

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
March 12, 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
Community Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Public Speaker(s)

Maite Halley
Maria Cruz
Sarah Gaglio
Lilly Azell
Eduardo Brunken

Agenda Item F-2 [11:40 a.m.]

Update on pickleball courts in Parking Garage 4
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: I'd like to see we get started with F-2.

City Clerk Urquia: One second sir. We're good to go.

Mayor Lago: Sir.

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Community Recreation Director: Thank you. We have a presentation. This is a follow up from the presentation that we, just a status update from what we presented a couple of meetings ago, and you wanted us to come back and work on the numbers a little bit and talk to some people, so that's what we did. So, this was the proposed rooftop plan. It had the eight courts, still had a row of parking on the top. There was also a waiting area in the middle and the office indoors with the bathrooms. That was what was proposed working with the consultants that looked at it in the feasibility study so, we looked at this. What we were looking at was the size of the court; the size that was proposed was tournament play. I did talk to some pickleball players, and you could go a little smaller on the courts if we wanted to look at extending and maybe adding another one if there's enough space, but that one would allow it for tournament play. And if you look at the bottom, the cross-section, we will have twelve-foot fences towards the street, six-foot fences on the north side, and then if we had separating fences in the middle between the courts, it would be three feet. So, this was the original estimate. I made it a little bigger, because I know it was tough to read last time. What we looked at is the courts, including the fencing, lighting, restriping, and construction of the waiting area and the restrooms and the office. With all of the construction costs and the contingencies, which we put in at 15 percent for construction contingency and 10 percent for general conditions. A construction cost was 683. When you factor in design and the consulting that turned out to be a project of \$785,623. There was also a discussion of whether we put in an elevator for that, because it doesn't have an elevator and that would have been an extra \$719,000 in terms of the rough order of magnitude. So, we went back working with the consultants, our Capital Improvement team, looked at our Public Works team, and looked at what needed to be done and how we could look at different reduced scope and there were a couple of items that our Public Works team, our Capital Improvement team thought that needed to be included that weren't included in the original rough order of magnitude, which was the demolition work and the surface preparation. We still have the number for the courts, and we'll talk about that a little bit later, and it had the same numbers for the fencing and the lighting. And there was a look at if you didn't do the waiting area, you didn't do an indoor space up top, you would have to do something in terms of seating and shading in that middle area, and they looked at that as being an estimate of \$50,000 versus \$240,000 for putting a building up there. That reduced that total down to the total project cost of \$600,530. Now, I did speak with representatives from pickleball players and also a couple of other pickleball players as I walked by. As you know, we have the pickleball courts at the Youth Center and they are there on Tuesday mornings, so they always see me walking in my suits and they make sure, and they tell me what's going on. So, we have some good talks with them. One of the things that they looked at which would result in a small savings is reducing the fencing by grouping the courts together. In the poster it had a little bit of a separation, that's a small savings, it's not a big savings. It would reduce the three-foot fencing, which is about \$5,000, so. They did say there was a couple of other things that might not necessarily have to do with the cost, but were important to note, they wanted to make sure that we wrapped the existing poles with cushioning, that we shift the courts four feet to the south, so we create a six-foot pathway on the north side for the players to put their chairs and watch, so that was one thing. Reducing some gates for access on both banks of four. They did want to make sure that we added windscreens, which we would, it's similar to what we do at our tennis courts, we would put the windscreens, those aren't a big expense. Instead of having a bathroom up top on the third floor, the suggestion was maybe renovate the bathrooms on the first floor, which would alleviate some of that 240 cost, if you wanted to put an air-conditioned building on the top. And the big item was to look at an alternative to the court

