

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-12
July 9, 2024
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 Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Parking Director, Monica Beltran

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-12 [6:02 p.m.]

Discussion regarding postage signage on privately owned parking lots
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Item F-12.

Commissioner Fernandez: F-12 comes about it's a discussion regarding non-city owned parking lots and the signage, and I had asked the City Attorney and the Parking Director to kind of give us guidance following that video that went viral on social media regarding parking lots; and I know this was an item was heavily discussed prior to Commissioner Castro and I being on the agenda. There was one parking lot in particular that had signage that was similar to the city's and was very confusing. So, I open the floor to our Parking Director.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Just very briefly, Stephanie Throckmorton, Deputy City Attorney. Just to give you all some background and as to these particular lots, I'll defer to the Parking Director. But generally, a few years ago the city adopted some really extensive regulations

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regarding parking signage and invoices for parking on privately owned and operated parking lots. The following Legislative Session that was preempted almost entirely by the state, so we're very limited in what we have left in our code. We do have some signage requirements to make sure that rates are prominently posted. We do have some details allowed by the State Legislature language on invoices to be clear that they are not government issued citations, etc. But as to the particular lots that have been mentioned recently and whether or not they comply, I'll defer to the Parking Director, but we do have some requirements, but they have been paired down, thank you to our State Legislature.

Parking Director Beltran: Good afternoon, Monica Beltran, Parking Director. So, what we did was, we went out and looked and kind of surveyed private lots, in particular the one that was the source of the complaint and what we have found is that although the code says that rates must be prominently displayed on signs at entrance, that that was not the case. And in particular, I think...fell short to say exactly what the issue is here, because that particular lot it's a two-hour minimum, right. So, the pay station stated one rate and the QR Code, when you access it, said another rate. But the bottom line is that it was a minimum of \$25 to park there, with a minimum of two hours. So, we must be very clear, although we don't have the control over what they charge. We must make an effort to ensure that these rates are prominently, and that this one in particular where it's a two-hour minimum that that is stated, because it makes a huge difference, if next door there's a \$5 dollar lot and this other one is going to cost you \$25 minimum. And actually, when you're at that rate, you may as well valet park somewhere, even at the hotel. We did meet with one, one of my staff members met with one of the operators. They were very receptive. Prominently displayed to me is not at the pay station, because by then you've committed, and because many of these operators also use either a camera or they have somebody watching people, right, if you stay more than 15 minutes, you're either going to get one of those notices, which typically is \$55. So, you are correct Commissioner. We need to do something, and I suggest one of the things, like I said, we already did which was to reach out to some of them, but we need to enforce that which is in the code and to that effect. I think the most effective process would be to identify either through the licenses or the operators here. Luckily there are operators that manage various lots and reach out to them and aim at that based on the code. So, we're on it.

Mayor Lago: So, this is something that we dealt with five years ago, four years ago. This is nothing new. What you saw on social media is what I explained to everybody who wrote to me is Clickbait. The individual knew that you could park on the street for some of the cheapest rates in Miami-Dade County or you could park at the Aragon Parking Garage, a block away, but he decided to do a story on social media...so that he could make it seem as if he stated that the city was, a story about the city was misleading people, that there was a price for X amount here, and a price for X amount there. As the City Attorney told you, we were preempted by state statute. Anybody who parks there understands it very clearly. And I will tell you this, if you put a giant neon sign that

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says, this is a private lot, you're paying \$20 an hour here, or you could park for \$2 an hour on the street. What's the exact number, I don't want to say anything incorrectly, what's the hourly.

Parking Director Beltran: I know that we have a maximum of \$5, that might be \$4 or \$5.

Mayor Lago: But I mean off hours. How much is the hourly rate in that area.

Parking Director Beltran: Its about \$4 or \$5.

Mayor Lago: You could park in the Aragon Parking Garage.

Parking Director Beltran: The Aragon, yes, absolutely.

