

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-1
February 26, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Services Division Director, Brook Dannemiller

Public Speaker(s)

Fabiana Gonzalez
Maria Cruz

Agenda Item I-1 [0:00:00 p.m.]

A presentation by FDOT District 6 staff regarding the safety related improvement project on US-1 and its impact on landscaping on the right-of-way.

City Manager Iglesias: Mr. Mayor, the DOT is here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

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City Manager Iglesias: DOT is here.

Commissioner Mena: (INAUDIBLE) is here for the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. DOT. G-2.

Commissioner Mena: I-1.

Commissioner Keon: I-1.

City Attorney Ramos: I-1.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I-1, I'm sorry. I don't have...

Commissioner Mena: That was for 10 am.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I-1, DOT.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, we have FDOT. We have Fabiana. She's the project manager for the project and her team, so I'll let her introduce her team, and this is for the US-1 project.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Guys.

Fabiana Gonzalez: Good morning.

Commissioner Mena: Hi.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good morning.

City Commission Meeting

February 26, 2019

Agenda Item I-1 - Presentation by FDOT District 6 staff regarding the safety related improvement project on US-1 and its impact on landscaping on the right-of-way.

Vice Mayor Lago: How are you?

Ms. Gonzalez: My name is Fabiana Gonzalez, and I am the project manager for FDOT District 6. I'm here with my consultant, Eugene Ochoa.

Commissioner Mena: Hello.

Ms. Gonzalez: He's the designer for this project. Kevin (INAUDIBLE), who is the -- our landscape architect for the district. And we have some boards, which we'll bring up in a little while. But can we pull up the presentation? We put a brief...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please.

Ms. Gonzalez: Presentation together.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please.

Ms. Gonzalez: Okay. How do I point?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Ms. Gonzalez: Okay. So, I'm here to present to you the US-1 landscape project, which goes from Ponce de Leon Boulevard to Douglas Road, which is 37th, as you know. The financial ID number is 433455-5. And like I said, this project runs from -- bear with me.

Commissioner Quesada: You're not -- the pointer doesn't work on the screen.

Commissioner Mena: The pointer's not going to work on the screen.

City Commission Meeting

February 26, 2019

Agenda Item I-1 - Presentation by FDOT District 6 staff regarding the safety related improvement project on US-1 and its impact on landscaping on the right-of-way.

Commissioner Quesada: Yeah.

Ms. Gonzalez: Oh, no?

Vice Mayor Lago: No.

Ms. Gonzalez: But it just did it. Alright, so basically, it runs from Ponce de Leon to Douglas and also includes the intersection of Riviera Drive, which is the one you see here at the bottom. So, this project started as a safety project. And if you notice, the last number of the FM is a little different. It's 433455-1. This was a safety job which the main intent of this project was actually to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries. It was...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do we have the statistics on the fatalities?

Ms. Gonzalez: I don't have it with me, but I can get it for you. It was actually in our high crash list, so it was one of the intersections that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. I would like to see that.

Ms. Gonzalez: Sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me tell you where I'm coming from. We were very proud, in 1989, when we planted those palm trees. It was the first, I think, landscaping on US-1. And many people said, you know, those royal palms, the fronds are going to come down. And I call them Chicken Little because there's not one incident of a frond affecting a car, not one. Cars have had crashes there because of the irrigation, because of whatever it is, maybe because of the reverse curbs. But my impression is that FDOT, any time they can take trees down and any time they -- any time that they can soil beautiful streets with removing trees and putting concrete, you love concrete. And

we love our trees and we love our canopies and we love that. And I'm very, very much against what you're doing there without replacing significant -- I mean, those significant trees with other trees, and I don't think you're going to do that. Whatever you tell us, I don't believe because you're not going to replace that. And if I had anything to do with this, we're going to sue you if we can because you guys are destructive of our canopy and our duty in Coral Gables. Go ahead, now that I've said my -- go ahead.

Ms. Gonzalez: Okay. Can we go back to the presentation? So, one of the main intents -- and I'm glad you brought up the trees -- of this project is -- and I'm glad you're familiar with the reverse curves, which is one of the main causes for the accidents and the fatalities taking place along US-1. Now, one of the intentions of this project is to replace the palm trees that are along the median.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why?

