off at, I'm using 72nd Avenue as an example, but we need our staff to come up with options and plans to be able to bring down costs altogether. Then we can take it a step at a time. Originally, I brought this motion last year to reduce our waste fees because it was a means of giving tax relief to some of the folks that are suffering the most. Instead of having to pay close to \$900 per year, because this has been an ever-escalating cost, it also is an ever-escalating cost on our budget. When you look at how much we pay for hauling waste in our city, we're talking, see if I put this number down here, \$13.7 million dollars in costs. Okay. We have a \$7.5 million dollar deficit from what we collect on it, so we're in the hole. We need to try to make the hole smaller if we're going to really provide true tax relief. If you're reducing the bill that goes in the direction in the envelope in the mail but not also reducing the cost on the other end, we are now taking it away from sidewalks, capital improvements, debt service, everything else, so it's actually a tax increase instead of a decrease. So that's my friendly amendment.

Commissioner Fernandez: I accept your friendly amendment.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: As amended, I suppose, or as modified by the Vice Mayor, I think the original idea makes sense. It's really not controversial. We are asking for a plan from the City Manager to eliminate something that provides direct relief to our residents. This is much more consistent with what I was saying, maybe inarticulately, rather than going to DOGE, right, just us start looking within with creativity ways of saving money.

Mayor Lago: Alright. If I may. I think it's a great idea, but it's a dream, and I'll give you an example. Before the election, politically motivated, brought before the Commission, and forced upon our staff was the dream of buying the Garden of our Lord, \$24 million dollars, and it was a resolution that was proffered here and it said, by Commissioner Menendez, let's buy, let's have staff figure out a way to buy the Garden of our Lord, \$24 million dollars. I said, stop, do we have \$24 million dollars. Oh yes, we do, in the reserves. So, I asked, are we going to have Crystal Academy be our tenant now, is that what we're going to do now? We are going to buy a \$24 million dollar property and keep Crystal there? Don't worry about it. The comment was, I remember exactly, I have full faith and confidence in staff, they'll figure it out. I've been talking

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about doing this for I don't even know for how long. Let me give you the facts so you understand the numbers. Okay. Eliminating the waste fee would create a fundamental inequity in how we fund essential services in our city, by the way, I'm in favor of it, let's get rid of the waste fee. Single-family homes receive a city provided waste collection, meanwhile multi-family and commercial properties are required to contract with private providers, and they pay for those services out of their pocket. Eliminating the residential waste fee would mean one group receives the service for free, while the other continues to bear the full cost. That's not equitable. Even more concerning is the proposal to absorb those costs into the General Fund. If that were to happen all Coral Gables taxpayers, including those who don't receive city waste services, would end up subsidizing it through their property taxes. That's not how responsible or equitable budgeting works. Waste fees are user-based for a reason. Those who benefit from a service should be the ones who fund it. Let's get to the numbers. Planning to eliminate the waste fee means eliminating a reoccurring revenue stream, one that currently generates \$6.2 million and subsidizes a total of \$13.7 million in waste collection cost. The \$500 that we pay every month, \$500 and change, brings us \$6.2 million a year, but we're subsidizing a total cost of \$13.7 million coming out of General Fund. So, if we got rid of the waste fee, we would be spending \$13.7 million dollars out of the General Fund. Remember when we were talking about parks, Phillips, another cut, another cut to parks, another cut to projects, another cut, you can't make it up, you've got to get the money from somewhere. I have worked closely with staff to analyze both the cost and the long-term impacts. The conclusion is clear. This change would have a devastating effect in our current and future budgets. We need to make fiscally intelligent decisions, not politically convenient ones, case in point, save the Garden of our Lord, which never came back to us. You know why, because staff knows that it was a pipe dream, it was a political move. Every action we take has consequences and this particular decision would carry serious financial repercussions over time. Mr. Clerk, roll the tape.

City Clerk Urquia: If Cable TV can run the video for the Mayor.