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that was presented by the consultants which was sport court. There are other surfaces out there. There are some composites and the most prominent one right now is pickle roll. There are others that are out there, but just an initial discussion that I was given some numbers that it would possibly reduce the cost of the court numbers by \$80,000. So that gives you additional; we wouldn't know until they go out there and look at the surface, but that is an estimate that you'd get a reduction there. So, for us, we'll continue to work with the community based on the direction that we receive in order to make it happen and the only thing to look at is when you do the waiting and office area, if you don't do that, it's going to be hard for me to staff, so it would end up being more of a drop in type public access facility. It would be hard for us to do court reservations, for us to organize things. We could organize things like tournaments and things where we go out there with a ten and we do a one-day thing, but in terms of having people out there without an indoor space up top, can it be done? – maybe it will be tough on staff to be outside the whole time. So that's something that we'd have to look at. And as I said, if you don't have the indoor space, some shading, and some other items there for people to sit while they're waiting for the courts, we would add in there. We talked about the court surfacing and the fencing reductions. I would say I have been approached and that there are people that would be willing to build it, private entities to build this facility, but of course that would result in a business model that would that business provider would control the courts and be some sort of negotiation with the city. So, from what I understand that there is some interest and there could be a bit, I haven't seen it, but I have heard discussions from entrepreneurs that have approached me and said they'd be willing to do it. So that's something to consider for the Commission if you want to go there. Currently, as we know, we've talked about it, the funding is not budgeted, that's why I'm presenting; and the next step is based on the feedback we receive here and how we move forward, we'll put it in as a funding request and if it gets approved then we can start in October working on this project. I'm here for any questions.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I guess, the first question I would have is, you're talking about a potential bid for somebody who could build the facility and manage the facility. That's similar to what we currently have at the tennis courts and Granada, correct.

Community Recreation Director: Not quite. Well, the Country Club courts, they lease it, and they pay us rent. So, it's a lease deal. The difference being that they're an operator, they still operate within our regulations and our rules. Whereas I don't know. It would all depend on whatever deal is worked out. The way I would look at it is, I know that there's other municipalities and other organizations that have had facilities like this. There's a big one that's coming in, in Fort Lauderdale, that's a much bigger scale, you know, 40 courts or something like that, but that's the kind of thing. I have been approached before, not on pickleball, but similar things like, I would be approached by somebody giving me, wanting to do five aside soccer, you know, they call it indoor, but it's the soccer with the walls and that kind of deal was, yes, we'll build it, but then we'll rent it out and we'll control it. So, they are basically using public land for a private enterprise which some organizations do if they don't have the cost, if they don't have the funding to build it.

Commissioner Menendez: I think the Manager and the Assistant City Manager have been in contact with a gentleman, Rene Pratts.

Community Recreation Director: He's the one that – he approached the City Manager's office, asked him to come talk to me. He gave me just an overall presentation of what they do, really not anything on specifics on what it would be for the court and anything else. I haven't seen what they would propose.

Commissioner Menendez: I was, I guess copied in an email, so I think the Manager's office is going to be meeting with him and his representatives in March and I think it's a good idea to have you there.

Community Recreation Director: Yes. I think they are having me on that meeting.

Commissioner Menendez: I think you mentioned in Fort Lauderdale, they did courts at Fort Lauderdale with no cost to the city whatever upfront. I don't know the details, but.

Community Recreation Director: Like I said, I've come across these suggestions before and what it is, is, they put up the capital cost and then in return there's a management deal where the city has some sort of revenue sharing or some rent or, depending on what the deal is. I've had over the years many different ones, and it was always for soccer, for...I haven't done anything for pickleball, but those are the things that you look at. For the city in the past, the thing that's very sensitive is, I'm not a fan necessarily, depending on the deal of ceding control of our courts and our spaces, especially for a long-term time. I like having control. Of course I like presenting it to our residents as play, and whatever we charge admission-wise is something that is decided upon by the Commission, so that's why I like it that way, but I can understand sometimes if the capital – The one in Fort Lauderdale is a 40-court, it's a massive facility which is multi-million dollars, which is a different animal to what we're talking about here.

Commissioner Menendez: I just asked the Manager, Assistant City Manager to include you, and obviously I would imagine your assistant director on that to see where that goes. Maybe that's a solution. Maybe it's not, but it's worth having a conversation.

Vice Mayor Anderson: If I could add a few things. And I've been asked by some residents and so forth about elevator and we covered that issue with the City Attorney's office doing research, because we do have other pickleball facilities that are open for individuals with disabilities and our first responders are doing what they do so fantastically taking care of us, so I'll pause for a minute – because we have other facilities that are ADA accessible for individuals in wheelchairs. If you have a van, you can use those facilities. And we've also talked about the bathrooms and the footprint in the bathrooms and there's so many different styles of handicap accessible bathrooms, Type A stall, Type B stall, that we can look into, and I'll have further conversation with you on that, so maybe we can save some dollars there. There are also some folks that have reached out that want some additional features on the courts and they've expressed an interest in raising some money. So, I think we have a lot to explore, if they want to get serious about raising the money, because I think this is a benefit also to the Mile, because you're going to go up there and you exercise, you're going to get hungry, you're going to come down, you're want to go see the smoothie bar or you want to go get a wrap or whatever it is you want to go grab quick to go eat and then go run back upstairs. So I think it's a win-win for the Mile, as well as the residents and I

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know there's residents that want to have some free time, you know, basically free courts, so if you want to come out there and try it for your first time and see if you're going to catch that addiction of pickleball, you could do that, so the Manager can come out there with me and I'll whack the ball a few times, like I did with a resident around the corner from me, just to get the feel of the ball. So, love to continue this conversation.

