

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-6
May 21, 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
Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz
Transportation Division Manager, Melissa DeZayas

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item F-6

Update regarding Alhambra Circle, Blue Road, Pisano Avenue and Venetia Terrace sidewalks.
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: So, F-6.

Public Works Director Diaz: Presentation please.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'd like to see – it's been years.

Mayor Lago: I think we have Blue Road; we've already discussed; Venetia we've already discussed. Let's talk about Alhambra Circle and Pisano, and Granada we talked about too. Granada is a no-brainer. There are barely any houses there. The lots are so big on Granada, and I've gotten a lot of residents who are in favor of it. Obviously, you have to ballot them, but a lot of them told

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me that they are interested in it and the lots are really, really big. I think that's a great opportunity to stretch.

Public Works Director Diaz: Billy, can we get the presentation.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We spoke about some of the options that were discussed during the Sunshine meeting and the response that the county gave you. Can you fill in the rest of the Commission, so they are all up to speed.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: So, we reached out to the county about, and you're going to see Option 3, which is basically putting the sidewalk for Alhambra Circle on the east side. That would require a crosswalk at Salvaterra and one on the northern limits of the project. We reached out to the county, sent them an email and based on meetings that we've had with them and conversations, they don't think that that's something that they would approve. They are concerned with the limited visibility that you have as you are coming off of the bridge and they just don't think it would be safe for pedestrians to have a controlled crosswalk at those locations. So, this one is Option 1. Option 1 is basically the curb and gutter option.

Public Works Director Diaz: No gutter just curb.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Curb, sorry. So, the reason that this option was first brought up is because we were looking into potentially narrowing the pavement. You have sections of pavement that are like 23 to 25 feet wide, so if we hold the edge of pavement on the east side and offside and shift the crown of the road, basically you're going to have the sidewalk maybe encroaching a foot into where the swale is at some portions. We would narrow it down to four feet if we have to because of the tree roots. So, this seems to be the least impact to the existing trees since we have mature trees that make it a little bit tricky to achieve the slopes that we would like. We had our surveyor go out in the field, take elevations at each of the tree roots. We calculated some of the slopes. Option 1...

Mayor Lago: So, this is a very similar look to what's in front of my house.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Yes.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mayor Lago: The same thing that runs.

Public Works Director Diaz: You get a curb on a sidewalk that is abutting to the curb. In some areas where you have proximity to certain tree roots, the sidewalk might need to narrow up to the minimum required by ADA, based on the need.

Vice Mayor Anderson: 32 for a distance of...

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Public Works Director Diaz: For a foot.

Vice Mayor Anderson: 36 is easier.

Public Works Director Diaz: It won't have to be that narrow, probably three to four feet that will be sufficient. So that's one option.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Option 2, we looked into shifting the sidewalk to the right-of-way line. It basically produced a winding sidewalk. We would have to wind back towards the end of the pavement once you got to the intersection, so you could place the crosswalks close to where people would have to make a left or right for visibility and safety for pedestrians. There was one location where...

Mayor Lago: There was one location there that was kind of tricky. The one where it met the driveway.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes. Correct.

Mayor Lago: Two locations.

Public Works Director Diaz: We have two locations. So, one location and the following slides will show.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: You'll see it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: With age comes wisdom though.

Commissioner Fernandez: That's bigger.

Public Works Director Diaz: If you look at tree number 8, keep that in mind on the upper side.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You're assuming I can see that.

Public Works Director Diaz: Sorry. Is that Tarragona Drive, right.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: No. That one's south.

Public Works Director Diaz: Salvaterra, I'm sorry. The second tree to the right of Salvaterra and tree number 3, right.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Yes.

Public Works Director Diaz: Which is the third one to the right of Travino, and then there's going to be some following slides that those areas are problematic with the roots.

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Transportation Manager DeZayas: This is the first tree that was mentioned. This one is close to Salvaterra.

Mayor Lago: And we talked about that because that area is perfect to do it behind it, because in the property line – see the property line on the wall, it wouldn't bother anybody and then you see that scenario and you're like...

