

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-1
December 10, 2024
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, 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

Public Henry Pinera(s)

Henry Pinera, TAB Member
Roberta Nuway

Agenda Item 2-1 [12:33 p.m.]

Time Certain 12:30pm

A Resolution of the Transportation Advisory Board requesting that the City Commission require development applications to address certain items and areas of concern in development application presentations.

Mayor Lago: 2-1, time certain 12:30 pm. Good morning, sir. Good afternoon, excuse me.

Henry Pinera: Good afternoon, Commission. Thank you very much for agreeing to hear this. This particular item came about as me participating in a number of development meetings, predevelopment meetings and hearing about the traffic impact studies that were being performed. There was a great deal of disbelief in the numbers that were being presented in the traffic impact study. I am an engineer by training, and I also do network engineering, which means that I'm very familiar with traffic analysis and the bottom-line is that most of these traffic impact studies are done on the basis of traffic engineering specifically for the busy hour, right. The public does not necessarily understand that these studies are targeted to a four-hour window during the weekdays. And so, there's a big distrust in the traffic impact studies. What this initiative is meant to do is to

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add a little bit more value and clarify some of the parameters that are going into that traffic impact study, so that more constructive conversations can be had predevelopment. Okay. So, I'm part of the Transportation Advisory Board and we went through, and we developed this template of information that we would like to see included in the summary for a traffic impact study so that the public can get more useful information and can have greater, better input into those developments. I don't know if you guys had a chance to read through the proposal, but we are asking for and this is very flexible, is just a basic comparison of specific requirements of what is there today versus what is there, what will be there post development, and then a number of traffic oriented questions, basic traffic oriented questions answered in a standard format across all of the traffic impact studies. I think that this will build trust with the community, and this will allow community members to have better input on those developments before they go to you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for bringing this before us. May I ask some questions of the director. I just want to ask a quick question. If you have anything else, you'd like to say.

Henry Pinera: No.

Mayor Lago: If you'd like you can sit down right there and then we can go back and forth in regard to if there is anything else you would like to add or clarify. Mr. Director, good afternoon, how are you.

Public Works Director Diaz: Good afternoon. Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director.

Mayor Lago: Can I just ask you one quick question.

Public Works Director Diaz: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Do you have a presentation you want to give?

Public Works Director Diaz: I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: Do you have a presentation.

Public Works Director Diaz: No presentation.

Mayor Lago: Just want to answer questions.

Public Works Director Diaz: And we do have some concerns that I'd like to discuss with the Commission.

Mayor Lago: One of the things I wanted to ask you, just for clarity. The gentleman mentioned something that, to me, seems pretty reasonable, and that is a before and after comparison of what is being proposed and what's currently there. Again, even if it hasn't been approved by the city,

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because obviously this would go before, if it does get approved today, it would go before the board prior to getting to Commission. So, there isn't anything...

Public Works Director Diaz: That is actually part of the process already. Any traffic impact study starts with a true generation report. The true generation tells you what is the expected added trips for that specific location, which is what triggers any traffic study to begin with; and the traffic impact study, they take a look at the data, they collect data and then they actually extrapolate it over the next certain number of years to get some estimates as to what the traffic is going to be years down the line, right. I think there is a little bit of misunderstanding about what the purpose of a traffic impact study is. The purpose of the traffic impact study is specifically to find where there are any actionable improvements that can be made as a result of the development, which is why you use the peak hour. Like when you design drainage; you don't design drainage for an afternoon shower, you design drainage for a peak storm. The same thing for traffic. You do a traffic impact study, and you find out that maybe the timing of the intersection on the corner of the traffic signal needs to be modified, maybe you need a new signal, maybe you need an extended turning lane. Sometimes you will find that there are some improvements that could be warranted, but maybe none can be done because there is not enough real estate in the right-of-way to do so. So that is really what the purpose of a traffic impact study. Anything else is information that we ballot to people, but from the perspective and something that is actionable, that's pretty much it. And a lot of information that is being asked on this proposal, is already available, a lot of it is already in the reports. We could put it in a way that is maybe more easily accessible. Some of the information we can ask the developer for. Some of the concerns that we do have is that some of the things that are being asked for here, they go beyond the scope of the Transportation Advisory Board. It actually encroaches into the purview of the Planning and Zoning Board and some of what is being asked it just won't be available. So, for example, one of the things that is being asked from the TAB is the type of businesses. So generally speaking, when you get a developer that starts at the beginning, you go through the TAB, you go through the Zoning, you know you have commercial, you have retail, you have apartments, that's it. At that level where you may be anywhere from a year and-a-half away to three years away from construction and entering into leases with people, there is no way that any developer is going to be able to tell us with any level of certainty exactly what kind of businesses is going to be there. The other thing here, like for example, what is the demographic that the house is the intended market to attract snowbirds. A developer who walks into a new might have some ideas, but again, an apartment is an apartment, that could change. There's really no way to – that's not something that could be represented on a traffic impact study. That's something that we would ask the developer what's your thoughts about how you are going to do this. I don't think it's something that anybody can force them. An apartment is an apartment, and a hotel is a hotel. Will there be covenants to restrict the impacts of businesses that are planning a new space. Covenants are used through the Planning and Zoning process and generally speaking, if a business is operating within the norms of what they are allowed under the zoning code, the only time there will be a covenant is when they come to the Commission and they say, I want an extra floor, I want more FAR, and then the Commission puts some restrictions where as a condition of whatever extra you want, we'll make those restrictions to your operations. Outside of that, the only restriction will be whatever it's currently under the zoning code. And again, it's something that, not something that we could really handle through any kind of a traffic impact study. And they are