Community Recreation Director: We have spirited discussions about free, we've had in my office, over whether they can play for free or not. We'll continue to have those discussions.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's an addiction you know, we're helping the sports industry sell these rackets and balls and the food downstairs.

Community Recreation Director: Absolutely.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. I think we all share the same sentiment that we really want to make this happen, but I think the real question, how are we going to make this happen? Where is the money going to come from? – and when you say, we'll get started in September, I'm like, oh my God, that's quite impressive, but usually when we chose a project, it takes a couple of years or even five years to raise the money or to budget the money to make this happen. So, I think that's something that we really need to talk about and see how we're going to make this happen and maybe I'll throw in the idea of, there was a gentleman in public comment saying that there was a festival, pickleball festival, maybe we could think outside the box. Maybe we could try to raise some funds to make this happen before so many years go by that we're still finding the money to make this happen.

Commissioner Fernandez: The reason I put this on here and I've been pushing this is, we've been talking about it for ten months, and I really want to make sure that we bring this in and have these courts. We've already added one, with the restriping of the basketball courts at the Youth Center, but there are issues with the one at Salvadore. The size just doesn't work, the location is just not practical. So, the question is, let's find a path forward that brings it to a sooner rather than later. The facility currently does not exist, so if there is an outside vendor who's interested in partnering with the city, maybe we can work out terms where we can still approve whatever terms are used for charging or what have you. But I think we should have all the options on the table and maybe over the next five weeks before our next Commission meeting, you can have conversations with them, try to really hone in on these numbers. Obviously, we could be at 520 versus the 600, it's a big difference, those \$80,000 do make a difference. So, what I would like to see is for us to try to get this done as soon as possible.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to add quickly something that the Vice Mayor mentioned. In terms of that area, had conversations with the administration, I think my agenda review, and right now what's in that area is going to be totally different than what's going to be in that area in five or ten years. You know we have the Publix project coming up, potential large park. There are some very nice apartments, condos, coming online a block or two away. People are moving to downtown. You know back in the day when I was a younger man, you drove or walked to downtown, you went back, but people now really want to live there, work there, and pickleball,

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the theater is right there, I mean, our downtown may actually, I think eventually evolve into what perhaps was envisioned a long time ago, but all the dynamics are there, and I think pickleball because of the social aspect to it, I think would be an ideal component of what's to come.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. One thing I would really like to see is a resident rate when this does happen, because I think it's important.

Community Recreation Director: We do resident rates for everything we're able to do. Whenever we have the possibility to do it.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Any further comments before I speak, just want to make sure that there is no further comment. So, a few things I'd like to put on the record. I like your preliminary rough order of magnitude, very well done, but we both know that it is unrealistic to have a 20 percent contingency. I know that's not going to work. You don't put a 20 percent contingency. I have never seen that before in any of my projects and it won't work here. In regard to a resident rate, I'm going to go one further. Residents should play free. No resident rate. Residents should play free, charge people outside of the city for X amount of time and let them pay the entire rate, so if they really want to play here and it's that hot, like the residents I've been meeting with lately and I'll give you names of residents I've met with, I have them on email, who I've met with them probably about 6 or 7 different residents in the last three weeks. They say that more people will come into this community because they are looking for facilities like the ones that they use near where Parrot Jungle is, what's that area called.

Community Recreation Director: Pinecrest.

Mayor Lago: No. No. Parrot Jungle on the way to the beach.

Community Recreation Director: Oh, Watson Island.