Public Works Director Diaz: The issue is the roots. Look at those roots.

Mayor Lago: And there's nothing we can do with that.

Public Works Director Diaz: And then if you look at the red line, the pavement at that location is 25 feet, which means that if we narrow the pavement the sidewalk is pretty much going to go over the existing pavement.

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Where the roots have already grown under the pavement.

Public Works Director Diaz: So that's one location where the sides and the height of the root is problematic, and the next one is a similar situation, and we did the same thing here.

Mayor Lago: That's the driveway where the pitch would be so aggressive.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct. So, the only alternative would be to cut down that root, which I think Deena would probably have a conniption over.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, we don't want to lose the tree, I mean. These are some of the few that are in good shape.

Public Works Director Diaz: And that root is so high that to put a sidewalk over, we don't have sufficient slope to meet ADA as we approach all the way back down to the driveway that you see. And if you look at the red line on the pavement, that's approximately back of the sidewalk, because again, at that specific location the pavement is already 25 feet wide, so the sidewalk, most of the sidewalk will be over where you see pavement right now. That does not mean we can go back to the previous one.

Mayor Lago: This is the one that concerns me the most. I mean, obviously they both concern me, but this is such a perfect location to put the sidewalk behind the tree and we would be able to run it all the way from the other home, if we would have zig-zagged this property, then we could have run it all the way to the bridge, and it would have been behind the property.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, if we go back.

Mayor Lago: Behind the tree, excuse me.

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Public Works Director Diaz: If we go back to the plan view, right. Right at the intersection of Salvaterra, we could meander around those trees, if the desire is to stay away from the edge of the pavement were feasible. So, you have one location by the intersection and then we could meander back. And then the same thing on Travino, right, where we would have to go on the edge of pavement, and then go back with a curb obviously, because the moment you get closer than six feet to the pavement now, now you need a curb, right, that's the threshold. And then the third option which we wanted to show even though the county didn't really give us their...

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Stamp of approval.

Public Works Director Diaz: Stamp of approval when we talked to them, but that will be the option when you get to cross the street; and the concern is not so much the sidewalk itself, but the location of the crosswalk and the visibility you have some large trees blocking visibility, as you happen to be on a curve just north of that location. So that's really what their harp on is. It's really just crossing the street.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, we've had that issue before when we talked about pathways on Granada Golf Course, etc. These types of curves, they would not allow crosswalks in those locations so that's why I pretty much knew what the answer was going to be the moment it was suggested, because of the speed that people come in off of Bird Road there, and then you have that tight situation with the bridge. We have enough problems there already; we don't need to invite more.

Public Works Director Diaz: So what we'd like from the Commission is to give us direction, whether you would rather have the option that is just on the edge of pavement with a curb or the option where we're going to stick to the back as much as we can with the understanding that as some of these areas intersection, we are going to have to go back to the edge of pavement with a curb and then get back inside, and then depending on that choice, we could create some exhibits, ballots, the design would have to be completed, and the county going back to the question about the traffic calming. The county wants to see what we are going to do with sidewalks before they give us their final approval on the traffic calming. We will require a Miami-Dade County permit for the traffic calming because these are not part of our interlocal. These areas its difficult to say the least, and then obviously, we'd like to get going on construction as soon as possible, not only because of the sidewalk, but we've been holding off on the milling and resurfacing which is another area where the pavement is in dire need.

Mayor Lago: It's in dire need.

Public Works Director Diaz: Because it makes sense to do them together.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It does. It's really bad. It's been bad for many, many years. If you ride on a bicycle, you'll feel it a little more, but it needs to be done.

Public Works Director Diaz: We actually completed some drainage improvements in the area ahead of this several months ago.

