

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-3
April 24, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-3 [9:21:37 a.m.]

An update from staff regarding the historic white way lights
(Sponsored by Commissioner Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: An update from staff regarding the historic white way lights, sponsored by Commissioner Lago, H-3.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I know that Public Works and also Historic Resources are here. We had presented this item before in terms of the cost of the restoration of white way lights. Absolutely stunning piece of Coral Gables history. When George Merrick was planning his city, he used to the highest level of detail, even the streetlights that were underground and they had a decorative motif on it that represented Coral Gables. The City has budgeted for restoration, unfortunately, the restoration cost is high, its approximately \$1 million dollars and so

we are coming back to you as a part of the Capital Improvement Plan, as you prioritize which projects you want us to pursue first; and it is also changing the type of electric materials inside. There is an electrical safety code and there is an electrical code; one is much more expensive, which the City is obligated to do, rather than what FPL is able to do. So with that, I'll have someone from either Public Works or Assistant City Manager Iglesias present the item with Historical Resources. I knew they were here somewhere in the room – I understand.

Preservation Officer Spain: So Public Works and I met with Sternberg Lighting, Lis Ferrer, contacted the gentleman, they were the original makers of these white way lights. I actually have...it was too heavy for me to carry and I don't know if I can get it up here, but we gave them the door to the base of it to see one of the ones that was really in bad shape to see whether he could bring it back and he did. He was able to clean it off and so at least the restoration can happen and we are more confident that we can restore them. As far as the transfer from Florida Power and Light, I believe – Jessica.

Ms. Keller: Yes, that's active, that's in process, I'm sorry I missed the first part of what the City Manager spoke about. Since the last update, we have kept on schedule, we've met with FPL, we have a plan in place, as far as the transfer goes and also, I'm not sure if you mentioned the capital request that we made that will help facilitate that process.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: One of the issues that we have is when FPL is under a national electrical safety code, we cannot do that, we are not a utility; we have to go with the national electrical code, which is what governs general construction. Once it transfers to us then we have to comply with the national electric code, which means we are doing all the circuit work, so it's quite expensive. So we are looking at maybe doing it if possible, from different circuits, because we can't do just one pole and take care of one circuit, it has to be the entire circuit. So, we are looking to see if we can...into doable portions right now.

Commissioner Lago: Thank you. So, the reason why I put this on and I'll just be very brief and also wanted to make sure that Corelli, as you all know, had a moment, but for some reason there was a mix-up and it was on my part, I apologize. She thinks it's going to be on the May 8th Commission meeting, so she didn't schedule to be here. After an analysis in regards to what the cost would be to mobilize and accomplish our goal of saving the white way lights, because every day that passes we are losing more, deterioration, deferred maintenance, it's evident, you can see it as you drive by the City. Again, it's a shame to lose this history, which is so important to the City of Coral Gables. We as a Commission need to make a decision and I wanted to bring it up now, because we are going into budget season, we have to make a decision whether we are really going to go after this project. This is not a cheap project from my understanding; we are talking about close to a million dollars. How many white way lights exactly do we have, because I've

heard two different numbers?- not including parts and miscellaneous parts, what do we actually have standing today or that is salvageable?

Preservation Officer Spain: When we counted them there were 72, I believe, there is less than that now.

Commissioner Lago: You want to go with 60?- 65 or so? So, basically every year we have less and less. So if we are going to make this decision, I know that obviously there is only so much money in the budget, we may have to take money from another line item or we may have to cut this up into two years or look for some sort of federal grant money to go after this, but we have to make a decision.

Preservation Officer Spain: I think this would be a great project for the Historic Art Fund that we've been collecting. I mean it's perfect. It is historic art and so, I think in that fund there is a little over \$300,000, so it's not the entire amount of money, but you know it's a start and I also believe there are grants available for this.

Commissioner Lago: What do we have right now in the budget; I think \$30,000, \$30,000 per year?

Preservation Officer Spain: I think it is \$20,000 per year?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We've done \$20,000 per year for a period of like three years.

Commissioner Lago: \$20,000 per year. Do you know how many years we've been doing this, so I can just kind of get an idea where we are at right now?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We introduced it. There is either \$40,000 or \$60,000 right now.

Commissioner Lago: So, potentially we could be around \$350,000.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We have it scheduled for \$20,000 a year.

Commissioner Lago: I just wanted to make sure that you are all aware of where we are currently that this decision needs to be made this year. I would attack it in two years, so our budget doesn't take such a significant hit, but I have a feeling that if we don't make this effort this year, we could lose a significant part of our history.

Commissioner Mena: I agree with you Commissioner Lago. You know one thing that might be helpful for us is, if you all could plot out for us where the remaining lights are located.

