

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
May 11, 2010
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
City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

F-2 [Start: 9:56:54 a.m.]

Discussion regarding the City of Coral Gables supporting the resurface project of Sunset Drive from Cocoplum Circle to Red Road to include bicycle lanes.
Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.

Mayor Slesnick: F-2 Mr. Cabrera.

Commissioner Cabrera: Thank you. This hopefully will be simple. I learned through County Commissioner Gimenez’ office, District 7 County Commissioner Carlos Gimenez office, that Miami-Dade County is about to embark upon a resurfacing project on Miller between Cocoplum Circle or Cartagena Circle and Davis Road, I believe, and what Commissioner Gimenez and I talked about was, well first of all the funding for this project will be through Federal stimulus money, so the County will be using Federal stimulus money in order to resurface it, and there are some additional dollars that the County has in order to potentially look at a bicycle lane for this area; and incidentally not only is it being resurfaced, it’s also going to be made ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant, which I think is a phenomenal initiative; and what Commissioner Gimenez staff suggested was that the Coral Gables City Commission show support for bicycle lanes, because they are going back and forth with the County’s Public Works Department to try to get this accomplished. So the purpose of bringing this item up to you this morning is to solicit your support for bicycle lanes with an understanding that the City of Coral Gables is not going to be asked to, or I’m committing you all to fund any of this, I’m simply asking for your support in trying to make that stretch along that very, very busy roadway a safer route for cycling. So that’s the purpose of this discussion.

Commissioner Anderson: You are looking for resolution and support?

Commissioner Cabrera: I would love resolution from the five of us, and if we don't think we want to do that because we don't want to over-commit ourselves, I guess the other thing I would ask for is then a letter that would be signed by all five of us, but ideally, Ms. Anderson, a resolution would be the best way to go on this one. So how do you all feel about this?

Mayor Slesnick: I support it, but let me ask you this Ralph, a resolution, I don't want to hold up the entire project, I mean, in other words it's still in the County's hands.

Commissioner Cabrera: It is, it is their project.

Mayor Slesnick: If it's OK with you, I would like to make it so it is our suggestion and if we support it, that it's our unanimous support for them to consider it, but that they....

Commissioner Cabrera: We are not going to slow them down. Listen Don, they are moving ahead, and what Carlos is trying to do is get them to understand how important it is to have bicycle lanes down the stretch of road, and so that's all it is. It's a conceptual or fundamental support for what he's trying to do without committing us from a budgetary standpoint or from a project standpoint. So that's really what it's all about. That particular stretch of road a lot of cyclist go through there on week days as well as weekends, and it's a dangerous stretch, and so this is just a wonderful way – Hey look, the bottom line is, any time we or the County or the State or the Federal government resurfaces a roadway it should be looking to find a bicycle way for that roadway. There's really no excuse for it, but they keep ignoring that kind of stuff, and that's why I'm trying to get the political body to support it, so that the governmental entity will go ahead and look at it as a priority. That's it and if I can garner your support great, if I can't, then what I'll probably end up doing is just sending a letter from my office and making sure that everyone at the county level understands that it's from one member of the City Commission in an informal basis.

Commissioner Withers: Here are my concerns Ralph. Number one, I don't think it's going to be used by local neighborhood families with their kids, because if they have a sidewalk option I would think they would rather have their kids on the sidewalk.

Commissioner Cabrera: It's illegal to have a bicycle on the sidewalk.

Commissioner Withers: That's my concern, if we now put a bike lane on Sunset, what are the neighbors and the parents going to think about, now am I going to have to put my kids out on Sunset Road to ride their bikes as opposed to keeping them on the sidewalk. I don't know what the city's position is going to be on that if we have a dedicated bicycle lane, I mean, right now I think a parent has a pretty good argument that I'm going to ride on the sidewalk with my kid. If I now have a bicycle lane on busy Sunset, which I don't know if Sunset Road was ever designed to have an extra three feet in a bicycle lane. So I don't think it's going to be used by neighbors, I think it's going to be used by the weekend cyclist mostly, which is fine. So that's a concern.

Commissioner Cabrera: But the weekday cyclist that live in that immediate neighborhood that also use it. While I understand your concern for a parent – look a parent is not going to take their 5 or 7 or 10 year old child and allow them to use the bike lane on Alhambra, that's not going to happen. A parent is going to use the Alhambra sidewalk. I've never seen a small child on...

Commissioner Withers: Honestly, I didn't know there was a bike lane on Alhambra.

Commissioner Cabrera: Oh yes, we've got one that stretches from Coral Way all the way to...

Commissioner Withers: Oh that part of Alhambra, OK, OK. So, I mean, I don't know what the city's position is; is it something that we should get neighborhood involvement or resident involvement in? I mean, I like the idea, I really do, I just don't want to create something that we are going to end up having to deal with the consequences.

Commissioner Cabrera: Well, as I said before, we've got bicycle lanes throughout our city, in some spots of our city, and I never see small children on those bicycle lanes, I only see adults.

Commissioner Withers: I know that.

Commissioner Anderson: I've never seen one on Alhambra.

Commissioner Cabrera: But you do see bicyclist on the bike lane, right?

Commissioner Anderson: Right

Commissioner Withers: Listen Ralph, I like the idea, I mean, we should be more bicycle friendly in our city. I just want to make sure that the neighbors and the residents know they still use the sidewalks and not obligated to use a bicycle lane.

