

**City of Coral Gables
Virtual Commission Meeting
April 21, 2020
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

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

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
Deputy City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
Assistant City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton
City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item B-1 – Mayor’s Comments

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Mayor's comments. I wish everybody when Commission members, Peter Iglesias, our City Manager, and Miriam Soler, our City Attorney, Billy Urquia, our City Clerk, and other staff (INAUDIBLE) this morning, a very, very virtual good morning. I would also like to extend a special welcome to all our City residents joining us remotely. We welcome your interest and participation in this unusual manner for conducting business in Coral Gables. For our City and the world, this past month has been one that is unprecedented in history. I'd like to once again extend most sincere thanks to all our dedicated public servants for working diligently to ensure that we are providing the best service for our residents during these challenging times. Our police department is at the ready to respond. They and our public service aides continue patrolling our streets. Fire and Rescue personnel continue responding to calls and assisting those in need. Our team at Public Works continues providing garbage and trash pickup and recycling

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continues as well. Crews are working to maintain our swales, keep our "City Beautiful" beautiful. I've had the opportunity to meet these men and women at their stations and the equipment yard and I couldn't be prouder of their fine work. They're doing a wonderful, wonderful job and I'm especially proud of their commitment and dedication. The uncertainty created by the spread of the COVID-19 has greatly affected all of us and we have sought creative ways to operate the City government. For example, notwithstanding what you hear, we are accepting construction plans at City Hall. This is an effort not to delay building permits and keep businesses moving. And just like first responders, our inspectors continue working to serve the public. And why is accepting permits innovated? Well, we are accepting them at the side entrance of City Hall. And before one can even step in, their temperature is taken in an effort to keep everyone safe. Keeping our resident safe has been our top priority, which is why we instituted the closure of our parks, the Youth Center, golf courses and instituted a curfew. I want people to maintain social distance and help stop the spread. Along these lines, some have asked why we haven't opened a COVID-19 testing site. The City Manager, the Fire Chief, and medical experts will address this later on in the meeting. I'm especially proud of our preparation. Our team, led by our City Manager, was ready -- I repeat, was ready and had many of the resources in place that many other municipalities scrambled to procure, such as masks. That is preparation and that is foresight. Our business community has been especially hard hit by the pandemic, as you know. To this end, I'm requesting that our City Manager instruct the Economic Development Department, if needed, to assist businesses located in the City if they need help with (INAUDIBLE) and (INAUDIBLE). I'm also instructing our City Manager to have our Economic Development Department people call our consulates to offer our help. We -- and with the Spanish team, with the Spanish consulate, really help (INAUDIBLE) by providing them needy -- very needy materials that they needed in order to return to Europe and they're very, very grateful. And to really help our businesses, I urge you all to shop local now with takeout or however you can. Earlier this month, we celebrated Passover and Easter and I had an opportunity to reflect on these holidays which speak to overcoming adversity, coming together and emerging stronger. I remain optimistic that as this has happened in the past, this global crisis will also pass. As Rahm Emanuel, former Mayor of Chicago said, "A crisis is a terrible thing to waste," and I believe this crisis gives us a unique opportunity to rethink how we do things and emerge even stronger from this pandemic. As we look to the future, we

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must focus on our strengths as a City. These strengths will be the key to our recovery. As a collaborative body, we need to have a view from 30,000 feet up and chart a course for the future. In the weeks and months ahead, I urge my colleagues and our citizens to share ideas that can positively impact the city in new ways. Along these lines, I'm asking the Administration to look for new ways to improve things, helping merchants, attracting businesses (INAUDIBLE) plans reviewers, expediting them. Another example (INAUDIBLE) projects (INAUDIBLE) replaced the highly successful Umbrella Sky project at City Hall, which had millions and billions of hits and dozens and dozens of people (INAUDIBLE). It's going to attract more local visitors to our restaurants and retail establishments and help us, our businesses, get to work. Or it can be one distinguishing feature of our City and a successful downtown benefits all. For our more than 50,000 residents, please remember that we're all in this together and we're better together. And to our City employees, I reiterate my deepest gratitude for your commitment and care, not only for our residents but also for each other. Please remember, stay home, stay safe and stay healthy in Coral Gables. Thank you very much.