Preservation Officer Spain: I have that. I'll be happy to send it to you.

Commissioner Mena: I think that would be helpful because maybe something we need to consider is, if there are some straggler lights on a given street, but there is a main thoroughfare, maybe we don't have to do all of them, maybe we are doing some of them, but we need to evaluate that to figure out what the best approach is. I agree with you that we need to preserve as many of them as we can, but if there is a main street where we can do that maybe the others we don't end up doing that's a consideration, but we need to know where they are located and really understand what our options are there.

Commissioner Lago: So if you could do me a favor, through the Manager, maybe we could schedule time with my colleagues, sit down with them, explain to them as you've done, because all three of you have done, along with your staff has done an exceptional job getting to where we are today. So let's drill down with every single Commissioner, the Vice Mayor and the Mayor, so they can understand and on May 8th, I don't want to defer this, we'll basically put this on the agenda again, we'll let Carilla speak, because she's been a staunch advocate of this, she deserves her moment. She's really been advocating on behalf of us for years and we'll come back and we'll set some sort of plan. I know it's tough to find the remaining \$600,000, but if we break it up, we follow what Commissioner Mena said; maybe we start dealing with the worst to the best. I know a lot of them are in bad shape, so there may not be too many best, following also the Annie C Code, which is critical, I think we can get to where we need to be. Because we did such an exceptional job in reference to our entrance features, our fountains, when you drive around the City and you see this; it doesn't reflect what Coral Gables standards are, in my opinion.

Commissioner Mena: If I also on sort of a tangential issue while we are talking about lighting. I'd like on the next meeting if Peter and Jessica, if you could; there are a lot of lights out in the City. Up and down Granada, North Greenway, there are also a lot of lights being replaced where, and Jessica I think you and I talked about this in the past where you are driving and there is a bright blue LED light and then an amber light and then another LED light and it just looks terrible. But, there are a lot of lights out as you drive around and we really need to get on that, that's unacceptable. We need to do what we can. I understand in some instances there are lights that perhaps the County or FPL need to deal with, but let's do what we can to apply pressure to that, so that we can get them fixed, because right now again, the more I drive around the City, the more lights I'm seeing out and we need to get that fixed. It's been a good amount of time since the hurricane past and we still haven't gotten them back up. So let's make sure we do that.

Commissioner Lago: Can you do me a favor, just to dovetail on his comments. Jessica will probably laugh at this, because we've been working on this for five years, I think Quesada was probably working on this before. I think other Commissioners have done this, but we've made big strides, share with my colleagues, Commissioner Mena and the Mayor, our inventory breakdown that you put together that took years to do, that FPL said was not possible, share it with them, the inventory that shows what we own and what FPL owns. Talk to them about the efforts that we've made over the last few years to kind of privatize and purchase some of the lighting and what the cost associated would that be. Also mention to them and share with them the fact of the hurdles that we had to go through in regards to purple metering, remember those discussions Peter that we had with FPL?- and why we've run into serious problems from basically migrating from standard metal highlight bulbs to LED bulbs, because the issue here and we've brought this up on multiple occasions, are we going to privatize our lighting? Like for example, City of Miami has done and other municipalities have done where they bring in private contractors to basically upgrade all the existing lighting, making it more sustainable, making it more energy efficient, obviously saving tons of money and the tons of money that is saved a cost-sharing portion of that goes to the private entity that has upgraded your lights for a certain amount of period. I've been advocating for this for years, FPL has not made it easy to get to this point and I'm being kind to FPL and I think it's time, Commissioner Mena has made those comments and I think this Commission agrees as-a-whole that we should address this problem and if there is an opportunity to go to an RFP, because I've been visited by multiple vendors who are interested in doing this, know that it took years to finally put together this inventory. You guys did an exceptional job. I want my colleagues to see that.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Commissioner Lago we have a time certain now at 9:30 (a.m.) and you've brought up a lot of points that I'm not up to date on, so I think it's a longer conversation, if it's OK with you, as you suggested...so I can be briefed on everything, because I know we have time constraints today because I know Commissioner Keon has to leave.

Commissioner Lago: I just want to make a quick motion, if I may, if I may. I want to put this on the agenda to discuss the white way lights, to discuss what Commissioner Mena said in regards to how we are going to address this, and also the issue that he mentioned in regards to the LED versus standard metal highlight lighting and where we are as a City in reference to either dealing with this ourselves or going the private route. I'd like to have that on the next Commission.

Vice Mayor Quesada: And, if we all could be briefed on it prior to the Commission as well.

Commissioner Lago: Yes. Yes. Does anybody second my motion?

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: All those in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Opposed.

End: 9:33:03 a.m.]