Commissioner Cabrera: I don't believe it – well I mean, I understand your concern, I don't get it because I just don't see parents putting their kids out there, and I don't see Police officers enforcing small children to move to bicycle lanes, but I mean, your point is well taken. Bottom line is if we end up not supporting it as a group, that's fine with me; I didn't expect us to be as controversial, so I'll just go ahead and...

Commissioner Anderson: I have no problem, as long as there is not budgetary impact, as long as there is resolution support, I don't have any problem with it.

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Manager you had something to add to this.

City Manager Salerno: I think certainly we all recognize Commissioner Cabrera's strong interest in bike paths, the only thing I would offer for your consideration, additional information in that regard, is that the county has said that they are going forward with this project; they did consider bike paths initially; however, they said there is an existing, and it may make a difference to you

all and what you actually write and communicate to the county, if you decide to do so. There is an existing ordinance in the county that prohibits bike paths on historic roadway; this is a historic roadway, and it's my understanding that you need to modify, and the county has said that there would need to be a modification of the county ordinance in order to provide for a bike path. There are no city dollars involved, there are plus or minus fifty residences along that roadway, I think as Commissioner Withers is pointing out, in order to put a bike path, and if you were to put a bike path, since there are no plans we can only talk speculatively, it would need to encroach we understand about four feet into the right-of-way on both sides of the roadway. So in that respect the input from residents may be desired.

Commissioner Withers: I don't think they are talking about building a bike path, I think they are just talking about restriping the road, aren't they?

City Manager Salerno: No.

Commissioner Cabrera: No, they are going to have to widen the road, and incidentally I provided the City Manager's office with all of this information that I received from Commissioner Gimenez' office, so when I decided to bring this before you, I went ahead and gave Ms. Menendez an entire litany of e-mails going back and forth with all the historic issues, but this is not to say that just because the road is historic it doesn't deserve to have a bicycle lane, it just was one of the issues or variables that was affecting this project.

Mayor Slesnick: Ralph what if we have a resolution that we'll send to Commission Gimenez encouraging him to continue his efforts to provide for bike lanes on all of our roads where he can, and specifically mention the resurfacing of Sunset.

Commissioner Cabrera: That's fine. I'll send my own letter, but that's fine.

Mayor Slesnick: Well I meant – but that way we leave these technical issues in his hands.

Commissioner Withers: If we are going to take four feet of right-of-way on each side of the road, that concerns me.

Commissioner Cabrera: Well first of all, I'm not sure its four feet, OK?- so I don't know where that came from, so I can't comment. As I told you before, I made the City Manager's office aware of this, OK, maybe the Public Works Department knew about it, but I didn't know about it until a very well meaning resident made a request to Commissioner Gimenez and Carlos' office contacted me and said, hey this would be really helpful if you all would support this as well. That's it, OK?

Mayor Slesnick: My suggestion was that we weren't going to get into the technicalities, nor do we suggest taking any land. I thought that since Carlos Gimenez, our County Commissioner, is making his best effort to provide for a bike path that we pass a resolution, which supports Carlos Gimenez and his efforts to carry on the work providing bike paths where possible on all county roads.

Commissioner Withers: Absolutely. Right. Listen, I love Carlos to death, but I don't want to see a black asphalt bike path on Sunset Road. I mean, we have pink sidewalks; the weekend cyclists that ride in there, 15-20 guys or gals, they are not going to use the bike path, I don't think, Ralph knows that, I think they are going to out on the highway anyway. So this bike path is going to be used by residents and maybe the occasional biker, and whatever. I don't want a black asphalt bike path like along Old Cutler on Sunset Drive.

Commissioner Cabrera: That's not the intent. But you are already creating...

Commissioner Withers: I know. I just want to make sure that – I don't mind supporting this, but I want it tastefully done, I mean...

Mayor Slesnick: Bike lanes.

Commissioner Withers: You mean part of the road?- that's OK; I have no problem with that.

Commissioner Cabrera: Let me do this, let me do this; let me do this, Don I'm going to withdraw this item for now. I'll just withdraw the item and....

Commissioner Withers: I'm prepared to support it Ralph.

Commissioner Cabrera: But you've got questions, staff has got some commentaries to make. Let me do this; I made staff aware of this, OK, and nobody really – the only thing somebody did was ask me, what would you like me to do?- and I said, well I'm bringing it before the Commission on Tuesday, OK, that was last Thursday, they asked me, what would you like me to do? So obviously staff didn't think it would require enough of an initiative from their side to try to answer a lot of these particular issues, so let me withdraw the entire thing, let me get some more information from County Commissioner Gimenez' office and maybe we will still have that window of opportunity to support this project, maybe not, and that way I can come back to all of you, how's that?

Mayor Slesnick: That's fine. I'm willing to support it.

Commissioner Cabrera: You know, I'm not going to do the leg work behind this stuff, that's not my job and none of you do that kind of work either, so I don't see why we need to continue to talk about this when obviously there is a lot of missing information. So I'll rely upon Commissioner Gimenez' staff to try to brief us, and as I said before, if the window of opportunity is there, then perhaps at the next Commission meeting we'll be able to take a more formal position, alright.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Sounds good.

Commissioner Cabrera: Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you.

[End: 10:09:28 a.m.]