Mayor Lago: Watson Island. In Watson Island there's pickleball courts. I've been invited to go see them, I just haven't had a chance, for one reason or another on Saturdays. The gentleman's name is Dr. Burrhus. He's part of a group that I sat down with that they want to do the same thing, a private/public partnership, but I explained to them very clearly, the issue that we have here at hand is that the cost of land here is so expensive that if we're going to give you and get into an agreement with you over a piece of property, number one, I can't tell you it's going to be for 30 years, 40 years, 50 years, that's not the way that it works. And number two, the cost, along with the construction could be prohibitive in regard to the actual use, because I don't know how you can make money, the lots, especially in downtown. So, what I see is, again, I fully support this. I think it's a great idea, especially since the infrastructure is there, but we've got to get real numbers. Those numbers are not real, you know that. Construction numbers are not real. The contingency is not real. I know you want to set the contingency high so you can eat away at the contingency if you have some costs overruns and then come back, but that's not realistic. What I'd like to see, what I would like to see, if it's the will of the Commission you can run parallel tracks, you can

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move forward with this is, not give up on an alternate location and I'll tell you why, because I think it's important, run alternate tracks, continue to do this, but also look for areas in the city where you don't have a second floor, where you don't have an ADA issue, where you don't have an infrastructure issue like you do here, where you have a dilapidated building. We both know it's not in good shape, where you potentially have to build an elevator to meet ADA requirements. That's another 7 - \$800,000. I've built exterior elevator shafts and that cost is light, but I think there's opportunities that we're not looking and I promise you, keep moving forward, I think we should do this project, but I'm sure that if we get people together in a room to have a conversation about this and say, bring ideas of other locations that we could potentially install ten courts that would, 10 or 15 courts that are some sort of city property that are underutilized, we just have to kind of look for that. Even if it takes buying something in downtown where there could be a potential agreement, we could potentially do something in that space, but I would like to run parallel tracks. Continue with this, but also have a conversation with the neighborhoods and the residents and anybody whose involved in pickleball, both public and private, and say, help us find properties that maybe are underutilized right now in the downtown that won't bother neighborhoods, that are not an issue. It could be a city parking lot. Maybe we have a city parking lot that we could potentially use as a pickleball court. We run the numbers. What are we making on the revenues there. How much could we charge, and that kind of stuff. But in regard to residents, I'd love to see it be for free.

Community Recreation Director: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. First speaker is Maite Halley.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Halley, good morning. Good to see you.

Ms. Halley: I have to say, you guys know me as a happy, sunny person, a lot of you have known me for a long time. I'm very disappointed today. I'm very disappointed because I keep hearing the word explore, and I keep hearing putting this off. Coral Gables is behind the times with this. We've got Palmetto Bay with courts. We've got Pinecrest with courts and all of these, by the way, are standing room only. You cannot get reservations at Pinecrest today. Thank you, Mr. Clerk, for giving me that bit of information. I did not know. I got it out of them. Water Oaks, public courts by Dade County way out west. Those courts are packed with lines of people at 7 o'clock on a Saturday morning. Doral has courts, Miami Beach has many public courts, including the six at the golf course, there's courts at the polo park. I did not know about the courts at Watson Island. That must be very new, because I don't know anybody who's played on them yet, and I'm very in tuned with the community, so I don't know if there are any there. Dade County is about to open up eight courts at Tropical Park for a total of twelve. When those courts are built, there'll still be a lot of waiting time. The demand is here and I'm going to show you in a little bit some pictures, but I wanted to start off with that, because I'm just very disappointed that this community that prides itself on recreation that has a fabulous recreation department, that I've been associated with. When I was a child here, which by the way, I might say I'm probably the longest, the person who's lived in Coral Gables the longest in this room, 1968, you and I might be close Kirk.

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Commissioner Menendez: I beat you.