[Video Playing]

Mayor Lago: This is what we're facing. I took this video. I took this video. That is 57th Avenue on the other side, that is the unincorporated Dade side, that is 57th Avenue and Red Road, Miller and Red. Gentleman is crossing across the street, nice gentleman, landscaper, and I have ten videos like this, I just don't want to bore you, its already super late. Goes over there, drops it right there on Bird Road on the corner on Miller, just drops it there and then it becomes the responsibility of the City of Coral Gables. Poor guy fell, working hard. Laugh now, but the truth is, and we've talked about this, Paula, you and I, this is millions and millions, and millions of dollars of illegal dumping. Every gardener knows, end your day in Coral Gables, throw it away. Before the blogs go crazy, I'm not saying to eliminate the garbage pits, because that's the next thing they'll say. What I am saying is that we need to be honest with ourselves. The Vice Mayor brought up

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something that we've been working on for some time, but it never got traction, and I will be making it a priority with Mr. Peter Iglesias. We need to divert all the green matter from the trash pits. That's why we work so hard to cardboard, to plastic bags, to do all those things. We are trying to eliminate cost. You are not going to be able to find a plug for \$13.7 million dollars, but you know what I'm going to do, I'm going to vote in favor of it, because at the end of the day, its just like the Garden of our Lord, \$24 million dollars. The plan that you are going to bring us is going to say, you've got to cut all these capital projects or you've got to raise taxes, but what we really have to do is use 72nd Avenue as a landing pad, get South Miami, West Miami, Pinecrest, use it as a location for garbage, have them bring their green matter and use the char system that I've brought here before and the Vice Mayor and I have talked about it. They are even doing it in Tallahassee, and they are doing it in other cities, where all that green matter goes through a machine, and it becomes a product that is used in concrete an aggregate. It is being done. So, if you want to save millions of dollars and stop paying huge tipping fees, because this goes all to the landfill, you've got to take decisive action. You have to lead. The garbage cost is only going up as the cost of the new incinerator comes into play, the cost of all the landfills being filled. So, I'm in favor of this, but staff, may I have you come up just one second. I'm going to ask a simple question. Do you think its possible you are going to come to me in a month after doing an investigation and find \$13.7 million dollars' worth of savings?

Finance Director Gomez: No.

Mayor Lago: Your option is going to be one, cut services or raise taxes, correct.

Finance Director Gomez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Okay. We're done. I'm ready to vote in favor because I'll do the exercise, I'll do the exercise just like we did with the Garden of our Lord, but its not politics. Let's take decisive action with Peter, the Commission, sit in a room, drill down, and divert the green matter, which is millions and millions and millions, by the way, you can divert all of that from going into the revenue, into the garbage stream and you can actually do something amazing. I'm all in. Yes, Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, let me clarify. What I'm hoping staff will come back with is a way for us to lower the fee by incentivizing people to get their landscapers to haul all this stuff out to a dump site that our city can provide, at 72nd Avenue or whatever location you all deem appropriate. So, we are not going to have as many trucks out on the road, we're not going to have these eyesores on our swales where people bring all the waste from everywhere else in the county and dump it in Coral Gables. We've been fighting this. It happens in the North Gables. Every single week we get one of these pictures of something being dumped in our city – a couch, a this, a that, dumped in our city because everybody knows we pick it up.

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Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, excuse me, I thought you were done. I apologize.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's okay.

Mayor Lago: I agree wholeheartedly with you, wholeheartedly. I agree with you. If you notice that I'm passionate about this because I am, because this is the biggest opportunity for us to save money in the city, and I remember when we had our old garbage director here a few years ago, the gentleman, I forgot his name, Al Zamora, we had this conversation up here. Mr. Clerk, can you do me a favor.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir.

Mayor Lago: Through the Manager's office, for my colleagues, so we don't break the Sunshine Law. Can you pull Al Zamora's tapes, I think Diana was there and so was Paula, and we had like a long presentation here about the millions and millions and millions of dollars. I sponsored it, the millions of dollars in green matter and everybody was saying, oh Vince is going to take away our trash pits. I go, no, we'll keep the trash pits. By the way, I haven't had a trash pit in seven or eight years. Its liberating. Its liberating. It's the best thing ever. I got rid of mine when they dumped 200 roof tiles illegally. Our city wouldn't pick it up. I had to put it in plastic bags so they would pick it up, about six or seven years ago. Its liberating, by the way, and I still pay the same garbage fee as everybody else does and I don't have a trash pit. So my point is, Mr. Clerk, can you put together all this information so that Commissioner Lara and my colleagues here can see what we talked about which was before Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Fernandez were on the dais, and we had a conversation in regards to, how can we save money so that we can apply it to what's going to be the outcome of this resolution which is going to be the way to find revenue is to attack the green matter which is being illegally dumped in our city, and instead of it being dumped in the trash, it gets dumped and recycled into something better.