Ms. Gonzalez: Because it's part of the beautification of this project.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But there's no beautification.

Ms. Gonzalez: The palm trees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's part of whatever you do to our streets and it's not beautification to replace 25-year-old royal palms with anything. Don't call it...

Ms. Gonzalez: We're putting them back.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautification.

Ms. Gonzalez: We are putting them back. The intention of this project is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's what you say, yes.

Ms. Gonzalez: We have to remove them to be able to align -- to realign the roadway.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To plant it in somewhere else.

Ms. Gonzalez: We're planting...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Which are you going to put back?

Ms. Gonzalez: I'll show you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Ms. Gonzalez: Where we're putting them in. I was just giving a brief history of the project. Now, the schedule of the -- the construction's already underway for the roadway side. However, the landscape was -- is being done as a separate project. As soon as the roadway finishes construction, the landscape part -- portion of it will start which -- in which the department is putting in the royal palms back to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You're taking out 45...

Ms. Gonzalez: Putting it back in the median.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And you're putting back 21?

Ms. Gonzalez: There's existing 45; 16 of those 45 were relocated to the Biltmore in coordination with the City of Coral Gables and then we're putting in 21. So, that's a total of 37.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, that's not...

Ms. Gonzalez: Palm trees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: 37. It's 21 on US-1. It's not 37.

Ms. Gonzalez: I mean, from the 45 that were existing.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Now, we're getting 21, which is what, 29 less or fewer palm trees.

Ms. Gonzalez: And that's something that we can work out in coordination with City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We would very much...

Ms. Gonzalez: We're open to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Like for you to work out.

Ms. Gonzalez: If we need to add a few more royal palm trees, then we will. That's not -- we're not close to that (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We've gotten international recognition for that landscape and you've come and you've taken them out and that's wrong.

Commissioner Keon: (INAUDIBLE) giving them away?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You're the landscape person, right?

Unidentified Speaker: No. I'm a civil engineer. The landscape...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm sorry. Who's the landscape person here?

(LAUGHTER)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm going to blame anybody I can because I think it's...

Vice Mayor Lago: Cast a wide net...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Obscene.

Vice Mayor Lago: A wide net, so watch out.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It is obscene what FDOT has done with our beautiful US-1.

Vice Mayor Lago: You know, if I may, Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead, yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let me vent.

Vice Mayor Lago: Go ahead. No, vent, vent, vent. I agree.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Lago: I under -- we all understand your position. We all understand.

City Commission Meeting

February 26, 2019

Agenda Item I-1 - Presentation by FDOT District 6 staff regarding the safety related improvement project on US-1 and its impact on landscaping on the right-of-way.

Ms. Gonzalez: No. And I understand yours as well.

Vice Mayor Lago: But we're a Tree City, USA, 30 years running. And if you noticed, we were just discussing trees on a supposed lot split that we just approved that we never approve in the city, okay, which is not a lot split. I want to be clear. I brought up trees. The Commissioner brought up trees. We're talking about trees. Trees are very -- like when you talk about Coral Gables, when you say City Beautiful, it's all about the canopy.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's trees.

Vice Mayor Lago: It's about the beautification. And we spend a lot of money on landscaping, maintaining landscaping.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: These are 28-year-old palm trees.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, it...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Which you took out.

Vice Mayor Lago: I understand the situation you're in, but we want to do everything within our power to make sure that what is replaced after you finish this project -- I'm not a traffic engineer. I won't pretend to be one, and I have to trust in your ability to deliver safe streets, especially on US-1, which is already a nightmare, especially with what's proposed in that area in regards to development, which is forthcoming. So, I think that we need to obviously have a little bit of trust in you, which I think we do. But the issue is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I don't.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to make sure -- I just want to make sure that what you deliver in regards to trees, landscaping, is something that is in line with what we, as residents of the City of Coral Gables expect.

Ms. Gonzalez: And in this project -- and I fully understand and that was one of the things that we took into account at least when I acquired this project a few years ago, which was landscape was one of the key components of this project, not only the safety portion of it, but also the landscape because I've worked with City of Coral Gables before and I understand how important it is to the City to keep the canopies and the trees. And these -- especially these particular palm trees that were put in in the late '80s and costed a large amount of money at that time. So, the intention...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You did the Granada project...