Ms. Halley: Oh, you beat me. Okay. But I've been here since 1968. Youth Center, the old, old Youth Center. Took my son to the new Youth Center. My husband has been a coach. I used to do the baseball stuff back on the charts before we had apps. We've been involved in community recreation here and we've got some fabulous facilities, but we are behind the ball with this new sport, and we've got to get on it. It's just shameful for us to be so far behind. So, I wanted to just talk a little bit. So, Fred and I have had discussions. Fred's been great. He's just awesome talking about all this. First of all, I wanted to just address a little bit about these two things that have come up today. One about not under necessarily city control but having somebody else come in and do that. I've been hearing about this. I know the name. I know what's happening with that. I just caution you on that, because I really think every time the city loses control of certain properties like that, we don't necessarily get the best deal and your citizens, your residents don't necessarily get the best deal. So, let's be really, really careful with what we might do with somebody that we negotiate with. You know they may be a very good operator. I don't know. I don't know who it's about and the numbers might be really high, and you might be pricing families out. I really pushed for making sure families can afford this, and not everybody lives south of U.S.-1, east of the highway, okay. We've got a lot of working families here who would love to do this recreation. We've got a great parks department who can run this. We can do this here. So, I'd be careful with that. And Mr. Mayor, to your point about some other type of facility. I'd hate to see us find a beautiful green space and then asphalt it over with pickleball courts. If we're going to find new land for this, let's use it as green space. Let's keep the trees that my church friend loved, let's do that kind of thing and not pave it over and make sure it's got even more use than just a pickleball court. And on top of that, that's adding another layer to explore some more. It's just taking too long. It's taking too long and that's part of why I'm very frustrated with this. What I do want to tell you is, if you decide to do this as a revenue thing, whether its city run, or run by someone else, there's money to be made here, but I would urge definitely some kind of resident preference, some kind of resident rate, because that's what we do at the Youth Center, that's what we do at the Adult Activity Center, that would be the right way to approach it, and I would insist, not that you're going to pay attention to me that much, but I would insist of like, if we had eight courts and we have, I think the number was 624 hours, court hours available that we do, was it about 30 court hours available for free and do them at primetime. So, take four courts on Tuesdays and Thursdays and make them free for a couple of hours in the morning, a couple of hours in the afternoon, that will also help build revenue-sharing programs, and Fred and I have discussed that. He doesn't necessarily agree with me, but that's okay. Well, we'll work it out.

Community Recreation Director: We'll work it out. We always do.

Ms. Halley: We always have, as we always do. Parking revenues can increase if we do this. Right now, go ahead and show the pictures. I took some random pictures a few times over the last few weeks, and nobody is on the top of that floor. In fact, I didn't take pictures of the second floor, the one that's sandwiched in between, but it's only about a third full too during the weekdays, and we wouldn't necessarily be using it during the weekdays during office time. If you could just look through them, there's about five of those. Thank you. As you'll see, I will talk about the court costs

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because I spoke to the national sales manager for the pickleball companies, which would be, I guess, one of the companies we would request an RFP from, and they said the surface is in really good shape. Their owner came and looked at their surface. He was in town. That surface would require minimal prep for the courts and those were her words, minimal prep. They would put the actual pickleball surface up there and then they would bring us nets too. So, for \$160,000, which is the number that was quoted to me just yesterday, for \$160,000 we could get those things done. Instead of \$242,000 plus nets. I think we had 242 plus the nets in addition. So, you know, costs keep coming down. I think if we chip at it, we can do this. Yes, a little shady area would be nice. We could do that with a couple of sales that we can take down when the hurricanes come, right, so we can do certain things like that, yes. I would love it if we had some kind of structure there. That would be great, if we had lights. There is electricity up there already, so its just a matter of making sure that the lights are right for playing. So, I think the cost and revenues on an ongoing basis, the revenues on an ongoing basis are great. We discussed a lot of different programs that would bring people to the facility. We talked about getting rid of the Salvadore court, the Salvadore Park court. Those courts are an accident waiting to happen. I've been hurt on them. I know people who have bruised ribs on them. You're lucky nobody's come back to the city on that, but I think it's a serious problem there, the overruns are very narrow, very dangerous. They are not standard, and I think if we build eight courts up here, we can net six new courts and give those back to our tennis community for a practice wall, for all of us pickleball players who practice for LaCross. I'm seeing LaCross kids practice on the walls back there. You know, I just wanted to finish up by talking about the demand and if we could go ahead and show the other pictures. This is one of our rising stars. These pictures were taken, these players pictures were taken last Thursday night. He's one of our rising stars. He's out there regularly on Tuesdays and Thursday nights. These are people waiting to play. I didn't count them. There are actually more paddles than that. This was last Thursday, as you can see its still daylight, so it's late afternoon, they are waiting to play. Show the next picture. We had well over 35 people here. The waiting time...[Inaudible – off mic]...Lots of young people are out there playing pickleball, so its not just the gray hairs like me out there. Mickey's one of our regular players out there. I think that's the last one. Thank you. Thank you for that. We have the demand, so let's get with the residents want please, please, please. Thank you for your consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions, if you have any of me.

Mayor Lago: I just want to respond, if I may. You made some comments I want to put it on the record. First off, its called reserve paddle and pickle; the Miami Herald which is here, actually covered it in an article which is, that I apologize, which is dated April 5, 2023.

