

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item – Discussion Items
April 10, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Commissioner Patricia Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item: Discussion Items [Start: 1:03:31p.m.]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Any other items to come before the Commission?

Commissioner Lago: Yes. I have some items. You want to want to move forward, you want to go first?

Commissioner Keon: I have just one item. At a prior Commission meeting along with our discussion on guns and assault weapons and everything else, we also supported the International Association of Chiefs of Police policies that they had and we passed that. I would like for us, through the City Attorney's office, to share those with the other municipalities that are working on these same issues to see if they would be willing to support them at their level also.

City Attorney Ramos: Sure. So, I'll work with the Deputy City Clerk to get that done.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: A few items.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A few?

Commissioner Lago: Yes – three items to be exact. Number one, I'd like to first off thank Mayor Valdes-Fauli and his brother Raul for doing an exceptional job this weekend. They opened their homes so that the museum and some of the trustees – Jose, excuse me, doing an exceptional job showing basically their exquisite collection. They provided great food, great beverage, but more importantly, it was just very good company. So, I want to say thank you. It brought a different level to the City. I also want to invite you all to attend on Earth Day; we are going to be having a movie showing on April 17th at 7 p.m. at the Coral Gables Art Cinema. I along with Marlin Ebbert have sponsored a movie called “Racing Extinction,” it's going to be very interesting. Its \$8 and I recommend that everybody come and see the movie. It's going to give you an interesting background in regards to the environment and sustainability. I also want to show you some quick PowerPoints, some quick photos that I took this weekend of my neighborhood that I think may open your eyes to what we have to deal with in regards to code enforcement. So here we have the beautiful area around University of Miami, this is on Robino. Well this right here is an actual garage that was closed on Sunday on Alhambra, this is a black toilet that was located in front of University Drive there, a block from my house, this is near downtown. I was driving and this is a couch on Alhambra, next to the Alhambra new park and that is on Robino that is a beautiful refrigerator. So, these are examples of what people are doing on a Sunday. Thank you to Chelsea for blacking out the employees that were there who were illegally closing a garage on a Sunday; and all these items that you see there, they were there on Saturday, on Sunday, on Monday, and on Tuesday, and I know that, because I confirmed them today when I drove by again. I want to say thank you to Peter; I want to thank Peter for being so diligent and being available. He actually visited the site on Sunday and actually saw some of this. I think that toilet may still be there, unless it was picked up. So if anybody is looking for a beautiful, black, shiny toilet you can go pick that up there, it's free. I don't think anybody is planning on installing that. Why am I bringing this up to you? Along those couches that's real leather, its real leather – yes the toilet. So if anybody is interested, if anybody is interested, I've probably brought up this issue with Code Enforcement, I don't know how many times. I know that we just started dealing with Code Enforcement and having a Code Enforcement officer on Sunday, correct me Madam City Manager, that we have Code Enforcement on Sundays?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We do have Code Enforcement on Sundays.

Commissioner Lago: So, the reason why I brought this up is because the people that are doing this who have lived in the City six months, a year, five years, ten years, they are aware of the law. They know the procedures and protocols and why we live in the City of Coral Gables. Why are we continuing to allow this? People in our neighborhoods are forced to live with this. It may not bother some of you, but it bothers me when I take my daughter around the neighborhood and I see this type of behavior continuing, the lack of respect for your residents. So, I want to transition from – if somebody has a code violation on a Saturday or Sunday, no more warnings, no more warnings, because those warnings are meaningless. Madam City Attorney, I know you and I have had this discussion before and I want you to give your perspective.

City Attorney Ramos: State Law requires that we give a warning and then we issue the citation.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But, this is a ticketing provision that we can issue an immediate \$75 ticket, correct?

City Attorney Ramos: If we are not doing an NOV, then yes.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So I understand sir, what your concerns are. We are right now evaluating code across the board in terms of staffing coverage and routes, but I believe there is a ticketing provision that can be applied without – consistent with what you are asking for, and so, City Attorney, we don't have to give a warning under certain circumstances, correct?

City Attorney Ramos: Under certain circumstances, which ticket we want to give. I'll talk to Code Enforcement about that.