Ms. Gonzalez: At least my goal is to keep...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And you haven't replaced trees with anything. Granada and US-1. You expanded the turning lanes and whatever and taken trees down.

Vice Mayor Lago: Are you familiar with that project?

Commissioner Mena: Which project?

Ms. Gonzalez: Which one?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They did it.

Commissioner Keon: At Granada and US-1. I think you expanded the left-turn...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Granada and US-1.

Commissioner Keon: Lane.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: The left-turn lanes. I think you extended...

Ms. Gonzalez: I'm not sure.

Unidentified Speaker: That might be another project. We're not...

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Ms. Gonzalez: US-1 and what was that?

Vice Mayor Lago: And Granada.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Granada.

Ms. Gonzalez: I...

Commissioner Keon: I think they took out some trees when they extended the left-turn lane, so I don't think there was a place to put trees back.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Left turn and right turn, taking trees down.

Ms. Gonzalez: I'm not familiar with that one. I do apologize.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Finish your presentation.

Ms. Gonzalez: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I promise I won't interrupt anymore, but you can see how...

Ms. Gonzalez: But it's okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Upset I am.

Ms. Gonzalez: You have very valid questions, so I appreciate it. So, let me show you what we're proposing, and this is what we currently have in our plans. So, between Ponce and Douglas -- so, Ponce being far left intersection, Douglas being on the right. We're showing -- you can see the row of palm trees where they go up to. We could extend that if we get the request from the City to extend the royal palms further a little bit more.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Absolutely.

Ms. Gonzalez: And then, on the sides, where we have this red velvet, which is a type of succulent. We got a request from the City asking for some sort of planting that is drought resistant. So, instead of putting in our normal grass, we're putting in red velvet, which is a type of succulent on the ends.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Which is not going to last in US-1, do you think?

Unidentified Speaker: It was a request by the City.

Ms. Gonzalez: Right.

Unidentified Speaker: And your landscape...

Ms. Gonzalez: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Which is not going to last on US-1, but go ahead. Go ahead.

Ms. Gonzalez: And then at the intersection of Riviera, as you can see, the red velvet is also there and then the median is actually too small to put in royal palms, so what we did is that we put them on the...

Commissioner Keon: The swale.

Ms. Gonzalez: Just the...

Unidentified Speaker: Swale.

Unidentified Speaker: On the swale.

Ms. Gonzalez: On the swale part on the east side of the intersection. Now, we did receive two different requests from City of Coral Gables from the landscape folks. And one of the requests was to put in, instead of royal palms along -- in the median, to put in Medjool palms. Now, this was -- well, requested Medjools in the median, live oak trees on the sides, to upgrade the irrigation system, which we did include that on the option with the royal palms, and this option was coming out to \$563,000. The department's budget is \$286,000. So, in an effort to try and reduce that 563 while still accommodating some of the City's requests for the Medjools, we reduced the number of Medjools, which would mean less palm trees along the median and we eliminated the oak trees on the sides. This brought it down to 463.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And maybe we could bring it down to zero if you eliminate all planting, Brook? Yeah, we can eliminate it down to zero.

Commissioner Keon: You just told us...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We only have 400,000...

Commissioner Keon: That palm trees are free in Homestead.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Cars passing through there and it is our -- you know, let's eliminate -- let's bring it down to zero.

Vice Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is that what you want?

Vice Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Come on.

Vice Mayor Lago: I never said that they were free. And let's...

Commissioner Keon: They're giving them away.

Vice Mayor Lago: Let me ask you a question, Brook, since the Commissioner brought this up. This is becoming interesting.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It is.

Vice Mayor Lago: Are palm trees cheaper today than they were ten years ago?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The market's about the same on them. There's...

Vice Mayor Lago: But they're cheaper today? You can buy them. I mean, there's a lot of them in stock.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: It depends.