Ms. Halley: What is that, I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: You said on Watson Island.

Ms. Halley: Oh, okay.

Mayor Lago: So, it's actually here. It's pretty extensive overview.

Ms. Halley: I hadn't heard of it, yes.

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Mayor Lago: So, it's there. You can look up the article, April 5, 2023. I can give you a copy after if you'd like.

Ms. Halley: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: In regard to the approach, I think you're 100 percent correct. I think it should be 100 percent free for the residents, which we'll make the money up on non-residents, which is kind of like what happens in Salvadore right now, due to the fact that we took money from the county years ago, our hands are basically tied for years, so its kind of a very difficult situation. If not, we would have a perfect resolution right there at Salvadore to add more courts, but that puts us in a tough situation. You mentioned about landscaping and parks. Again, my job and something that I've advocated for, and I've delivered on is bringing more parks to the downtown. I would never take a park and make it into – what I said was on the record it says, how about a parking lot, like get a parking lot that exists, and we can take an already existing parking lot and renovate it and use it for something. Again, we have to figure out what is the revenue that we're getting, how much are we losing, and can we make that up one way or another. So, I think those are important distinctions to make that I wanted to make sure I'm clear, but I support moving forward. I just think that having something at the ground level and I think that if we were able to find something, if we put our heads to it, I think we'll be able to find something that could work. And I'm going to give a few names of people who have reached out to me who are interested in a P-3 partnership, who reached out to me saying, listen, let's grab a cup of coffee and have a conversation to see how we can collaborate on this issue. So, thank you for being here as always.

Ms. Halley: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, is Maria Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, Mrs. Maria Cruz. I don't want to sound very sinical, but it gets to a point where here we go again. Here we go again. The community wants something, and we start finding reasons to make it hard. When I was sitting here listening, I had not even signed up, I just signed up to speak, Burger Bob's keeps appearing in my mind. You know what, it's impossible to do anything and go against a wall. If the community wants it, you know what, there are priorities. We have budget priorities. There are things that we do that the community doesn't want, but we want it, so it gets done. Well, this is something that the community wants, you know what, go through the budget and find the money to please the community. You know, I'm tired of the excuses. Somebody must want the rooftop for something, because the rooftop is not a good idea now. Okay. Somebody must want something, because you know every time the community wants something that the elected, electeds, whatever we call them, they want it, there would be some problem and the longer we push it ahead, the more expensive it will be. Look at Burger Bob's. We started with what, 200-something, maybe and now we're half a million and at the rate we're going, nobody will be able to go there, because guess what, we would be able to afford it. The same thing is going to happen with pickleball. If we have to charge people because it takes us five years to get it done, it would be for nothing, because you know, most people, even though we think that everybody in Coral Gables is filthy rich and there's money on the streets, is not the case. I think this is something that the community wants, she's proven it. Maite has been here so many
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times that I've lost track. You know what, let's see what's in the budget that we really could push later. I'm not talking about the Water Tower, by the way. I'm not talking about buildings that have been allowed to be decrepit, okay. I'm talking about things that we put on the budget, but that we haven't started and maybe we can say, okay, you know what, that can wait, but not this. I think enough is enough. The people speak, you're here to listen.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I have one more speaker on Zoom. I don't have a name, but I'm unmuting them right now.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

City Clerk Urquia: Ma'am, if you could unmute your phone.

Ms. Gaglio: Yes. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Ms. Gaglio: Okay. I spoke earlier. My name is Sarah Gaglio. We don't have enough courts in the area to accommodate the community. We need regular pickleball courts. Not only that, it's also for the surrounding communities that do have pickleball courts. Everybody who lives in Coral Gables is coming to our community, which is going to make it impossible for us to be able to play as well. So, you need to do something for this community please. Pickleball is a growing sport. It's inevitable, you know. We need to do something, please. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker on Zoom is Lilly Azell

Mayor Lago: Ms. Azell, good afternoon. Ms. Azell.

