

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-4
March 22, 2011
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II
Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Maria Anderson
Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne “Chip” Withers**

City Staff

**City Manager, Patrick Salerno
Interim City Attorney, Lourdes Alfonsin
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

Public Speaker(s)

**Steve Helfman, Special Counsel for the City
Mario Garcia-Serra, Counsel Representing The Palace**

H-4 [Start: a.m.]

Resolution authorizing entering into two lease amendment with the Palace Management Group, LLC with regard to City owned property at 45 and 50 Andalusia Avenue, Coral Gables, Florida.

Mayor Slesnick: H-4 Mr. Manager.

City Manager Salerno: Thank you Mayor. H-4 is a resolution authorizing entering into two lease amendment with the Palace Management Group, LLC with regard to City owned property at 45 and 50 Andalusia Avenue, Coral Gables, Florida. Steve Helfman, Special Counsel is here to briefly present the item.

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Helfman.

Mr. Helfman: Good morning. How are you all?

Mayor Slesnick: Good. You?

Mr. Helfman: It's a pleasure to see you all. You may recall that I served as your Special Counsel on this item for some time now. This matter involves your senior housing facility. The original lease was signed almost two years ago, and the very good news is that the project is about ten (10) days away from an actual groundbreaking and clearing, that is due to the very hard work of Mr. Shaham to a great extent, who has really stuck to this project through very difficult times. As we all know that the real estate market for development has been extremely difficult. Why are we here? We are here because in order to actually get this thing closed and get him on that site, and get the ground broken there are some final amendments to the leases that are necessary, most of which are actually needed in order to comply with requirements of his lender. So those are the items that are before us today, they need your approval, there is an amended development schedule which is just updating the dates because of the time lag. I need to tell you that the Manager has been very helpful in this effort, it was very difficult to come into the middle of this process; Cathy of course had handled this for most of the project and then the Manager and Cindy had to take over. So we did have some difficulty in getting through this last stage, and there was some consternation on the other side, but they stuck with us and they are our good partner; and I think you have a good partner in this process; and there is always going to be unexpected things that happen, but I'm pleased to tell you that this was reviewed by all of your consultants. You still have Barry Abrahamson, David Moore, you had your senior housing consultants who are all still part of this team, who have all looked again at this entire project with the amendments and have issued memorandums in support of the amendments and the project as it is. So we are all here for any questions, if you have them, but I think everybody is looking forward to your favorable approval. The team is here, I know Mr. Shaham and his lawyers are here, Cindy is here and the Manager is here, and of course I'm here to help you with anything.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you. Mario do you want to – for the applicant.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Good morning Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, Mario Garcia-Serra with offices at 333 Avenue of the Americas, representing the Palace Management Group today, along with our Principal Jacob Shaham and the rest of the Palace Group team. It's been a long time in coming--getting to this point that we should all be very happy, you know if it was any other developer, any other city I don't think we would have made it here. There was a point in time where absolutely no banks were lending on any projects here in Miami-Dade County and because of this developer in particular and the commitment of this city, we've been able to find lenders for both the private and public portions of this project; and basically what we are asking for today are amendments that are required due to their own requirements right now, the lender and so

forth. So, as long as we get these items approved today in the very near future we will be breaking ground and starting construction on this project which has been anticipated already for quite a long time, and the reason we got here was because of you, us, and your staff, lead by your Manager working day and night in order to make it to this meeting.

Commissioner Anderson: Good to hear that.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I just want to reiterate that. I'd like to thank staff for their diligent work, but I'd also like to thank the developer, Mr. Shaham. Let me tell you, if he was not the developer like you said, this project does not get done and our vision of having a senior citizen facility does not get built on Andalusia. This is a great day in the City of Coral Gables where we will have a senior citizen facility where we've all visioned our seniors having an option instead of staying in their homes to stay in the City of Coral Gables, the community that they love. So thank you Mr. Shaham for everything you have done, thank you staff, and this is a very good day in the City. Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: I have no speakers on this item. Do I have a motion?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So moved.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

Mayor Slesnick: It's been moved by Mr. Kerdyk second by Mrs. Anderson; further discussion?

Mr. Clerk

Commissioner Withers: Yes

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Cabrera: Yes

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes

Mayor Slesnick: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

City Manager Salerno: Mayor?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Mr. Mayor if you'll indulge for just one second, Mr. Shaham wanted to say a few words of thanks here.

Mr. Shaham: Good morning. Jacob Shaham, 95-- Old Cutler Road, Coral Gables; happy to be a citizen of Coral Gables. After a long journey and I mean very long journey, I really appreciate very much you Mayor, City Commission, that at the end of the day you gave us the OK to go ahead and start the construction. We filled out a lot of papers, a lot of talk now we need to deliver. Thank you again.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you very much.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you Mr. Shaham. Mr. Manager.

City Manager Salerno: Mayor, I just want to take an opportunity to thank Cindy Birdsill as Mario had mentioned and Steve Helfman, she's worked tirelessly for the last several weeks, and the last two weeks I think everybody knows the communications between all parties were going into the late hours of the evening. So personally thank you Cindy, I can tell you from our side the item wouldn't be before you at this stage if it was not for her being as dedicated and hardworking and capable of dealing with the changes that have successfully been brought before you so that this project could proceed. That's all I wanted to put on the record Mayor.

Mayor Slesnick: Let me just add one last note. This is the final item that I think I'll be considering in this term of office; I don't think my outer countenance reflects my inner joy about this project. I am still very concerned, yesterday, just to express why my outer countenance is somewhat dreary, yesterday a recent retiree of our city lost his only son in a terrible traffic accident on U.S. 1 in the early morning hours, and then today just a few minutes ago, and you saw it played out right here in our Commission meeting, our City Attorney's family close personal friend met a tragic end this morning. So, I'm sorry if I'm a little down, but my heart goes out to all those families, but let me join the Vice Mayor, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Cabrera, and Commissioner Withers in saying what an incredible moment this is because ten years ago as some of us sought office for the first time, Maria, Ralph and myself, and Ralph and Chip continued on, we all had the input from many of our seniors about the necessity of having an option of aging here in Coral Gables and not going way west to the excellent Palace facility west, or not going down to Eastridge, and I think at one point in time we thought that Eastridge was one of the precincts of the City. It literally – that's where so many of our citizens went when they wanted to age with assisted help or independent facilities with some services, and so this is an incredible journey of ten years that we are finally bringing now to a glorious finish. We look forward to it, we've been through as Jacob said, as Mario has said, as Steve has said, we've been through a lot together, we've been through different designs, we've been through ups and downs, we've been through bondings and so forth. Anyways, I just wanted to add for the whole Commission all of us, we can now look at some of the people like Elaine Duncan in the eye and say, we are going to have a senior facility here in Coral Gables and

people can stay near their families as they age, so what a glorious, glorious moment. So thank you to the team from Palace, thank you to our Special Counsel, thank you to our City Attorney's office, and to our City Manager's office, and his Development Department; and I'd like to say a word here of thanks too, and Cindy this is nothing to take away from you, you've done an excellent job, but I'd like to say thanks to Cathy Swanson who started us on this road and who is now ensconced up in Hollywood doing other great things. With that, that concludes that item and look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming groundbreaking.

[End: 10:59:52 a.m.]