Finance Director Gomez: If I may.

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am, of course.

Finance Director Gomez: At this Commission meeting I was going to bring the special assessment for solid waste to set the maximum rate that will then come to a public hearing in September. Through the Manager's office we chose not to bring it to this since the discussion was going to be had, but we must bring it to the next one in order to meet the count's deadlines in order to be able to set a special assessment for solid waste. So, that item will be coming to the City Commission at the next Commission in order for us to make the deadlines, to put it on the tax bill whatever the rate is to be chosen. So, in order to recoup the full cost of solid waste, if they are choosing to also do a discounted rate of some percentage, the rate would have to be about \$1,300, \$1,350, maybe the regular rate and \$1,275, something like that, quick numbers, for the discounted rate, based on

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the amount of people that pay early versus put it on their tax bill; and that would recoup the entire amount needed to cover the operations, to cover the cost of the solid waste, the \$13.8 number that the Mayor mentioned was the adopted budget, since then there was an amended budget, an amendment to the budget, so its more like \$14.1 million dollars, the cost of solid waste. So that's what would need to be charged in order to recoup the cost of the current services that we are providing. That is my recommendation. I would love to charge the full amount for what the services we would need that we are providing. We are providing the services that cost us about \$14.1 million dollars. I understand that is not the will of the Commission. Last year you reduced the rate from the full rate of \$938 to \$577, and \$550, if it was early payment. A number is going to come on the agenda next Commission meeting. Right now, it is tentatively place held with the \$550 and \$577.50 rate. So, I just kind of wanted to disclose that. That's the number. We cannot come up with a plan to reduce it any further in the next two to four weeks or whenever the next Commission meeting is, that will be able to be some kind of plan that would be feasible to determine a rate that could be charged less. Again, my recommendation, charge the full rate, pay for the services that we are providing. If that's not the will of the Commission, through the Manager's office we'll bring the \$550 and \$577.50 that was last year, but I just kind of wanted to put that out there. I don't see how there's going to be any – without just picking a number randomly to reduce the rate, I don't see how we are going to come up with a number in that little bit of time that would be of any kind of meaningful to say, we can do these services this way. We can't. We are subsidizing over \$7 million dollars currently for the services that we are providing. The services provided cost \$14.1 million dollars in fiscal 25's budget. I believe that would be the minimum of what fiscal 26's budget will be when we start bringing the budget forward. So, if we're only charging the \$550 and \$577.50, we are only bringing just under \$6.2 million dollars. We are finding the other – other things are not happening because we have to pay the services. So, kind of just wanted to disclose that.

Mayor Lago: If I may, and this is the last comment I have to make. I want everybody to understand very clearly, this is simple fundamental math. Every time you cut, something's got to give and what gives capital projects give, there's no other way – where are you going to get the money from? So, you can keep cutting, keep cutting, its perfectly fine, but at one point we are going to say, there's no capital projects to fund. So, we have to make the decision and the tough decision is, either we stay par for the course, or do we find an opportunity like other cities are doing, like I've mentioned for two or three years now, to go out there and find a way to recycle the green matter so it doesn't go to the trash and we pay tipping fees. I don't know how else to say it.

Finance Director Gomez: Respectfully, if I may.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Finance Director Gomez: So, there's only so much recurring money that we send to Capital, so that's going to run out very soon anyway and this is recurring revenue. We have to have a balanced budget, so all of our recurring expenditures have to be covered with recurring revenues. So, at some point, and I don't have the number of recurring amounts of money that we sent towards Capital, but its only the recurring part of Capital that can be reduced. At some point, we are going to deplete it and then we have nowhere else but then to start cutting services in order to take the cut of a recurring revenue such as the solid waste fee.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, in the exercise, I'm going to ask you to look at two other things; one, every single year we have increased tipping fees, just like COLA, goes up every single year. Consider adding that in so that an informed decision can be made. Number two, if we are able to move forward and we may not be able to do it this year, but in the future to have an incentive program for folks, to have their landscapers drop off their green waste a city designated location, is it possible to have a two-tiered plan? You have no trash pit, your landscaper hauls it, you can have a two-tiered plan.