Ms. Azell: Thank you. I appreciate it. Good morning or good afternoon, I'm sorry, I'm out west right now, but this item is way too important not to call in and speak with you. First and foremost, thank you for bringing this up again. I spoke to you all about a year ago now regarding this need that as the USA Pickleball Ambassador for Miami-Dade County get calls and emails constantly. And let me just say, my name is Lilly Azell, my address is 601 N.E. 36th Street, Unit 1212, Miami, Florida 33137. I'm at the forefront of the need that is occurring in Coral Gables. As the lead USA Ambassador, which is our governing organization, I've been talking in front of probably about 20 municipalities in our county and Miami-Dade County at-large. There were many reasons, I think the last time I went in front of you all was when there was a parking lot that was an idea with a parking lot and it was a real estate situation, land again is too expensive. There was another study that I went in front of you all again regarding going into some other parks and there were issues with that. Obviously, the price tag was way over what was, you all were comfortable with, understandably so. We came back to the drawing board, pickleroll, and that parking lot came as a result of the immediate need that Coral Gables residents had way overdue. And that's how this started. Pickel Games of Miami came in January, it was 30 courts that were placed in the Miami
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Marine Stadium, a festival. Maite was involved, obviously, with Fred and we're very appreciative to him and all his work he has done and listening to the community about purchasing some of those courts because we could have that done immediately. That's how this parking lot came to be. So, I urge you to stop the studying please, because this has been done for quite some time. There's always going to be someone that comes in and that can do it and do it better, or this public partner partnership, it takes a long time to get anything done with those things. It took a few years for the Fort Lauderdale project to take place up there. A lot of issues, a lot of Commission meetings. People up in arms about it. There's a need now and Coral Gables is way behind the times and it's very sad that your residents are asking for you to do something and we're still in this situation. So, I urge you. Yes, let's take an analogous path. I agree with what was said by Mayor Lago, let's take a path alongside, but let's get these courts up so your residents can have a place to play. Look what pickleball has done on Lincoln Road. There's a shift on what's happening in Miami Beach with the type of tourism coming in there. People want their city back. Coral Gables is nothing like that, however, there's a revival that can take place in your downtown. If people are walking around, people are spending money, people are visiting those restaurants. Let's think about giving your residents, your students, your public-school kids a place to come and play with their parents. I urge you to please put this in front and vote on something like this, because we've been studying this now and I know Fred has been diligent working with the community as many of you have, but I urge you to please put this in front of for a vote.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, I just want to give a little context. One of the first sites that I had looked at was the parking lot that is close to the Police Station, okay, since there was discussion of possibly using that for something else. The idea was to use that after we cut the ribbon on the parking garage next to the Police Station itself. That would be ground level. I don't want to exclude any possibility, especially if we can get a deliverably faster and open to everybody in the community. And then the second was the top of this parking lot, because it is underused. It was something that I noted for staff that, can we do it, its flat enough. I don't want to make it overly constrained. I know that when I go out to play, I usually sweat enough, that the need to use the restroom is not that high, so I think the idea is we need to get it going. The beauty of having the government do it is, we can do this in phases too. We can have a transition plan to improve facilities later on. So, I don't want to foreclose any opportunities, especially if we can deliver it for fewer dollars and quicker, so let's forge forward. I think we can do it. Let's put a warning that pickleball is addictive, so it does catch on.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, really quick. I have one more member of the public requesting to speak on the item.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Mr. Brunken: Hello. Can you hear me.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

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Mr. Brunken: I spoke earlier. Real brief. A way to fund this – we have so much major corporations that are based and have offices in Coral Gables, Bacardi, the Cadillac Dealership, there's many more, why don't we try to get four sponsors, give them a five-year deal, \$250,000 each, that's one million dollars, you can raise that money. I think it's a drop in the bucket for these companies to have their signature up there as major sponsors for this, and we still have control, the city has control of the project and not sourcing it out, and that would be a way to raise the funds. Have you guys thought about that?

Mayor Lago: Yes sir, we have, but also the city and we can provide it through our City Attorney or through the Manager, we can provide you a little bit of information in regard to our code, in regard to advertisement and what we allow on the exterior buildings throughout the city. So, there's a little bit of a hinderance in regard to that. We haven't allowed that in the past, but I think there are a lot of opportunities and I think it's great to get the entire Commission together and anybody who's interested in having this conversation flushing out every idea that comes before us. Thank you.

Mr. Brunken: Thank you. Have a good day.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, is there anybody else?

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Sponsor.