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asking about will there be additional drainage added to the community as part of this project to reduce street flooding. Every developer should require maintaining the flooding on their sites. That's something that Development Services reviews. On the streets, my department reviews if there is any need for drainage improvements on the right-of-way with make the developer do drainage improvements. At the time that this gets to the TAB, we don't have enough information to make the determination at the time. That's something that gets done through the plans review process, that usually doesn't fully take place until after the project has gotten all their approvals. So, those are the concerns. We are not necessarily opposed to the entire thing, but there are some things that is being asked of us here that the answer is really going to be, that information is not available, and we cannot provide it, and that's really our concern with some of the things that are in these documents.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. In my capacity when I was sitting on Planning and Zoning and continue, I did appreciate the contributions that the Traffic Advisory Board brought, and I saw that there was a lack of consistency in the reports as to the format and the information that was provided. There are a lot of good ideas in what they have brought here, but I would like to work with them more to hone it down to the type of information that's available at the time, because one of the most memorable moments, I had the Transportation Advisory Board come forward, was when we were talking about a hotel on Miracle Mile with a drop-off in the alleyway. It wasn't practical and Traffic Advisory Board members came forward and spoke before the Planning and Zoning Board and pointed out some of those things. Other times it becomes relevant too is when you're talking about the traffic flow and the drop-offs and pick-up of schools. If you are going to be making a modification to the school, perhaps we can design the drop-off and pick-up area better. So, I do think this is a great start in that we can work on it together and to come with a product that will provide what's necessary for both Planning and Zoning and the Board of Architects to have something to work with.

Public Works Director Diaz: We'll be more than happy to do that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: Thank you.

Commissioner Fernandez: Question for you. Since you've gone through that part of the process, would you be willing to sit with them on behalf of the Commission and come back with a recommendation.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, I can. I can.

Public Works Director Diaz: Maybe we can schedule something at the TAB meeting.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes. We can do that and have staff in there and we can have a good comprehensive conversation, since I'm done with the very lengthy process of the Mediterranean Bonus.

Public Works Director Diaz: Sure. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Sir, does that work well for you and the advisory board?

Henry Pinera: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Do you want to set a timeline so that there is a bookend, so that this doesn't linger on. You want to maybe see, Madam Vice Mayor, if we...

Henry Pinera: How does next Tuesday work.

Mayor Lago: I just think it's a little difficult for [staff] because of the Christmas holidays. What I meant more to say was, schedule a time to bring this back to Commission so that we have four to six weeks to get this taken care of, so that we get it to Commission, like maybe the first meeting in February, that gives us enough time, because I think, as you know, the week of Christmas and New Years is meant for travelling. You're not going to get everybody there.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to suggest that we get together in January.

Henry Pinera: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And staff circulates dates of availability. I know people have some vacations scheduled, including me, and then we can look at it with some fresh eyes. I think we are all a little tired from a very long year, right now, and I've worked staff's tail off on this Med Bonus.

Mayor Lago: So, can we do this, Madam Vice Mayor, when is the first meeting in February?

City Clerk Urquia: The Commission will be voting on it today, but currently its scheduled for February 11th.

Commissioner Castro: I think January 26th.

Mayor Lago: I'm fine with February 11th. If the Commission is fine with it, can we defer this item to February 11th, that gives us enough time for you to meet with the Vice Mayor, coming into January, go back to the board, everything works out, and then bring it on February 11th and we defer this item till that day.

Henry Pinera: Of course.

Mayor Lago: And we'll have a plan of action.

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Henry Pinera: Sounds good. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before moving forward, I also have a member of the public requesting to speak on this item.

Mayor Lago: No problem.

City Clerk Urquia: Roberta Nuway.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Nuway, you are unmuted.

Ms. Nuway: Okay. Hello. Can you hear me.

City Clerk Urquia: We can hear you ma'am, but you are unmuted on our side.

Ms. Nuway: Okay. Can you hear me now?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes ma'am.

Ms. Nuway: Good. Okay. Roberta Nuway, 1236 South Alhambra Circle, 33146. I want to commend the TAB for coming up with this. I think it's a way to really help with and make the whole development process more amenable for everyone. However, when it gets revamped, I hope it will address the needs of all traffic, not just cars. People who chose to walk or bike or people with disabilities deserve to have their needs addressed. I walk a lot, and I know that well-designed sidewalks, buildings with eyes on the street, in other words, no high walls and entrances and exits that do not impede walking, encourage people to commute by foot whenever possible; and traffic is a mess in Miami-Dade County. We need to work with developers as much as possible to design projects, but with right-of-ways, and I know it depends on the development with right-of-ways that encourage walking, biking and the use of public transit, and also take into consideration ADA requirements. This will make life better for all of us. So please, when you rework this document, include walking, cycling, help us lessen the traffic. Anyway, that's it. Thank you for your time and have a great day and happy holidays everybody.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

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

Mayor Lago: You are fine.

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Henry Pinera: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.