Mayor Lago: So let me ask you a quick question to move forward. Can we show the residents once again the two options that are feasible, because now that you mentioned the issue with the roots and the pitch on the driveway and you also mentioned the fact that we can't go in the rear on that property that it makes complete sense, because you have the property line where the wall is, that's the most easy one to accomplish where the homeowner, I don't think had an issue because they have their fence line right there. I want to get support from the residents, but I'd like to show them both of the final options that we're going with.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, if you prefer – my only concern is that maybe we get, I don't know, maybe the old agreement what they want is not an issue, but I think it's only like five residents in that area. We could give them Option 1, Option 2, do the...

Mayor Lago: What I would like to see is, send it to them, I want them to have their own time to review it, and they can resubmit it to the city in regard to what their opinions are.

Public Works Director Diaz: We can adjust the line to show how we're going around the tree in those areas, so we will add that so they can visualize it.

Mayor Lago: So, they can understand where we'd go, and hopefully we can build consensus and finally get this project done.

Public Works Director Diaz: What concurrency would you like us to include – 50 plus one?

Mayor Lago: What is required?

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Two-thirds.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, if you follow – there is a 2017 resolution that the Commission passed, but that resolution was intended for residents to even process, this was initiated by us, right. That resolution has an entire process where the resident would have to go and get some concurrency with the residents, come to the city. That requires a...

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Two-thirds concurrency.

Public Works Director Diaz: A two-thirds concurrency of everybody or return ballot, do you remember?

Transportation Manager DeZayas: Return ballots.

Public Works Director Diaz: Return ballots. It would really be up to the City Commission whether you want to keep that, or you want to make it a smaller threshold.

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Commissioner Fernandez: Another suggestion might be if we're presenting them with two options, are we able to do live balloting in person or maybe you can have a meeting with these five residents, present the two options and have them vote in person.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The problem is getting everybody out there.

Commissioner Fernandez: Well, we got everybody out there last time we met. All five homes were represented at one point.

Public Works Director Diaz: We can try.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'm sorry, you're right. There was one that wasn't, because it was a new owner.

Mayor Lago: I think people want to review it, take their time, get an understanding, plus you want to make it so that it's a situation where they can review it on their own time. Some people have very tough schedules. Let them make the decision. I'm fine with whatever threshold you want to put in regard to concurrency. I just think it's time that we got something done.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to suggest that we use the same thing we do for traffic calming, which is 50 plus one.

Commissioner Menendez: I remember a few years ago, concurrency came to the Parks and Rec Advisory Board for this type of matter and there was a resolution for 50 plus one back then. It was back and forth and then there was a resolution for the city. So, I remember even a board was supportive of that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's a public safety item. I think we need to move forward.

Public Works Director Diaz: A couple of weeks.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: We can do that.

Mayor Lago: If you can, just through the Manager's office, just keep us all aware of what's going on, because I'm getting calls from residents.

Public Works Director Diaz: We'll give them 30 days to respond. We'll knock on doors, if we need to. I'd rather get a response than none.

Mayor Lago: I think we've gone to the point here where we've got to move forward with the milling and resurfacing and the other traffic calming that's going, and I think that we can build

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consensus with a sidewalk now from the residents, especially with the multiple designs that we're offering.

Public Works Director Diaz: On a side note, I don't know if any of you have driven by the Tarragona site, just a block south of that location where we finished the seawall and Deena will finish the landscaping. I think it came out great.

Mayor Lago: Beautiful.

Public Works Director Diaz: We have some really bad weather now.

Mayor Lago: It came out so nice.

Public Works Director Diaz: But I think we had a tremendous positive response to that. I think that was a very nice project.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It has a nice Deena touch to it.

Mayor Lago: When you look at University, you look at Alhambra, its going to be done now, you look at Blue Road, you look at Camposano, you look at the area around Doctors Hospital. I hope that builds interest in people say, okay, I can have this in front of my property, I can have this in front of my house. People are more interested in putting their sidewalks, because it's not as invasive or disruptive as possible, especially on University. If you look at it really closely, University came out really nice, very tasteful.

Public Works Director Diaz: And I think eventually, you are going to have a connection to a brand new park.

Mayor Lago: Yes, which is great.

Commissioner Menendez: Real quick. With regards to those five residents and I may have missed it. We're going to confirm that they received the package just not – I want to just confirm they received it.

