

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D – Public Comment
January 24, 2023
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jim Cason

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suarez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item D [9:40 a.m.]
Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Moving onto to Public Comment. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have one member of the public requesting to speak today, its Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Cruz: This is not as good as the previous comment. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I'm not a lobbyist, I'm a resident, I'm a taxpayer who has lived here since, we bought our house in 1976. We, the people that live in this great country have federal, state, municipal laws, ordinances, rules that we are expected to follow. If we don't follow them, there are consequences. I'm a retired educator, as you all know, and sometimes I have things that I do not clearly understand and I bring them up. We have a City Attorney and I believe we have a City Prosecutor. We are told that the

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City Attorney's job is to defend and protect the city. Now the question is, who is the city? – are the residents, the taxpayers not the city? When someone, I believe, I think, when someone interferes with what we consider our rights, we should not have to get an attorney, because our City Attorney should go after whoever does wrong. I know we do have a Code Enforcement Department, but that is not always the answer. Case in point – developers, individuals buy property and they decide what they want to build on it. The neighbors, the residents do not like it, they start the process to challenge what the developer wants to do. They go to different boards, they get turned down, so the next step they have is to appeal, and they say we are going to appeal. But during the appeals period, the developer decides to start doing things, to modify what's there. Code Enforcement is called and I want you to know that I made four or five calls yesterday, and there was no answer, no answer, okay. I called every number I knew that should have been answered, even one that is no longer a Code Enforcement number and I got connected with the police and they switched me back to Code Enforcement. I couldn't get an answer. So, this is the question – who should be defending the applicant's due process? Who is going to handle the persons or parties who violates the rules? Since this proposed project will come before the elected officials and most likely will, should any Commissioner be involved in suggesting, finding or arranging for anything related to it. Shouldn't the process be allowed to proceed without any interference from elected officials? People elected you and elect officials to represent them. In fact, when running for office most of you never said that it would be what you think is best, but what the people want. Has there been some sort of poll or referendum done to see what the people who paid most of the city taxes want? I know that businesses are important, but we pay most of the share. When did the taxpayers tell any or all of you that they want all this humungous development. Please, all you have to do is drive around our city and you see what I'm talking about. Now that I drop off my granddaughter at Gables High every morning, and I drive LeJeune, its like we have a wall on the east side. There are more buildings than I have ever, this is worst than Brickell at this point, and anywhere I drive here, I look east, big buildings, I look south, big buildings. There is only a little part on this side that's still not excessively built. Is that what most of us want? Perhaps it is time for some of you to be brave enough to ask us. Don't let what you call a small group like me, lead the way. Ask the residents and settle this issue. I say enough is enough. Stop granting variances, all these changes, all the rezoning and ask the people. Ask those of us that live here what we want. The time has come for people to know that when they buy property in the City of Coral Gables we do have a Comprehensive Plan and if you buy a lot that says that it's a residence, not a duplex, not a townhouse, not a little office, that we will enforce that. You need to please, please listen to the people before it gets worse. I say there are no more variances, no more changes, no more excuses, no more waivers. I'm sorry, the time has come for you to listen to the people. We're not happy. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

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