Vice Mayor Lago: What's more in demand, shade trees, like oak trees or a palm tree?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay. The cost -- I mean, I know how much they cost.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Vice Mayor Lago: I know, but I mean, I know they're in more demand so you can't find larger species. There's a lot more palm trees for sale, so again...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I don't think that you're very much aware of the importance of those palm trees and the importance of landscaping on US-1. And I -- and the shrubs that you want to put, those little flowers, that's not going to last with the pollution and the...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, the original set of plans that Coral Gables Public Works Department received to review was back in May of 2017. We provided our comments about a week later. The original plans had 69 royal palms shown on the plans -- or on the table and 60 shown on the physical plans. There was a little discrepancy. We marked up the plans, sent it back and with the same number of trees. We just requested palms on the middle and oaks on the sides. And....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And now we're taking down -- because in order...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: And so...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To save money...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The first set of plans...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They're reducing...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: We can -- the -- FDOT said they've been sending us the plans. We hadn't received them. We don't know if there was a firewall or something that prevented them, but we have not received any updated plans. I saw these plans for the first time around 9 o'clock this morning. I'm concerned that there's only 21 palms in the median. The original plans had 30-some in the median and another 20-some on the sides.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Then put 40-some in the median or 30-some in the median as opposed to 29. Do you realize the initial -- the original plan for this median? We had the royal palms and then we had ixoras winding around the palms.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: And we still have that, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And they looked beautiful.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: And so the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We don't have it anymore. We have concrete.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: And that's our concern as well is that there -- we went from over 60 palms to 30 -- I think we're down to like 21 to 30-some and only 21 are in the median.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And two blocks -- which I'm sure they haven't gotten to yet -- and they will get to them and then we will eliminate those too.

Commissioner Mena: But what are our options?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, the -- our request that we've been asking FDOT for is to do Sylvester date palms in the middle and do oak trees on the side. And the Sylvesters are -- they're a better scale for that corridor and they will -- they're slightly skinnier, but they have the rougher trunk and they're -- it's a good -- it's more drought tolerant because the majority of our water use in the city for irrigation zones comes from that US-1 corridor. And so doing drought-tolerant plants will reduce our water consumption and look nicer because it's not going to get stressed when we have to turn the irrigation off because of accidents and things like that. So, we've met with Planning and Zoning and Historic, and we had kind of the DRC team discuss what the appropriate plantings would be for that area. And the consensus was let's go with the date palms in the middle and the oak trees on the side.

Commissioner Mena: Who would maintain these?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: What was that?

Commissioner Mena: Who would maintain these trees?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The -- SFM's our contractor to do the maintenance.

Commissioner Mena: The City.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah. But the irrigation has been off in that section for years, so that section has always looked a little raggedy.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, we want to make sure that the planting -- and the markup that was sent back in 2017 was for dwarf (INAUDIBLE), not with the red velvets. We had had discussion on that, but we haven't had plans to review since then, and so that was our concern was that the project's moving forward and we haven't given our final approval of the (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Mena: Is there any...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: How long do you think...

Ms. Gonzalez: I think we're having an issue with the firewall because we've been sending -- I've personally been sending plans. The last time I sent them was February 8 and we have -- I can show you all the emails. I showed you some outside starting since like November of last year when we implemented some of the changes that -- the landscape was basically separated into its own FM, into its own financial ID number in order to have more time to beautify this area and to be able to put in as much of a landscape back as possible. So, the options we've considered so far were, as you can see on the presentation, the Medjool palms, which will be a cost difference -- it will be a cost increase from the department's budget. Like I mentioned, it's 286, which is for the royal palms. If the City wants something...

Vice Mayor Lago: Nicer.

Ms. Gonzalez: Different, in this case, Medjools, it would be a cost difference of \$176,000. That will be the increase. If they want Sylvester, that would be an increase of around \$77,000. This is not including the live oaks on the sides, but it does include irrigation; every option does. So, what the department gave -- the option that we gave the City was we're okay with putting in whichever palm tree you desire, but our budget is 286. So, anything over, the City may have to contribute the delta of that cost.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have 400,000 cars pass through there. And if you put these little purple flowers you're talking about, do you think that's going to survive the...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: We don't...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Pollution, the...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: We have red velvets on...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Four hundred thousand cars?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah. We have red velvets on Le Jeune. We recently removed them and put green island ficus in there because we were replacing them too frequently. The -- our original mockup was for the dwarf (INAUDIBLE), but we'll work with -- the shrub -- the ground cover is the easy part to iron out. It's the...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Getting the tree -- the palms and the trees that we want and the -- because that's the most highly visible and most impactful.