Commissioner Fernandez: Vice Mayor, what you said makes a lot of sense. There may be a phased approach here, where we're going to need benches, we're going to need other things, that can come later. Right now, there's no benches at any of our locations. You basically, just go play, if you're waiting there standing, having a conversation. As far as facilities, there's nothing specific to that area, you have to go into the Youth Center to use the facilities. So, I think, and again, I thought that's what we were going to get today. What is our bare bones, this is what we can do to get these eight pickleball courts opened and ready to go, and that's still what I would like to see. I know that there's a lot in here, a lot of different things that are part of it, but at the end of the day, we have level ground, there's not a whole lot of work to be done on the actual garage. It's about purchasing or going through the RFP process to secure the pickleball courts, putting up the netting around it and letting people play. I think that's simple. That's what needs to get done and the Vice Mayor had even talked about partnerships with neighboring businesses that have restrooms or facilities that could also be used, is obviously going to be an influx of traffic for their locations as well, so it's a partnership, but we should explore these. What I would like to see is a plan that we can try to move on by our next Commission meeting, and something that's simple. We can use money from this year's budget. We have had an increase in property values, we have had more income. At our six-month mark we normally have an idea of what our budget projections are going to be for the rest of the year. The money should be there in this year's budget, and I would like for the Manager to work with the Budget Director and our Finance Director to find a way to get this done as quickly as possible. I know RFP is going to take some time, but if we can get this done over the

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next few months, get this opened, we won't have 35-40 people, and actually those pictures aren't even close to what it was before. Before there was probably half that number of people, so we've doubled. I know a lot of us, I show up, if there's a long line waiting, I just go back home. I have an eight-year-old, he loves to play, but we don't have the luxury of waiting there because he gets ancy and dad, let's just go. So, I think we have a demand now. If there's a parking garage that can be used in the future, you know, I think we should definitely consider that. We should consider all the options that are available. This is a sport that's continuing to grow, and if we have other options going forward, I think we should consider those as well, but I think we need to satisfy the demand that we have today. Doral opened a facility, I think it was a year and-a-half ago or last year, and there was a post online yesterday about how that facility isn't even covering the demand that they have in Doral right now. So, it's a sport that's continuing to grow and the Vice Mayor is correct, it is addicting, because once you're out there you just want to continue to play. I'm happy that we have an addiction that's a positive for people, not an addiction that's a negative for people, and if we can foster that addiction for the outdoors, we have a community that's completely an outdoor community. Every day you see more people walking, more people biking, more people taking advantage of our parks. Salvadore Park is beyond capacity every afternoon, every weekend, because people are looking for things to do. This is an empty space right now, a blank canvass that we can take advantage of it. Let's do it sooner rather than later.

Commissioner Menendez: So, I figure if you can piggyback on what Commissioner Fernandez said. Would it be possible in April, our next meeting is in April to come up with two or three paths forward funding-wise, so we can consider them tangible, real-world options and then perhaps at that point we can say, okay, collectively this is the way the Commission would like to go and give guidance that way.

Community Recreation Director: Sure. We can do whatever is requested. Not a problem.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. If there's funding, as the Commissioner is saying, let's get it started. What are we waiting for? We have several plans of things that we could do, if the funding is available, I mean, this is the path forward.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. In April.

Mayor Lago: Would you like to touch on that.

Community Recreation Director: No. It was directed. In terms of what we try to present is, we did look at scaling it back. As I said, there's a little bit more if you do the surfacing where you can cut it back some more, and that's why I itemized it out. You don't need the \$50,000 for the shade and all that, but it's still a substantial amount when you do the fencing, the surfacing, and the lighting. So, it's going to be a little less than that 600, but its not going to be half, but we can definitely look at – we'll work with Finance, and we'll keep working on these numbers and wheel them down as much as we can.

Commissioner Menendez: My thoughts on the things you said that can be perhaps added later. I want to make sure that those elements of the game that assure the participants that they have a
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positive experience, we don't cut corners there. Things that perhaps are more amenities, you know, the shade, that comes later, but I think you were talking the fencing. I don't want to do something like say, eliminate something and then six months later we realize, you know what, we really do need to add it.

Community Recreation Director: I think if you concentrate on the play, which is the surfacing, the lighting, and you do need the fencing, the barrier.

Commissioner Menendez: I agree.

Community Recreation Director: You need to get that twelve feet up so that the ball doesn't go over.

Commissioner Menendez: Or a person.

Community Recreation Director: Exactly, so that kind of thing. So, we'll concentrate on the play, is what we would do. The side stuff we can, you can phase it in, if you want to put up – like I said though, if you do that, it will be free, because it would be hard to control who plays there and who doesn't without staff.

Mayor Lago: Anything else.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Anything else. Okay.