Commissioner Lago: I want to make this clear so people understand, I haven't saved these pictures for weeks in advance or months in advance, Peter Iglesias can tell you, this happened this weekend, and the Manager also was copied on the text messages that I sent.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And I responded.

Commissioner Lago: So this is within a three-block radius from my home, so again.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But Commissioner this goes to what I was saying before about staffing; and yes, it's wonderful to be low staffed and to be efficient, but sometimes we...into muscle.

Commissioner Lago: I agree or maybe staff needs to be reshuffled. I know that right now currently we have one opening in Code Enforcement. I've read and I was looking over Key

Biscayne's breakdown. I know that they have fewer residents, but they have more Code Enforcement officers. Maybe more is not the answer. Maybe we have to reshuffle these individuals and put them and require that accountability is their main focus. For example, let me give you an example. When you have a security guard that runs or works for a private business, they have to go to the four corners of that building and check-in. Maybe we are going to have to require that, because it's unacceptable that I'm getting phone calls from residents on a Sunday and I know that all of you are getting the same phone calls; and this is a type of situation, which is not only an eyesore, it's just embarrassing...

Commissioner Mena: Embarrassing.

Commissioner Lago:...it's embarrassing, it's embarrassing, and this goes back to the trash pits that we talked about, and I'm still waiting for, I know I'm still supposed to get cardboard, I'm waiting for a cardboard update, I'm waiting for a cardboard update, they told me it's going to come at the end of the month, so I expect to see that cardboard update; and we need to make a decision if we are going to continue to allow this. I am willing to take drastic measures, because I can no longer continue facing the residents that we are powerless on a Sunday or on a Saturday to deal with this issue.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I disagree with you that we need to make a decision on whether we are going to continue allowing this. We are not going to continue allowing this and it is forbidden today. It's a matter of enforcement. You are absolutely right. It's a matter of enforcing our code and we need either different procedure or more Code Enforcement staff, because that's inexcusable. I agree.

Commissioner Mena: I agree as well – absolutely.

Commissioner Keon: I do too.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anything else to come before the meeting.

Vice Mayor Quesada: But what's the answer?

Commissioner Lago: And I happy you said that Vice Mayor. You know what the answer is?- the answer is and I'm embarrassed to say there is no answer. I've been bringing this up, I've been bringing this up for a year, for a year, and we haven't got an answer. We've been told, no, we are going to deal with this, this is going to stop. When you see somebody blatantly on Alhambra Circle closing off their garage – I'm getting to St. Augustine Mass at 5 o'clock, so you know that there are hundreds of people attending that Mass and these people are doing it in plain sight.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Are we making them opening it up? I hope.

Commissioner Lago: So now, by the way, now you give them a citation and now what's the option?- you keeping hitting them with citations with a lien on the property. That lien has to be dealt with when they sell the property, correct, because it's their homestead. So, that can stay like that until they sell the property.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: That's not a homesteaded property sir. I researched it myself and can you give an update on what is happening with 5111 Alhambra? You went yourself as Building Official to the site.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would like an update.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But it is a non-homesteaded property.

Commissioner Lago: Like I told you before, Peter was beyond responsive this weekend. He was on site dealing with the issue, but this is going on everywhere, this is going on everywhere, everywhere.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: I saw the issue Sunday and we immediately sent Code Enforcement out Monday morning. So, it's been cited and they have to tear that down and replace the garage door.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Will you report to us at the next Commission meeting whether that has been done please?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Yes Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: And we are also looking at Code Enforcement right now, we are also looking at GPS for all our vehicles, including our trucks, we are looking at camcorders right now, to look at our truck systems so we know how they accelerate, how they are actually performing. So, we are in the process of looking at all those issues right now.