Commissioner Mena: From a hurricane recovery perspective, is there concern with having -- you know, obviously, US-1 is a pivotal corridor. Is there concern with having oak trees versus palm trees? You know, I think...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Well, in the median, it would still be the palms that would be...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: On the sides. The majority of the corridor from where 95 ends to South Miami has oaks, mahoghanies and black olives along the sides. And so...

Vice Mayor Lago: Can I ask you a question?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hurricane Andrew...

Commissioner Mena: Can I just -- I'm sorry.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: We don't...

Commissioner Mena: Can I just let him finish?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: We don't foresee that being a major issue because you have three lanes on each side and the oak trees might reach the middle of the middle lane at maturity, but that would be...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And our royal palms survived Hurricane Andrew.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, if...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Hurricane Andrew.

Commissioner Mena: No, I'm asking about the oaks, not the royal palms.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. So, the issue -- I just want to learn a little bit more myself. So, when we talk about frangibility -- and I've learned a little bit about this from Ed, who was giving me an explanation about why we can't do this on 57th Avenue and why they're requiring palms versus - - some sort of palms versus a shade tree. Why don't we just go back to the royal palms? Save -- you know, keep the money down. I know, obviously, the Medjools are a lot more beautiful.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: That would be the...

Vice Mayor Lago: The trunks are beautiful.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The Sylvesters, which are slightly...

Vice Mayor Lago: Because you want that because, like you mentioned before, because less water consumption.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The -- less water -- the date palms use less water, but they also -- they grow a little bit slower so they'll be in scale for longer. So, now that it's been about 20, 30 years since the original royal palms were planted, the canopies are way -- they're 30, 40 feet high.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But they're beautiful.

Vice Mayor Lago: And the only reason.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: They are. And...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You have a reputation for not liking trees and cutting trees down. And I get -- we get a lot of emails, you know, why was this beautiful tree chopped down -- it's your reputation.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: I...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm not accusing you of that. But leave well enough alone. I mean, why are we always looking for solutions...

Unidentified Speaker: Agreed.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: To problems that don't exist?

Commissioner Mena: The trees are gone, though, right?

Vice Mayor Lago: They're gone.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, they're...

Commissioner Mena: So, that's not a constructive conversation about where we're going.

Vice Mayor Lago: (INAUDIBLE)

Commissioner Mena: The trees are gone.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. That's my -- and I'm going to -- I don't have anything else to say except for the fact if we go with royal palms or if we go with Sylvester date, can we just have some shade trees on the side? Does -- is there any benefit to that? That's all I'm saying.

Ms. Gonzalez: There's actually -- and the -- at least the live oaks, we did check and we don't have the right-of-way to put in live oaks on the sides.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we're going to have...

Ms. Gonzalez: We did check, though.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The Underline on the side, so...

Ms. Gonzalez: The right-of-way is just not there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Maybe they will have something to say about that, yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: There's no right-of-way.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: There -- we have spots along the right-of-way that they will fit, where the royal palms are relocated to and on the west side, where the original ones were proposed.

Vice Mayor Lago: You have differing opinions.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We will...

Vice Mayor Lago: Do you have sites that you can basically explain to our colleagues here...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah, the original...

Vice Mayor Lago: From FDOT where maybe we can fit some oaks to provide some shade?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Yeah. Originally --- our original plan review request which was to swap out the royal palms on the sides with oak trees in the same spot where they had proposed them. So, it was just a species switch.

Vice Mayor Lago: Because my goal would just be the more trees that line the street -- and maybe you can educate me -- cars will slow down. We have a little bit less SRI. You know, it just cools things down a little bit more and it's more indicative of what the City of Coral Gables stands for. So, that's what I -- I think we should move in that direction. I don't know what my colleagues say. I'd like to see more shade trees and just putting more palm trees.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah. I'd like to see the palm trees back in the median.

