

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-5
October 8, 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 Jorge Fors**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-5 [2:34:50 p.m.]

An update regarding Cocoplum resurfacing and Miami-Dade County.
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Vice Mayor Lago, G-5.

Vice Mayor Lago: Oh, this is just...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Cocoplum.

Vice Mayor Lago: Very quick because I know you have to leave at 3. I went with the Police Chief and the City Manager and -- about a week ago, and we visited Cocoplum for other reasons. We took a visit to see Uber and Lyft drivers. And I was taken aback by the actual -- I know we've talked about it a few times and we've gotten a lot of contact from residents. But the current state of the Cocoplum circle is, you know, it's embarrassing, to be honest with you. I know it's outside of our control, but when you talk about ADA compliance and you talk about people in this community, young children, elderly, disabled, the sidewalks are cracked. I don't think a person in a wheelchair could cross the bridge. The existing bridge has received so much discussion as a result of it possibly being revitalized, which is a discussion that we stopped about a year ago. But it's a situation -- and the County needs to be more accountable in regards to what's currently happening in Cocoplum. Because I'm tired of -- and I know that this entire Commission is tired of answering residents and our hands are basically tied. If they're not going to do a project in Cocoplum, if we're not going to do a project, then we at least need to resurface Cocoplum. That is a meeting point. It's a convergence of the City of Miami, South Miami, Coral Gables, Palmetto Bay, Cutler Bay. Everybody meets at the Cocoplum Circle. So, if you take a drive through there -- and I recommend that you do -- we were on site. It just looks like a third-world country, the street. It's that -- that's how bad it is. Another issue that we're going to bring up when we talk about Uber and Lyft in the next two weeks, the amount of garbage -- it's outside of our control -- on the embankment was, to be honest with you, the City Manager saw it -- it was embarrassing. The fence and the gate was torn off completely. So, the embankment, anybody could fall down the embankment. There's no longer a door there. It had been ripped off and was dang -- it was fall -- had fallen onto the embankment. So, these are things that, again, are outside of the City's control. They're controlled by the County. And I -- we need to urge the County to be more accountable.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I agree. And we should write a letter or call or...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm working on a letter and working on a few different items that I've requested...

Commissioner Mena: Ken Russell?

Vice Mayor Lago: From staff. What?

Commissioner Mena: Ken Russell's district?

Commissioner Keon: No.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, no, no, no. That's the County, Miami-Dade County. That's Xavier Suarez.

Commissioner Keon: That's Xavier Suarez.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is the County.

Vice Mayor Lago: Xavier Suarez. Ken Russell's is -- it's close, though, a block away. So...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: This is the County.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, what -- I'm putting together a letter. And what I would like to see is that the letter doesn't just come from me, that it comes from the entire Commission and that we send it to the County Mayor, along with the County Commission, requesting that, you know, there's some accountability here. Because this project that you're about to talk about that's been in the works for years and it's a multimillion-dollar project that the County's considering embarking on, it's back and forth and back and forth, and we got to do something.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, I agree.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Good afternoon, Ed Santamaria, Assistant City Manager, Operations and Infrastructure. Vice Mayor, you're correct. There are a lot of issues at the circle, and particularly, with the pavement. And that's -- what they've been doing for a number of years are short-term fixes. It's a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound. So, that bridge -- the base for that pavement needs to be reworked. It's pretty much a total reconstruction.

Vice Mayor Lago: Sidewalks.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Sidewalks, there's a gray area. Some of those sidewalks might be under our responsibility. We will take care of whatever...

Vice Mayor Lago: No, no, no. On our side -- I apologize for interrupting you. On our side, where we have the little walkway, that's our side, correct? The side of Cocoplum?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: That's correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: Those sidewalks are perfect. They look brand new. It's the other side of the bridge, which would be the east side, correct?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: East side, south side...

Commissioner Keon: South side.

Vice Mayor Lago: South side?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: South side.

Vice Mayor Lago: What was it -- Peter, where we were standing, where we were standing...

City Manager Iglesias: We were on...

Vice Mayor Lago: Where the Uber drivers...

City Manager Iglesias: We were on the north.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah, we're all wrong.

Commissioner Keon: The northwest corner.

Vice Mayor Lago: So...

City Manager Iglesias: The west corner.

Vice Mayor Lago: The point being is that there's an area there...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: North Coral Gables.

Vice Mayor Lago: That I know it's the County, and it's full of garbage and the sidewalks are cracked. And when you come off that bridge and you make an immediate right and you're following -- if you're on the sidewalk, I mean there's a point there where the sidewalk goes from four feet and converges down to two and a half because a portion of the sidewalk has fallen off. We've got to do something.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: If it's our sidewalk, we will take care of it.

Vice Mayor Lago: It's not ours.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That is our sidewalk.

Vice Mayor Lago: You think so?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah, that sidewalk is ours.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: It may be. We're trying to figure that out. That said, that gate, it was actually ours.

Commissioner Keon: That's our gate.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We -- it's our gate.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We built that sidewalk when...

City Manager Iglesias: Well, the -- Mayor, Sunset, Old Cutler and that part of LeJeune belongs to Dade County. On the east side, it's Cocoplum. That's our side right there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think the other one is also ours because we built it in the '90s when Luis Cruz, the owner of that property in the corner took over the sidewalk and put fences and put whatever, and we made him remove it, and we built the sidewalk.