Commissioner Lago: I'm going to leave you with two points before we hear from Maria, if the Mayor allows it. Number one, I expect to see, if it's not on the 24th, I know we have a jam-packed agenda, I'm willing to accept moving it to the subsequent meeting. I expect to see an

answer for cardboard. Before this gentleman left, I know he's no longer here, there has to be an answer; and when we talked about it, it was put in your recycling, putting the cardboard unbroken next to your recycling. I need to see some sort of – I was told here in front of this Commission that we have the means available to deliver on that, so that's number one. Number two, I don't even take back streets, I'm taking main thoroughfares, San Amaro, Alhambra. Can you imagine what's going on in the neighborhoods? These are all main thoroughfares. I don't need to be code enforcement, I have better things to do on the weekend, but these are so blatant that they have to be called in.

Commissioner Keon: I also noticed and I actually asked Miriam to look into it is, since I moved from my condo and downtown I have taken different routes to different places. Going by I notice two different homes that looked terrible and asked them to look into them and they turned out that they are both abandoned properties. I find that I am – it's unbelievable to me with the number of people that are City employees on our City streets, whether they are police officers, neighborhood patrols, garbage trucks, trash trucks, everything that someone doesn't note that there is a home that is in terrible disrepair and it doesn't look like there is any activity. I mean if nobody is picking up garbage there, they should wonder what's happening at that house, I'm not picking up any garbage there or different things, and how no one can respond. Every single employee in this City that is out on the streets should have some responsibility for quality of life issues in the City and those are all quality of life issues, that when you see a home that is in bad disrepair, just note it and set up whoever they would refer it to. Maybe somebody should take a look at this, or you know we haven't been picking up garbage at this house, you know there is not a for sale sign out there, there is nothing, it looks like debris is accumulating. They would wonder why does it look like this. As a police patrol, why does it look like that? Those are all quality of life issues that everyone on the street should recognize and should report.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Let's listen to Maria Cruz.

Commissioner Lago: Before Maria, one last point and this will be very brief. We've also been waiting, I think two years now, two years for a pilot program in regards to larger recycling bins, still haven't gotten that, we still haven't gotten the larger recycling bins. What are we waiting for? Its budgeted in the 2017 Budget. I keep asking for this and there is no answer, no answer; and I keep getting phone calls from the residents telling me, 17 recycling bins with a bag of additional recycling. I need to know. Are we going to do this?- or we are not going to do this?- because I can't continue to answer the phone call and not get a response or answer e-mails where, Oh yeah, we are working on it, we are working on it. Working on it is getting old. So, either we are going to do the recycling bins with more surface area on the tops or we are not going to do it. Just tell me, listen we are not going to do it, so I'll stop talking about it, I sound like a broken record. I won't talk about it anymore. So let's make the point, I want an update on

the recycling bins and I want an update in regards to the cardboard and I asked for an update from Fred in reference to the additional monies that they need from the \$22 million that we have that will be allocated toward programming in the parks and also toward upgrades of the parks. Those are all things that have been pending, if we can't get them on the 24th, I don't have a problem extending them to the following Commission meeting, but I need answers.

Ms. Cruz: The problem that we have with enforcing issues to do with code is that we do not have enough people to handle it. On the weekends, you have one person Saturday, one person Sunday; the people know when they are around. You know the City is not five blocks, OK; we are large enough that if something happens down south the rest of the City is wide open, OK. One person Saturday and one person Sunday is not enough. You have had a vacancy in Code Enforcement since December; it's still unfilled, OK. You have the hours – I've discussed this with the City Manager way back, the hours, you know what, that thing was happening Sunday, because they knew that nobody was going to check on them. If you send Code Enforcement home at 4 o'clock or 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., you know what, now when there is daylight people are going to be doing things. You know you have to be flexible; you have to have the hours to encompass the possibility of people doing things. It cannot be, you know, every day from 7 to 4 or to 5, you know its daylight till what, 8 p.m., people are going to be working outside till that time. You know we have to be a little more flexible. The roofs are dirty, the trash outside is impossible; and I'm sorry, but I don't think you can blame Code Enforcement employees. I think they are overwhelmed. Let me tell you, there is graffiti all over the place. I called because I knew there was somebody who took care of graffiti. He says now we are short one person, I'm doing their job, I cannot do graffiti. Hello. We need to support them and we need more people.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Maria. OK. Anything else? Meeting adjourned.

[End: 1:19:33 p.m.]