Vice Mayor Lago: Oh, I agree on the median, of course.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I would like to see that.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm talking about them on the outside.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: City staff's consensus was that palm should remain in the median and oak trees on the side. The -- we do receive a fair number of complaints. We have at least two claims in the last four years from -- the City has paid out for damage to cars from palm -- royal palm fronds falling. So, we thought, since it was a safety project, that if we switch it to the Sylvester state, then we'll have a less likelihood of fronds falling. They don't get 40-feet tall. You know, they're going to be in that 20- to 30-foot range. They grow a little bit slower, so that'll also help slow traffic.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: How long will it take it for them to grow?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Well, I think it depends on -- we have these palms. We just planted these palms at the historic entrances too, if you want to see the scale. They will probably be taller when we install them because of the height clearances that we need. But I could get -- you know, they grow a few inches every year, so -- but that would keep them in scale because they go in at a mature height versus the royals. They grow really, really fast, so they can kind of grow out of scale over time. Because the ones that we have now...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Maybe by 2050, we'll have some nice palm trees there. I'm sorry. Go ahead with your...

Ms. Gonzalez: Well, we were -- I just asked my engineers if the oaks would fit. And on the south side -- on the south side of the street, we might be able to fit maybe four trees, but it's not going to be a row. So, we can put in -- it'll be maybe about four trees, but it won't give it that effect that you want of the row of trees that you were mentioning. So...

Vice Mayor Lago: Again, I mean, I trust staff's decision. Obviously, I think the entire Commission would like to see what we were talking about, but if it's not a possibility, I understand. Plus, I'm also concerned with, you know, the next 15, 20 years, those trees will grow and are you going to have any issues with the roots and see it in our sidewalks. So, we can't have everything we want...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: But I'd like to see those -- at least the medians -- at least the medians brought to a level that is appropriate with our standards here in the City of Coral Gables. It's representation of what we...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You...

Ms. Gonzalez: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: Have become used to.

Ms. Gonzalez: And we do...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You have heard our concern.

Ms. Gonzalez: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You have heard my very deep concern as to replacing palm trees in the median -- I'm talking about the median -- with concrete, which is what I think you've done. And I will believe it when I see it that you'll put those palm trees back, frankly. Any other -- anything else (INAUDIBLE).

Ms. Gonzalez: That will begin -- that landscape construction will begin some time in December of this year.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Of this -- of '19?

Ms. Gonzalez: Yes. Once the safety roadway job is finished, the landscape will begin. So, around December of this year, January of next year, the landscape portion should start.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why? Why that long?

Ms. Gonzalez: Because the roadway construction goes first. Then once that's finished, the landscape begins. It's a separate landscape standalone project. Any -- and that's just the norm for the district. Projects that have -- that go beyond a certain amount in landscape cost, they become its own landscape project.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, what you're doing there is only a median, obviously, some milling.

Ms. Gonzalez: What we'll do now...

Vice Mayor Lago: Some striping, but you're not doing any -- you're not doing any drainage. You're not doing anything -- reworking the drainage or...

Ms. Gonzalez: For the roadway...

Vice Mayor Lago: Catch basins.

Ms. Gonzalez: Portion, yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Catch basis and all that -- you are.

Ms. Gonzalez: For the roadway portion, yes. Because we're realigning -- we're removing the reverse curbs that the Mayor mentioned. We're removing those and we're realigning them to make it straight.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, you've got to obviously realign the catch basins and all that.

Ms. Gonzalez: Right. And that's why we have to remove the trees in the meantime. So, until December, you're going to see the palm trees are going to be gone. And then, after December, they're going to go back.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But I would like, please, to invite you back here in our first meeting in December for you to report to us that you have started replacing those palm trees. Would you make a note of that, Mr. City Manager?

Commissioner Mena: Yeah, and I would...

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Commissioner Mena: I would just say, when you all have gotten with Brook and finalized a plan from a landscaping perspective that you're okay with, if you could just come back to us and update us on what that is. Obviously, I think the biggest takeaway is we're not okay with removing 45 palms and putting 21 back. So, if you could just work with our team on how to improve that and come back to us with a plan that we could be comfortable with and we'll get to the finish line here.

Ms. Gonzalez: And the only thing the department, we're requesting at this point, we've had a couple of years of coordination and back and forth. So, the plans for this landscape job are actually supposed to be completed next week. So...

Commissioner Mena: But you're not...

Ms. Gonzalez: We're just...

Commissioner Mena: Starting until December?

Ms. Gonzalez: Right. Well, the lighting is in August.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Ms. Gonzalez: So, the plans are finished and they're put out for bid.