Finance Director Gomez: I don't know how we would track a two-tiered plan.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: I think – I don't want to get into the operations because its not my area of command any longer, so I don't want to dictate somebody else's area, right, but for an operational purpose what happens in that sense is, if you and Commissioner Castro are neighbors and you chose not to have your trash pit, but Commissioner Castro does, or vise versa, I don't want to put you on the trash pit list, right, the crew still has to drive down your street. So, this operation really needs to be reviewed, and a discussion needs to be had, and the Commission has to really decide on how that operation works for the community. There are many options to get there, but its not as simple as just incentivizing, it really has to be programs that are thought through and thought as to what equipment is needed and how those changes impact the operation overall. So, you and I have had many discussions on how to get there and there are lots of creative ways to get there, but the same phase I've used before, as long as the operation cost \$14.1 million dollars, we need to fund \$14.1 million dollars, and it will not take – even if a decision was made today to change the operation, it will probably take at least a full year to get to change equipment, to reroute things, to change the community, even when we went to cardboard boxes, we gave like a year of warnings and extensions so that residents could get accustomed to it. So, my concern with this direction, which I appreciate, its just direction is that what is the expectation of the Commission of when a change would come. This change is not going to happen overnight. We are going to have to set a fee next Commission meeting that will be billed out, and we will be presenting you a budget that has increases for COLA, increases for operating cost, and that \$14.1 million dollars will be a larger number guaranteed.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I understand. So, you know many different options, present some of them, and we can talk off-line about some of these options.

Mayor Lago: May I ask out of courtesy of the sponsor. Why don't we do this. Why don't we call a Sunshine meeting, the five of us sit down with the new Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk, Solid Waste, the entire team, and we have a sit down conversation with Sustainability, Finance, everybody comes and we sit down and have a conversation and we spend three or four hours on a Saturday or whenever they want to do it and we sit down and have a conversation about, how do we finally address this. How do we attack this problem and put a timeline of six months to find alternatives to really addressing, and I know I keep going back to the green matter, because that's the low hanging fruit. When they see the report that you put together by Al Zamora that Al Zamora put together years ago, it was right in our face.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Fifty percent.

Mayor Lago: It's a huge number. It's a huge number. By the way, my landscaper takes the landscaping. I know that we have weekend warriors, and I respect the weekend warriors. I love to do my own landscaping. I put it in a bag, but we have to find a solution, you have to find a solution. But I think the best thing to do – I will vote in favor of this today. I love this idea. I think it's a great idea, but we've got to find a plan, because we vote in favor of it, they can't deliver, just like you couldn't deliver, if I may, on buying the Garden of our Lord, because we didn't have \$24 million dollars. So, Commissioner, I'm asking you, if you'd like we take a vote on this, and I will ask you to set a Sunshine meeting so we can collaborate on working to finding a solution to fund the garbage.

Commissioner Fernandez: I agree with you. I think we talked about it last time, it just never materialized. The question is, obviously, I think we are late in the game at this point for this year. I think maybe the direction of this resolution is to start coming up with options so that when we have the Sunshine meeting, we have different potential options as to what can be done. I know this was done at one point. It was only one option provided. I think the Vice Mayor's recommendation, I think the recommendation the Mayor has made, there are different options out there on ways that we can streamline the process, reduce our cost, and explore what other municipalities are doing as well. We're not the only ones that do provide this kind of service. I'm sure that nationally there are many municipalities that offer this type of service and have found ways to reduce their cost, which at the end of the day, like the Mayor says, that's the path forward. So, realistically, how much time do you think it would take to come up with concrete options so that we can have a real sit-down Sunshine meeting with options to consider so that we can forge a path forward.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: That would not necessarily be my area, right, but I do have some understanding of it, short of Hermes being in the room. I believe that this is a three-prong discussion.

