

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
May 7, 2024
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-1 [5:25 p.m.]

Discussion of No Parking Signs, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

Mayor Lago: H-1.

Public Works Director Diaz: Again, good afternoon, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director. The reason we're here for this item, I'm sure you're aware sometimes we have a little bit of a tug-of-war between some residents that are concerned about the over proliferation of signs around the city. First, it was the residents who want "no parking" signs before the homes. So what we've done is that in coordination with Kevin Kinney's office, we came up with a SOP, Standard Operating Procedure, for when are we going to agree to put "no parking" signs, and we wanted to bring that to your attention, get your input, make sure that this is something that – So what we're looking at is to have "no parking" signs – put up the slide really quick, just a single slide. So, the idea is that we'll be adding the only places we'll consider adding "no parking" signs is the areas that are

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located within one-tenth of a mile which is 528 feet from a school, parks, commercial, or institutional uses or multi-family residential development. Unless we have documented safety concerns, such as for example, in some intersections where people are parking in the visibility of the triangle or a specific area where people are consistently parking on sidewalks, broken access to driveways, mailboxes, or where it's becoming a problem where solid waste cannot do their pickup because somebody is parking somewhere they are not supposed to, or otherwise recommended by the Police Department. So, it's something very simple, very clear. I want to hear the Commission's opinion about this, and if you are all on board, we'll be more than happy to implement this and moving forward, the city staff will have very clear guidance as to when we are going to approve and when we don't.

Mayor Lago: I didn't want to interrupt you.

Public Works Director Diaz: The last thing I wanted to say, for those who don't meet these criteria, who still don't want people parking in front of their property, we still have the swale package where people want to plant it in accordance with prior Commission resolutions, so they still have a tool.

Mayor Lago: I just wanted to hit on a few points. Okay. I've been talking to you about this for a long time. You get all my emails and out of respect for Marcelo Salupe, who is a big, big advocate of the city, especially beautification, he's always sending us signs. This is something that we have to be very, very careful, because I'm a big proponent of less signs is more. I've tried and I'm going to bring it up now and it's something I would like to work on, see if I can work on it with you, through the Manager's office and with our new team. When you look at certain neighborhoods, you have three signs on a swale.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Mayor Lago: Why can't we devise a new sign that says, "no parking from end of block to end of block."

Public Works Director Diaz: We can do that too.

Mayor Lago: I've brought this up four or five times in the last four years, okay, and instead of having three signs, just have one sign that gives you the authority. Everybody reads it. You cannot park from the end of block to the end of block. It's simple. That's one thing. I would love to do that. I would love to work on that. I brought that up multiple times to see if we can get that done. That's number one. Number two, when do we finish all the signs. I know it has nothing to do with no parking, but since we're talking about signs – the 25 miles an hour signs that are all – you can barely read them.

Public Works Director Diaz: I think we're pretty much done with that.

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Mayor Lago: Okay. If we see any here around the city, I'll send them to you.

Public Works Director Diaz: Over time some signs may fade. It's been a few years already, but I believe that the ones are done.

Mayor Lago: I'm a proponent of as little signs as possible, okay. But when you're going to meet a person that you take away their sign and that's like taking away their child, because they believe that the sign is the deterrent. That's the reason why I wrote the legislation for the swale package. I have the swale package in my yard, and I have the most traffic of anybody that I think on this dais.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We'd do a contest.

Mayor Lago: In between UM, St. Augustine, Doctors Hospital, Riviera, 57th Avenue, U.S.-1, Lennar Center, I can keep going, and guess what I welcome it. I love it. I don't have a problem with it. I love the active lifestyle of it, but there used to be parking issues; UM really worked hard, they got it under control, and planted the ferns, I put the ferns in my swale. I never had an issue ever again and I got rid of my trash pit. I don't have anymore illegal dumping, but people believe that the parking sign is like a deterrent and what they'll do is, they won't park, they just like literally stand right in front of it, and most people are just waiting for cars, waiting for this or that. They are not leaving their car there for 24-48 hours. So, I think that if we can get rid of the signs and I'll show you one. One of them we worked on, remember I pointed out to you in front of Venetian Pool where we did that little work of infrastructure, that civil work that we did on the triangles. Remember we walked that site two years ago. Across the street there was a house with three signs, and I said listen, this person shouldn't have three signs. They were 15 feet away from each other. And the person was like, no, don't take my signs away. Take all the signs away, you put one in the middle, block to block. I want to show you another sign. This is me walking with the Manager to visit a resident two days ago, and I just walked by the sign. I don't know about you, but this sign tells me to do nothing.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, yes.

Mayor Lago: I just gave this to Billy right now because Gabby puts her package together every two or three days and sends to the Manager's office everything – deep trash pits, signs, all kinds of things. So that right there, I try to send the best address I possibly can. That sign right there should be replaced, because that sign hasn't been in service for ten years. So, if somebody goes and removes that sign, it's one less thing to service, it's one eyesore, and I think these are opportunities. Those are low-hanging fruit that I think we have to look around the city and submit to the Manager's office and say – you can't even read it, it's faded.

