

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-4
February 25, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Patrick Salerno

City Attorney, Craig E. Leen

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Zeke Guilford, Representing Temple Judea

Rabbi Peter Knobel, Temple Judea

E-4 [Start: 9:48:05 a.m.]

Conditional Use with Site Plan Review. An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida requesting conditional use with site plan review pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review", Division 4, "Conditional Uses", and Article 4, "Zoning Districts", Division 2, "Overlay and Special Purpose Districts", Section 4-204, "Special Use (S) District", for an addition to an existing religious institution within a Special Use (S) zoned district, for the property commonly referred to as "Temple Judea" and legally described as Lots 1-31, Block 135,1 Riviera Section Part 9 (5500 Granada Boulevard), Coral Gables, Florida; and including required conditions; providing for severability, repealer, codification, and an effective date.

Mayor Cason: Item E-4 is also an Ordinance on First Reading, which is a conditional use with site plan review, Mr. Manager.

City Manager Salerno: Thank you Mayor. This item is a Conditional Use with Site Plan Review. An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida requesting conditional use with site plan review pursuant to Zoning Code Article 3, "Development Review", Division 4, "Conditional Uses", and Article 4, "Zoning Districts", Division 2, "Overlay and Special Purpose Districts", Section 4-204, "Special Use (S) District", for an addition to an existing religious institution within a Special Use (S) zoned district, for the property commonly referred to as "Temple Judea" and legally described as Lots 1-31, Block 135, Riviera Section Part 9 (5500 Granada Boulevard), Coral Gables, Florida; and including required conditions; providing for severability, repealer, codification, and an effective date.

Mayor Cason: Do we have any speaker cards?

City Clerk Foeman: No Mr. Mayor.

Mr. Guilford: Good morning again. Mr. Mayor, Commissioners for the record Zeke Guilford with law offices at 400 University Drive. It gives me great pleasure to be here representing Temple Judea on this application for you. A couple people here in the audience, I have Raul Rodriguez, who is the architect, Jim Siegel and Joe Greenberg with the Congregation and Construction Committee, and Tim Plummer our traffic consultant. What I'd like to do before I get into the presentation, Mr. Mayor is, have Rabbi Knobel come up and say a couple words, if that's alright.

Mayor Cason: OK. Mr. Clerk does he have to be sworn in?

City Clerk Foeman: Yes Mr. Mayor.

Rabbi Knobel: It's a real pleasure to be back so soon. Thank you for the gracious welcome you gave me the last time when I had the opportunity to open the Commission with a prayer.

City Attorney Leen: Excuse me Rabbi, I'm sorry Rabbi, I know that you have an oath to God to tell the truth, but we have to...

Mayor Cason: As a formality you have to be sworn in.

City Attorney Leen: We have to technically...

Mayor Cason: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Foeman: Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the statements you present today will be the truth and nothing but the truth?

Rabbi Knobel: Yes.

City Clerk Foeman: Thank you.

Rabbi Knobel: As you are well aware Temple Judea is an important religious institution in the City of Coral Gables. In addition we just celebrated last year our 65th anniversary, in fact we are the only synagogue in Coral Gables. The project we are asking you to approve is a very important project to us, it really enables us to serve our children well by making it possible for us to serve both the little ones in a space that is appropriate to them and the older ones that need a different kind of space, and we are very hopeful that you will approve this project which will ensure that we are able to serve our current population in an appropriate way. Thank you very much for allowing me to be here.

Mr. Guilford: Mr. Mayor, I'd just like to explain the application and then kind of walk you through the board. What this is, is we are not expanding any student's enrollment; we are not trying to increase our population. What happens now there are only a certain number of rooms at the Temple and in the morning they are used by young preschool kindergarten children, so you have the little tables, the little chairs, and then in the afternoon someone has to come in and move those chairs out and move adult chairs back in. So this is actually an application so that the kids have their rooms, the adults and teens have their rooms. So, I'm going to take a moment and walk you through the site plan. What we have before you is actually three pages, we have the existing synagogue area that is not going to be touched, in the middle we have the existing classrooms right there, which what's going to happen there new windows, those classrooms do not meet current Code requirements, we are going to improve those, add restrooms, etc., and then the new addition at the end, which actually fronts toward Ponce Middle School. On the first floor addition we will add four classrooms at the end and a drop off, covered drop off for the children there. Then on the second floor, obviously we are going to need to add an elevator and we'll have five classrooms on the second floor. So a total of nine additional classrooms; and then when we get through hopefully this is what you'll have as the addition. As a matter of fact, this year a few months ago, we did in fact have the building declared historic because it's a Morris Lapidus design building. So this site plan because it has to go through the Planning Department, but because its historic it also had to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Board. They unanimously approved it, it went to the Planning Board as well. They unanimously approved it, and we would ask that you approve it as well. If you have any questions we are more than happy to answer them.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Just a quick comment. I moved right down the street from the Temple and they are great neighbors, fantastic neighbors, it's a benefit to the community for sure.

Mayor Cason: There were no traffic issues?

Mr. Guilford: No, actually because we are not adding any additional people. We have it, there are some conditions in the staff report adding conditions, just if something happens we are having police people, we've agreed to those conditions.

Commissioner Keon: It appears you've added actually a better drop off arrangement, so you really appear to have improved the traffic circulation in that area. I would like to also commend the Temple, they educate a multitude of various faith children in our community and they've done it so well for so long.

Mayor Cason: OK. Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: Just a quick question. Mr. Guilford, have you had any issues in regards to the neighbors?- I can imagine...

Mr. Guilford: We actually had two neighborhood meetings; we had one earlier in the process before we actually even filed the application, we had two neighbors, one of the neighbors was actually on the corner. Her concerns, obviously queuing in the morning and she gets a double-whammy, she gets the Temple's traffic, but she also gets Ponce traffic, which is a lot heavier.

Commissioner Lago: She must be a lot happier with the proposed layout.

Mr. Guilford: And one of the things that we are proposing is the gate to the drop off opens at a certain time, so basic cars are queuing outside the gate, that gate is now open, so the cars can actually queue inside the parking area, so it should actually relieve her. She had no problem – we had a second meeting a couple of weeks before the Planning and Zoning Board and we had only one commercial neighbor come over to introduce himself, I'm your neighbor and glad to have you in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Lago: The reason why I ask is because I spoke to some of the residents that live adjacent to the Temple and they were actually very happy with the procedures and the fact that the Temple had taken their interest into consideration, so I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Guilford: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you very much. Alright that will close then, unless there is somebody else who wants to speak at the public hearing part. Any discussion?- if not we have a motion?

Commissioner Keon: I'll move the item.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Keon makes the motion.

Commissioner Lago: I'll second.

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Lago seconds it.

City Clerk

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Commissioner Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mr. Guilford: Thank you all very much.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

[End: 9:56:10 a.m.]