Mayor Lago: And people chose to park in that lot thinking they are going to run into a store, pick something up, and come back in. You want to know why, because that happened to me on 8th Street. I thought I was going to run in, grab something and run out, and they sit in their car in the lot, and they put a boot in your car the moment that you don't do it, and it also happened to my mother, and I use this as an example when we dealt with this five years ago. She is handicapped and she parked in the handicapped spot. She walked out after having both of her hips replaced and she was walking out with her walker with my father who is a physician. She made it down the block, they turned around to get something, there was a boot on the car. You even have to pay in the handicap parking spaces.

Parking Director Beltran: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: And people don't know that. So, this is a game that has been going on for a long time. The issue here is that our hands are tied to a certain extent.

Parking Director Beltran: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: And we could put a neon sign there that says hey, you are leaving the facility, you could potentially get a ticket if you don't pay. And what a lot of people do is they come back, and they'll call me, and they'll say, Vince, I got booted in this area, but I paid for parking. Look, I did pay for parking on my app.

Mayor Lago: And I say, yes, but that doesn't work, doesn't work.

Parking Director Beltran: There was a lot of signage, I have to tell you within. The signs were a little wordy, so people don't read them. However, in the disabled space, there was a disclaimer you have to pay for parking.

Mayor Lago: If you go back and I don't remember the exact conversation back and forth, I think the lawyer was Tony de Yurre, remember that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Tony de Yurre was the lawyer representing the applicant and we had probably, like four or five meetings on this, and we changed the language on the ticket, we changed the language on the street. We required on the sign, on the pay station.

City Attorney Suarez: We required Commission approval of their invoices for the fee.

Mayor Lago: Yes, everything.

Commissioner Fernandez: I remember that.

Mayor Lago: To the point that I was like, I don't know how this is going to be profitable, but obviously it's profitable because there is a proliferation and then they write you back on social media saying, you need to shut these people down. I go, we live in a free economy. This is a capitalist society. If somebody decides not to develop that lot or decides not to do something with that lot and they want to do a surface parking lot, people want to pay to park, they pay to park.

Parking Director Beltran: Remember I come from Miami Beach, they tow you.

Mayor Lago: They tow you.

Parking Director Beltran: \$150 if you don't pay at a private lot or you get one of these notices. So yes, we're preempted until a certain extent, there's not much we can do. This is, you know, free market.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Parking Director Beltran: Everybody has a right and the lots are very expensive, so people want to recover money if they are not developing them. That being said, people should be able to see rates at the entrance. Mind you here it's even better because our municipal lots have a distinct pretty sign. This particular sign, and I sent you copies, had a lot of signage just did not have that rate signage at the entrance.

Commissioner Castro: One of the questions that I got from Instagram, it was that if we could go ahead and control the valet parking prices. They are our vendor, right.

City Attorney Suarez: So, it depends. We have some that are part of our centralized valet and then we have others that are just permitted valet stations.

Parking Director Beltran: Right, some are permitted. They rent spaces from us, and they are private. And then in the BID on Miracle Mile and Giralda that's our vendor and \$12 to \$15 on the peak time, you can't get better than that.

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Mayor Lago: You can't get better than that.

Parking Director Beltran: Its not even worth looking for parking spaces to valet.

Mayor Lago: Its not even worth it. When they put that on social media that's why it's Clickbait, it's for clout, because you're telling me you can park in the Aragon Parking Garage, which is clean, its undercover, you can park your electric vehicle for some of the cheapest rates for charging.

Parking Director Beltran: And there's parking, there's available parking.

Commissioner Fernandez: And it's a block away.

Mayor Lago: It's a block away. It's even a better location than that parking space.

Parking Director Beltran: Absolutely. Actually, at the Colonnade, which is right across, the parking rate wasn't that crazy either. So, in reality you could walk down the street and get a \$12 or \$15 valet. They have options.

Mayor Lago: Anything else.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I guess the only thing I would say, thank you for going out there and being proactive and taking a look at the issue and would that fall under Code Enforcement or under your department to just keep track on these parking lots just make sure that things are being done the right way.

Parking Director Beltran: That would be Code, but I'm going to take the initiative to reach out to the operators.

Commissioner Fernandez: Perfect.

Parking Director Beltran: And ask for their collaboration, cooperation.

Commissioner Fernandez: I appreciate it.

Parking Director Beltran: To put that on site because actually it's a bad image for them as well.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.