Commissioner Mena: Okay.

Ms. Gonzalez: It just follows a process. They go to Tallahassee, et cetera. So, we just need a decision so that if we need to revise the plans to add more royals or whatever the case may be, we just need to know now.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Ms. Gonzalez: So that...

Commissioner Mena: There's obviously been a communication issue here for whatever reason. He hasn't gotten some of your emails. If you could all please just get together and work to a resolution that incorporates, I think, the obvious sentiment that we need more trees to replace the 45 that were removed. I'm sure we could get something done.

City Manager Iglesias: We will do that, Commissioner.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is your presentation over?

Ms. Gonzalez: Yes. Thank you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Ms. Gonzalez: For your time.

Commissioner Keon: I didn't -- I -- I didn't end up understanding what trees we're putting in. Are we putting in...

Ms. Gonzalez: What we have in the plans...

Commissioner Keon: The date palms or are we putting in...

Ms. Gonzalez: Are royals.

Commissioner Keon: The royals?

Ms. Gonzalez: We have royals in the plans right now, which is within our budget.

Commissioner Keon: With royals in the plans.

Ms. Gonzalez: Anything that goes over the \$286,000, which is the department's funding...

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Ms. Gonzalez: We ask the City to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would like to be...

Ms. Gonzalez: Contribute if they would like something...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very much involved in the...

Ms. Gonzalez: Different.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE)

Commissioner Keon: Oh, okay. So, are you going to come up with a different plan with different palms or...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: So, I mean, the...

Commissioner Keon: Are you going to use royal?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Basically, it seems like the two options are both have oaks on the side and either royals or Sylvester date palms in the middle. And we can have - - the spacing would be the same, so we could...

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: We could ask them to...

Commissioner Mena: Cost the same for royal versus...

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The Sylvester palms...

Commissioner Keon: They're less.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: Sylvester palms will be more.

Vice Mayor Lago: More expensive.

Commissioner Mena: I'm sorry, which ones?

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: The date palms will be more. The Sylvester date palms will cost more.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have 400,000 cars pass through there every day.

Vice Mayor Lago: Commissioner, they said in the previous slide, it said it's about \$77,000 more, correct, for the Sylvester dates?

Ms. Gonzalez: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, again, what they're asking for is the City to pick up that delta.

Public Services Division Director Dannemiller: And is there an opportunity for the City to plant the plant material for the -- for you guys to do the permitting and for us to plant whatever so it doesn't fall within your budget?

Ms. Gonzalez: I would have to ask our construction office. I'm not sure how that would work.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have a member of the public that wishes to be heard. Thank you very much.

Ms. Gonzalez: Thank you so much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Appreciate it.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Brook.

Unidentified Speaker: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: I have several issues. Number one, I think it's, I would say, almost arrogant for somebody to stand here and tell us that there were safety issues and not be able to provide us with the facts. There's safety issues. Okay, how many accidents? Oh, we don't have that information. That's not very good, okay. Number two, I have issues with the staff knowing about this for what, two years? And it seems to me that the people that we elect didn't have any idea what the changes would be until today. Number three, I think the royal palm issue is a big issue. And I think removing those palm trees is a big issue. And I'm sorry, but you know what, we're not into all this different kind of palm of palm trees. We like royal palms, and we have said that many times. And I think it's also very arrogant that you all meet today and, by next week, the landscape plans have to be ready. Hello? I mean, is that enough time for anybody to make decisions? You know what, there comes a time -- and I know that this Commission has done it before -- where you have stood up to Miami-Dade County. Maybe it's time to stand up to the Florida Department of Transportation. There -- it has embarked into a plan to do something in our city because of safety issues where we don't have the facts because of timing issues and everything has to be rush, rush, rush because otherwise the deadline is not going to be met. And now, to add injury -- insult to injury, the trees that we're going to remove are the trees that we paid for, but now, since we have to -- we wanted to go back to what we had, now we have to pay on top of that. You know, we didn't ask for the project. We didn't ask for the trees to be moved. You know what, if they want to do it, they should pay for it. Why should we pay for them to put back what we have always had? Something is wrong. And I think -- the last comment is it's time for your staff, your paid employees, to report to you all and not make decisions without talking to you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Maria. Thank you very much.