Parking Director Kinney: There are a couple of things that are in the proposed SOP. One is, we limit the neighborhoods that signs can go into. It has to be adjacent to something. I mean 500 feet

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from something that's generating a lot of traffic. Those are legitimate places where we need to control the swale, and the only issue I would say is, the other thing that the proposed policy that we're going to implement says, it gives us specific distance between signs. And historically what has happened, and I agree completely with you, Mayor is, signs wind up way too close together. But one sign per block, I do think is going to create something of a due process issue for us, because if there's one sign in the middle, if you're on either end of the block, you can claim, I didn't see it, and you may be correct.

Mayor Lago: Okay. But let's be positive. Let's use our better judgement. If we're sitting there and we're about to install a sign, and you see there's five oak trees on the swale and you can't see it, then I understand, but the idea that you can't install, for example in front of Venetian Pool, I'll take you to see it now if you like, you've seen it where you have three signs as far as from here to Matt.

Parking Director Kinney: Absolutely. Those are not appropriate.

Mayor Lago: And there's no trees in the middle, its just green grass swale and I think we can...

Parking Director Kinney: But the new SOP specifically says signs have to be a certain distance.

Mayor Lago: But what I would like to do, through the Manager's office is, entertain my wish. Can we make a template design to show to the Commission that says, no parking and use whatever verbiage you want – no parking from edge of block to edge of block, and then signs like that, so that it will give our staff the necessary teeth to be able to find, to hit somebody with a citation, but we can start eliminating the sign pollution.

Public Works Director Diaz: There are other locations where you do have that, where it says, no parking on block, but that assumes that the entire block does not want parking. Very often it's a specific owner, the owner, the one across the street doesn't want the sign. That may work in places where the entire block – like UM, for example, right, they control that area, so they want no parking on the entire block or there is concurrency among the property owners that they don't want parking on the swale. But sometimes its somebody at the corner and then the ones across the street, because remember, no parking sign means that they cannot park themselves. They might want to be able to park on their swale themselves. So, that will work, I think in some areas, but in some others unless we're going to be telling owners the whole block accepts it or not. That may not be...

Mayor Lago: Look, I'll give you another place, so that my colleagues can go, because my colleagues when they drive and when I drive, you are just trying to get home, you've got a long day, you're trying to pick up your kids, you don't really focus. Go to the Venetian Pool. In the Venetian Pool the parking has a concrete stump about this high with a pole on it that has a sign, and then you go ten feet over and it has another sign. That's city property. We could put it there from edge to edge.

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Parking Director Kinney: I would say one sign is not likely to work there. The email that was forwarded to me today for another location that Hermes and I are working on, Santona, it has a no parking sign. The problem is, where the people are parking, they don't necessarily see the no parking sign in the middle of the block.

Commissioner Fernandez: The Mayor is not wrong on this. You can put one at each end of the block and nobody can say we didn't see the sign. You put it at the center, I understand they came in, they turned around, they parked there, but if we put them on the ends of the block, you're reduced from maybe ten signs to two. We're solving a problem.

Parking Director Kinney: But I think that's what we're trying to accomplish with this.

Mayor Lago: We're using signs to block people from parking. You know its like you have a tree then sign, then tree then sign, then tree then sign.

Commissioner Fernandez: And you'll be surprised they still park.

City Attorney Suarez: So, the proposed policy that's attached would provide that there cannot be signs closer than 75 feet apart, is that accurate.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right, but the Mayor's point is not about the new signs, we're talking about the old signs. And its something that I had brought up to Peter in the past was, do we have a sign inventory.

Public Works Director Diaz: We did a sign inventory several years ago, yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: And do we regularly check those signs. Like the one that the Mayor showed there are tons of them out there and Leo Bueno sends us pictures all the time with signs that...

Mayor Lago: Not Marcelo Salupe, I'm sorry, Leo Bueno.

Commissioner Fernandez: Leo Bueno – signs that are faded, signs that are falling, signs that are crooked. I think this is something that's really simple to do. Just go out there, any sign that's faded take it down. It's a simple solution and that way we start reducing signs. You'll probably have a good five to ten percent of the signs that are out there that are no longer in good use.

Public Works Director Diaz: I think we can turn it into a policy. When the sign is completely faded, we will just take it down without replacing it.

Mayor Lago: That one that's in front of the building that we're in. Remember the building that we went to go see for the trees, with the older couple, that's on that swale right there. You can't even see it. Let's move forward.

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Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Mayor Lago: Move forward. Let's go. I think it's a great idea. I think we're going to finally make Leo Bueno happy.

Public Works Director Diaz: He's not like the ones who stay.

Mayor Lago: This is his thing and by the way, I respect it. I respect that. If he likes it and this is what makes him feel that he's making the city better, I wish we had more people like that.

Commissioner Fernandez: I agree.

Mayor Lago: Anything else for the good of the order. Mr. Clerk, did I miss anything?

City Clerk Urquia: No sir.