Public Works Director Diaz: I think we can mail them and then what we can do is that we can maybe knock on the door, leave our card.

Commissioner Menendez: Or email them or call them, make sure that they received it, that way we don't lose time.

Public Works Director Diaz: We have emails and phone calls for some of them. I don't know that we have every single one of them, but we can reach out to them and maybe encourage them to reach out to the neighbors just the same.

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Commissioner Menendez: Yes. I think it's important to get confirmation that they received.

Public Works Director Diaz: I don't know if we have every single person.

Commissioner Menendez: We're the government, we can find out.

Public Works Director Diaz: But the ones that we do, we can absolutely do that.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have a member of the public requesting to speak, Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, Mrs. Maria Cruz. I have a question. I heard University from Camposano to Pisano is that on the opposite side of the hospital, or is that on the side of the hospital?

Public Works Director Diaz: That's on the east side, the parking lot side, yes.

Mrs. Cruz: East side. Okay. And Pisano, where is that?

Public Works Director Diaz: Pisano is on the west side of the hospital across from UM.

Mrs. Cruz: Well, the hospital, who pays for this?

Public Works Director Diaz: The hospital is going to pay for the work on Pisano and they are going to give us \$100,000 towards the work on University. I believe that's what the agreement that we have with them.

Mrs. Cruz: Question. Doing the sidewalks, do you also take care of the street, because there is a big, big problem there with floods.

Public Works Director Diaz: Pisano – yes. In fact, Pisano, and this is why it's taking so long...

Mayor Lago: Parallel parking.

Public Works Director Diaz: Well, it's going to be angle parking.

Mayor Lago: Angle, excuse me.

Public Works Director Diaz: But we're going to do a sidewalk, its going to have drainage and have some...

Mrs. Cruz: The side, the University side is higher than the Doctors side.

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Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mrs. Cruz: That's the problem.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct. So, we're going to create a proper crown on the road. We're going to have some drainage and the entire pavement is going to be redone. Currently, we're not planning to repave the University side of it.

Mrs. Cruz: No, it's done. The University side was done and that's what created the flooding, because it's higher than the other side.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct. And with the water puddles that's where the potholes keep happening.

Mrs. Cruz: Yes.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, this project will correct that. It's not just sidewalk projects. It's a complete roadway, pavement, drainage, sidewalk.

Mrs. Cruz: And the hospital is paying for...

Public Works Director Diaz: The Pisano work.

Mrs. Cruz: And what about not San Amaro – Camposano.

Public Works Director Diaz: My understanding, if I recall, is that the agreement is that they pay for Pisano, and they give us \$100,000 towards University. I don't believe that the agreement included Camposano.

Mrs. Cruz: No. The agreement was that they would have sidewalks all around.

Public Works Director Diaz: We'll have to doublecheck.

Mrs. Cruz: Yes. The agreement when it was sold, you know when they got the parking lot, the agreement was the hospital will have sidewalks around, both sides.

City Attorney Suarez: It was the work on Pisano and then \$100,000 towards additional sidewalks.

Mrs. Cruz: Okay, but would that \$100,000 take care of Camposano is what I'm asking? Then it's not going to be all around. There is a side that you wouldn't have sidewalks.

Public Works Director Diaz: I think, of course I'm going by memory, but my recollection is the \$100,000 was for the area on University abutting the parking lot, that's going by memory. I could be mistaken, but that's my recollection.

Mrs. Cruz: I suggest...

Mayor Lago: Camposano is a very small sliver that has parking.

Public Works Director Diaz: It's about half of that block.

Mayor Lago: Its about half the block.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Let's take a look to see what was the final, because I remember that at the last minute, I requested that they pay for all the sidewalks, and they include that into the sale and purchase agreement. Let's just look into it, because I don't remember what the exact numbers were.

Mrs. Cruz: Because there's no sidewalk on the other side of Camposano, okay. So that would be the only sidewalk.

Public Works Director Diaz: It would be on the south side, right. Correct.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, anyone else?

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, sir.