[Commission laughing at off-camera incident]

Mayor Lago: Sorry about that. Sorry Paula.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: It's okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'm glad we didn't get that on camera.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: So, the meetings that the Mayor has referred to are Sunshine meetings where there were discussions at length about best practices and options that are available to the city, right, so that is one. One for us to explore the options, but really the second one is what is the community and the Commission willing to accept as an option, because there are many ways to get there. There are ways that have not been appealing to the city. There are other creative ways that maybe we haven't explored. So, this is, I think, not just in one meeting, right. Like if you tell us, in the summer come to us with options, I think that what's going to come to you is some discussion points and things for us to study and look at. I think this is probably a six to year-long process of really deciding what the Commission wants. That would be my opinion.

Mayor Lago: May I Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: I'm going to ask for a favor, okay. We have a new Manager starting, okay. I would like; this has been one of my biggest unaccomplished goals. This could be one of the biggest things in the history of the city we can accomplish, literally, big, huge, because it's a beautification issue, it's a financial issue, and by the way, we don't realize that the future is only going to get worse for us because the cost of garbage removal if you read what's out there, its everywhere, its only going up. So, I would like for Commissioner Fernandez in the next two meetings, maybe three meetings from now, come back to us and say, I sat down with the Manager, we are looking at the following consultant. We are going to hire a consultant to put together a plan. The plan may say, hey, you've got to get rid of garbage pits, to save, I'm just making up a number, to save X amount or if you keep garbage pits you get this much, or if you go and you take all the green matter like the Vice Mayor said, and you put it on 72nd Avenue, you save \$10 million dollars, and then you can use that money, I'm just giving you. I would love – we have too many departments, too many people. I think we need somebody to come in, herd the cats, bring everybody together and say, you really want to do this, you really want to keep backdoor service. I don't want to get emails tomorrow, please – keeping the backdoor service, we are keeping the trash pits, we are doing everything, this

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is what I recommend that you do. This is the plan, and we have Sunshine meetings, and we talk about it, and how far are we willing to go to bring this down. That's what I think is the only way, because I don't have the bandwidth. I don't think anybody here has the bandwidth to sit down or the expertise to sit down and drill down on something of this magnitude.

Commissioner Fernandez: So then, what we'll do is, let's move on this. I will sit down with the incoming Manager and once we've come up with suggestions, we will come back to the Commission, no later than August.

Mayor Lago: I'm ready to go. Are we going to move on this. If you want to take a vote on this, I'll vote in favor of this.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Chair. There's been a lot of talk here about diverting the green waste to somewhere else, also beautification, what does that mean exactly? Are we talking about eliminating trash pits, is that what we're talking about.

Mayor Lago: If I will answer you. You heard me say over the last ten minutes, I said it four times, I didn't want to eliminate trash pits. I don't want a sound bite for Political Cortadito, please, I don't want one, okay. What I do want is to address this problem. If I may. You asked me a question, I'm answering you. Paula and Diana were here, and the Clerk will tell you, this is something that I've been talking about for years. I've asked the Clerk to provide through the Manager the videos for the Al Zamora presentations that we did here that talked about everything, when there was an uproar about getting rid of trash pits and I had to basically say, we are not getting rid of trash pits. We are trying to find a way to save money. All we want to do is see what the options are we have on the table to remain with the trash pits and keep the backdoor service, but to be more efficient to try to get this – we are being taken advantage of. I just put up a video, I don't know if you saw it, that I took myself of how people are dumping all over Miami-Dade County in the City of Coral Gables. I took that video. I have another ten videos just like that.

Commissioner Castro: I'm still talking. Okay. What is diverting green waste and beautification means then. Paint a picture for me.

Mayor Lago: Okay. If you see the Al Zamora tapes and the tapes where I brought here with the Vice Mayor, a company – what they do is, they take all your green matter and they basically make it into bio-char. The biochar then is used or sold or given away to concrete companies who use it as aggregate. This is product that instead of going into the landfill and costing us money, because there is a tipping fee. By the way, the largest amount of money that we spend in garbage is as a result of the green matter that goes into the landfill. Its unnecessary going into the landfill. So, what other cities do is, they require their landscapers to take it away, they don't offer the services that we do. They offer two or three times a year bulk pick-up. We offer it every week. This is the

Rolls Royce of services. So, what it would look like would be 72nd Avenue, we could even monetize that other cities are in the same boat – South Miami, West Miami, Pinecrest. If we can give them an alternative to dump their green matter at 72nd Avenue, we turn it into biochar and its completely diverted from the waste stream, remember when I brought those companies here. I showed the videos how it works; Miami-Dade County was using it; Tallahassee is using it already. This is not something new. This is years old. As a matter of fact, I met with a gentleman last week in my office who brought me the same information. So that is what you have to divert it from the waste stream and that way you can lower your tipping fees in the garbage in the dumps. That's what I'm talking about.

