

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-4
November 12, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-4 [11:31:17 a.m.]

A discussion about implementing Live Remote Public Comments at Commission meetings to the agenda (Sponsored by Commissioner Fors, Jr.)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: G-4 – Commissioner Fors.

Commissioner Fors: G-4.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I love the idea. Oh, we have remote and then you can....

Commissioner Fors: I got this idea from another municipality, Miami Lakes, who recently implemented it. Basically, it allows residents or anybody who wants to public comment during a public hearing, to go to a portal within our website using a common server like Zoom or Go To Meeting, and it allows them to make their public comment right here on the television screen right here. From my understanding its cheap and easy to implement. Before directing the City Manager or staff to come up with a budget and implementation plan for us, I just want to get the feeling of my colleagues on whether they'd be interested in doing it.

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No sir. I think it's a horrible idea frankly. It's a horrible idea. If anybody has to be sworn in raise your phone with your right hand. I'd like to see the people here, I'd like to question them, I like the interplay, and I don't like especially if we have meetings starting at 5 and somebody at the neighborhood association has suggested, in their pajamas at 11 p.m. testifying in this meeting. I think it's a horrible idea, frankly.

Commissioner Keon: I think it has downfalls and good things too, but I'd rather them like tell us, I'd like to have someone from staff who does this and tell us how it could work and when it would be applicable and when people could comment. I think its like a bigger discussion.

Commissioner Fors: Yes, I know, I think it's a bigger discussion too. I don't want to move on it today. I want basically for staff to give the presentation, find out how the City of Miami Lakes does it. Sure, it does have cons, at the same time I think those cons are all weighed by giving a better opportunity for residents to speak during our meeting.

Vice Mayor Lago: Commissioner, I support you on this. Again, its another opportunity for transparency. I've spoken to Mayor Cyd about this, after you came on the Commission, and I think it's a great idea. I think any opportunity that we can give to somebody who can't make the meeting can come and speak. And by the way, we are very transparent already as a City. We take a lot of time, we spend a lot of money, newspapers, articles, magazines, newsletter, all the kind of things that we do. For example, our City Clerk has a great program that barely anybody takes advantage of. Where you can send in a comment or a question and we've had that for years and we constantly put it out there for people to take advantage it and they don't use it. Maybe they'll start using this. What I want to find out, like when we recommend staff maybe dig into it, is there like some sort of delay, because can you imagine putting up somebody on the screen and who knows what you get out of that.

City Attorney Ramos: In addition to that, I'd like to know if it's a public hearing, a real public hearing where they are testifying like the zoning item, I would prefer that they be present.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think it's a horrible idea, frankly, and I would like to see the people they care. I haven't received any complaints about people not thinking about being here. There are complaints about the 5 o'clock versus 9 o'clock in the morning, maybe 8:30 at night now, if you have started this at 5 and people feeding their kids and homework and whatever, but I would like to see the people face-to-face testifying, if Miami Lakes does it, that's fine for them, but I don't think Coral Gables should do it. I think it's a terrible idea.

Commissioner Keon: I think that it could have some potential, it could have some applicability, but I think out of respect for Commissioner Fors that I would have staff talk about it, when its applicable, when its not, how it could work, when it could work, and let them go through that whole discussion before we just say no.

Commissioner Fors: That's all I'm asking for. Let's hear how exactly it would work.

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City Manager Iglesias: And we can look at what Miami Lakes is doing and with the Commission's preference, we can report back on the meeting in December.

Commissioner Keon: Could they do it now or you want them to come back and do it?

Commissioner Fors: Come back whenever they've looked. I understand the City Clerk had already planned on attending Miami Lakes meeting to see how it works in person. I don't want to take any vote today, other than get staff to look into it and present to us what it entails.

Commissioner Keon: Do you want a resolution to direct them to look it, is that what you're asking?

Commissioner Fors: Yes, let's do that.

Commissioner Mena: If we can get some intel from whoever the appropriate person is in Miami Lakes about how frequently its used or not. I have some reservations logistically about how it would work out, but I'm open to seeing how it actually works.

Commissioner Fors: I've spoken to the Councilman at the City of Miami Lakes and from what they tell me its not overused, its not underused either.

Commissioner Keon: I'm with your request to direct.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Holmes wants to speak.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you so much, Jackson Rip Holmes, 35 Sedonia Avenue. One of our bright contributions, I believe from Commissioner Fors, I am so upset really that some of the projects that we've had the merchants are never really noticed and they are not given notice. Its hard for people to set aside times in their day to get here. I know Mayor that, that would be preferable, but do we really want to exclude those people. I think we need – and Coral Gables is a great City. We can expand our opportunities for our citizens to be part of this and it will make us all better. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: I need a second.

Vice Mayor Lago: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

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Commissioner Mena: Just to review?

Commissioner Keon: He's just asking staff to look into the capability of it and to come back with a...

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

[End: 11:37:40 a.m.]