Commissioner Keon: Right. That was that house on the corner.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Right.

Commissioner Keon: Right, that house on the corner.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: In fact, some of that might actually be...

Commissioner Keon: That was that house on the corner of Sunset and LeJeune.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Some of that might be on a private...

Commissioner Keon: And Old Cutler.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Property.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Those improvements may be on private property. So, it's complicated there, that right-of-way, because you have boundaries, you have different jurisdictions, and then you have...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: So, we'll look at it.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Some private property.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I mean, look at it and tell us about it.

Commissioner Keon: You know, the problem with the circle is for years there was a plan. I think it was -- what was it, like 2010, 11 or something. There was a plan for that circle, and then the City modified it to add more planting or something to it. And all of the markings for the circle were redesigned and whatever else. And who was the person there that was at the County at the time? He was their traffic engineer who was at the County at the time and he recently retired. He retired about a year ago.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Jeff Cohen.

Commissioner Keon: Right. You know, they had a plan and a whole -- that had crosswalks and dealt with a whole variety of issues, and there was such a negative response from the local community to the plan that they ended up finally just abandoning that plan and reallocated the money to something else because they could never get a plan that the residents of Cocoplum and the people living on Sunset near the circle were not very, very strongly opposed to. So, it's been -- you know, there was a plan. It got, you know, sent back. It was -- couldn't ever work it out. The money was reallocated to some other project, and so, it's really sort of been allowed to deteriorate, and you just fill in the...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well, let's put pressure on the County.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah. But you need to come up -- the problem is you really -- you need to work with the residents for -- because they want to apply -- is it the Greenbook? What is it? What do they call that, the traffic engineer...

Unidentified Speaker: The Florida Greenbook.

Commissioner Keon: What do they call it?

Unidentified Speaker: The Florida Greenbook, yes.

Commissioner Keon: The Florida Greenbook. Okay. But you know, they wanted to apply all of the measures in that Greenbook to that circle, which really changes the striping and it makes it -- it changes it so significantly that there was just great opposition to it. So, I don't know how you -- you have to somehow work with them to come up with a plan that, you know, you don't have -- unless you don't want to do any community meetings and you just go ahead and do it.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Commissioner, we are...

Commissioner Keon: So, you either decide that you just do it and you don't meet with the community about it and then you suffer that one, or you know, you meet with the community and, you know, be prepared for whatever the response is. It could be very different now. I mean, maybe the people are different. Maybe it's different parties, maybe whatever. But it really -- you do need crosswalks there. Somebody did come along and did clean up a lot of the shrubbery and everything else on the southwest corner of that -- of the circle. So, you at least have some visibility crossing Old Cutler at that point because the bus stop is right on -- is on that corner. And the housekeepers, whoever is working in Cocoplum, they have to cross Old Cutler there. It's very dangerous. I think there's been a couple of pedestrian accidents. I know at least two over the last five years, at least two housekeepers have been hit. It could be more. I don't really know, but I know at least two have been hurt at that intersection. So, you have to do -- it's more than just -- you have to put in crosswalks along there, and then, you have to be prepared to meet with the people in Cocoplum who, you know, view that as, you know, the entrance and exit to their homes.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We are at square one with all that, but we have told the County that we are happy to facilitate that...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Community engagement to see...

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: Figure out...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's do that.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And in fact, we met with the community...

Commissioner Keon: We did it before.

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: And...

Commissioner Keon: Right. We did it...

Vice Mayor Lago: Let's...

Commissioner Keon: Before, and that's why...

City Manager Iglesias: And Commissioner, from a...

Commissioner Keon: Good luck.

City Manager Iglesias: Trash perspective, between sanitation and public service...

Vice Mayor Lago: We are doing the work...

City Manager Iglesias: Our park rangers, we go there almost every day.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, we're basically doing the...

City Manager Iglesias: So...

Vice Mayor Lago: We're doing the work for the County already to pick up the garbage. So, I just want to bring this in for a landing because I think we got off topic here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: What I really want to do -- which is why I put it on the agenda and I'm going to have -- I already have on the next agenda, I already put Uber and Lyft. I already met with them onsite with Peter and with the Police Chief, and I'm going to propose options. Because I've been sitting down with Javi Correoso from Uber to see if there's really options that we could do here because the community wants some sort of rideshare opportunity there. So, that's one thing that we're going to present. We need to add more garbage cans. We need to deal with the County and say, listen, County, forget what your design was. We just need to leave it as is, repave it, you know, fix the hole so that this doesn't continue to happen and just make it acceptable. We own the portion of the park in the middle. That's -- Coral Gables owns that. We have money, my understanding, already allocated for that, correct?

Assistant City Manager Santamaria: We have money budgeted to improve...

Vice Mayor Lago: So, let's move forward with that for whatever additional improvements we're going to do so we can beautify that area or start calling the community meetings to get their input and make sure that they're fine with it. We need the garbage cans. We need the crosswalks, and we need the sidewalks to be repaired, along with, obviously, fixing the circle. If the County's...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Lago: If the County's not going to fix the circle and they just keep, you know, passing this on for over 10 years almost, let's just do what we can so that it's no longer...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The City Manager and I met with people from the County, and they're, I think, disposed to dealing with the issue. And I suggest...

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That you and I meet with them again...

Vice Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And also, with a letter from, you know, from us. And, I think it's good. Can we take F-4? I have to leave in five minutes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Perfect.