Commissioner Castro: That sounds like a great idea. So, what would be the function of the trash pits if we are not planning on taking them off?

Mayor Lago: Again, you can leave your trash pits, if you want to throw a table there, if you want to throw a chair, if you want to throw a sink, if you want to throw something in there that you are going to throw away. I don't have to do that. I just put it literally on my driveway and it gets taken away. I don't find a need for a trash pit, but I'm not advocating to remove anybody's trash pits. I know how sensitive and how much ownership people have over trash pits, and by the way, my yard looks beautiful without a trash pit, just so you guys know.

Commissioner Fernandez: And Mr. Mayor, just to clarify for Commissioner Castro. The plan would in essence be, and again, this is just a concept, to have the landscapers take the waste and drop it off at a city location. So right there we are saving money because we're not having to pick it up, so that's item number one of saving money, that's one less pick-up that we have to make; and two, we are not taking it to a location where we can change that into something that's usable that we can then potentially sell. So, there is a revenue stream for us there as well while still offering the services that we offer. Again, I'm sure that even since that presentation took place, there may be other concepts. I know that you were exploring some as well that you had talked about, so I'm sure there are other companies that have come about with new ideas and new things to do over the last few years that we may be able to explore.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. Sierra Club and all throughout this incinerator program has been very well advertised. Instead of incinerating or instead of putting it in a landfill, which we're running out of land and prices in the northeast United States are north of \$75 per ton. We're paying what, \$50, \$45 - \$50 per ton, not only can it be bio-charring used for cement; biochar and however they want to recycle it, mulching it, etc., can also be sold to farmers to supplement their land. It's a great source of nutrition. Can also be used by the landscape companies that sell the potted plants for potting soil. Its better than what we're buying right now in bags at Home Depot. I...used to offer for free to people, okay. We can turn this into a resource, we can turn it into an income stream. I do have videos from other folks too, we can have our Sunshine meeting,

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we can have our individual meetings, but we can turn this into a positive thing. When I get rid of furniture and stuff, many times I put it on my driveway as well, rather than digging up the grass and uglifying my front yard.

Commissioner Fernandez: And through the Mayor. We also have a program here in the city where we recycle Christmas Trees and we turn those into mulch, so we're saving money in having to purchase mulch by just picking up people's Christmas Trees and turning them into mulch.

Mayor Lago: Anything else for the good of the order. So, we have a motion and a second. Can I get a call, can I call a roll.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: So, if I may, Commissioner Fernandez is going to meet with the Manager, sit down with the team and start working on something that he can come back in a few meetings and say, this is what we're looking at. We'll have a Sunshine meeting at everyone's available time just to talk about these opportunities to see how we can hopefully deliver a plan in the future. I also want to see what other cities are doing, because I know other cities are doing, and I will send all the consultants that I've met to the Manager's office. Okay.

Finance Director Gomez: And so, for setting the fee for next year, since this won't happen by then, do I have the right to set the full fee, to recoup the full \$14.1 million dollars.

Mayor Lago: You have no choice. I would love to do it now, but obviously, we have no choice.

Finance Director Gomez: So, in terms of bringing the fee – I need to bring the fee, the maximum rate, the fee that I'm going to set, so.

Mayor Lago: I'm of the belief that you have to move forward, there is no other choice. We don't have the time.

Finance Director Gomez: Right. Right. So, the same fee as last year; the full the \$1,300 to recoup the whole \$14 million dollars, the \$550 rate?

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*Agenda Item F-7 – Resolution directing the City Manager to formulate a plan to eliminate
The annual solid waste fee*

[Date]

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Mayor Lago: I would be in favor of \$550, keeping the \$550. If you jump to 13, you're crushing people right now. I could never do that.

Finance Director Gomez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: I know you want the \$1,300, trust me, I want to give it to you. You caught me off guard. Almost like Hermes, sneaking in on me there.