

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-4
December 10, 2024
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

City Staff

**City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Asset Manager, Zeida Sardinas
Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Director, Anna Pernas**

Public Speaker(s)

**Tom Prescott
Maria Cruz
Jackson Holmes
Dariel Gonzalez
Anthony Gomez
Karelia Carbonell
Mark Trowbridge**

**Agenda Item F-4 [1:40 p.m.]
Update and possible action regarding alterations at the Biltmore Hotel.**

City Commission Meeting
December 10, 2024
Agenda Item F-4 - Update and possible action regarding alterations at the Biltmore Hotel.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Commissioner Fernandez: I think staff has a presentation they wanted to -- to give us on -- or an update on what has been going on since our last meeting at the Biltmore. So, Zeida.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Good afternoon, Mayor and Commissioners. Zeida Sardinas, Asset Manager. We have had -- I think what we gave out to you all was a timeline of what has occurred and what we have done. We had a recent meeting with the Biltmore to prepare for today, and they are all here if you guys have any questions. I think what we decided to do was to give the cure period -- extend the cure period for another 45 days. We are going to conduct a walk-through of the entire property that will give us time for them to do that because we do need to get into certain areas of the Biltmore, like the Merrick suite and things like that that are usually rented out. So, we're going to do that. And then once we get through to that, they are also working diligently on a proposal. And what we've tried to do is ask them to go back as if this had been done at the beginning and submit conceptualls and all of that for Historic to review and for us to -- and the rest of staff to review in order to start working on the different areas where we've already identified that there have been issues. So, the Manager has extended the time, the cure period, for another 45 days, which will put us towards the end of January for that.

Commissioner Castro: So, the -- so, the 45 days -- the 45-day extension, is it to give the City time to go ahead and do a walkthrough through all the Biltmore or...?

Asset Manager Sardinas: It's both. It's to give us time to do a more thorough walkthrough, which we were not able to complete the day that we went, because like I said, there were people in some of the designated areas within the Biltmore that are designated that we wanted to look at, and there were people in the rooms, so we couldn't do that. So, we're going to do a whole walkthrough again to document things properly. So, that's one thing. And then the other is for them to be able to work towards having the proposal ready, which they need more time to do because it does take time.

Commissioner Castro: And is 45 days sufficient and realistic during the holidays to accomplish all of this?

Asset Manager Sardinas: Well, I think what we wanted to do, Commissioner, was to accomplish a specific amount of time. And then if they need more time, we're certainly able to work with them to provide more time, but we would like to be able to have, you know, just to make sure that we're making diligent progress towards getting this -- these issues resolved.

City Manager Rojas: Commissioner, so you know -- excuse me, Zeida -- we're working closely with the Biltmore management. We've had one meeting. We've asked them to go back and provide us some additional information so that we can go back and do a full walkthrough of the

complex. As Zeida mentioned, some areas are being used right now, so we have to kind of fit it into our schedule. So, we have a conservator that -- well, actually, the Biltmore has hired a conservator to work with us. And this is going to be a slow progress, but as we take our time and walk -- and work through it, we should get to the end result, which is making the Biltmore and continue to keep the Biltmore the landmark that it is for the City of Coral Gables. So, I do want to just make a comment that I do appreciate the fact that the Biltmore staff and Mr. Prescott came in, and we've actually been able to sit down and iron out any of the little issues that may occur. So, as we walk through, we can try to expedite this without, you know, causing any delays or any miscues when it comes to fixing the items that need to be fixed, permitting the items that need to be permitted. And then the second phase would be the projects that the Biltmore intends to do in the future, working through our office here so that we can approve those and make sure that we have Historical, we have the conservator, everybody's on board for the future projects. So, it's past projects and future projects that we're working with the Biltmore on.

Commissioner Castro: I guess my concern here was that I didn't want us to eat up the 45 days, and obviously, have a realistic timeline.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Well, I think the way that we're going to approach it is schedule the walkthrough. We're also going to schedule a design meeting with their design team and Historic and us to, again, discuss the conceptals of the different areas and start towards that and get to a point where everybody's comfortable and then they can move forward to actually implement plans and then file the correct permits, et cetera, et cetera.

Commissioner Castro: And then we can go ahead and grant another extension if necessary.

Asset Manager Sardinas: If -- yeah, if it's required, then we would consider that at that point.

City Attorney Suárez: If I can chime in, the Manager has agreed to a 45-day extension and has requested certain things happen during that 45-day period, which is the complete walkthrough, and then the meetings between the appropriate City staff and the Biltmore's design team, area by area, because some of these areas will take some time. So, certain areas, you'll have different meetings on certain areas. And then also, you know, during that process, the Biltmore knows that they're working toward these drawings, these plans, and ultimately, there's going to be a lot of work that goes into that. So, at that point, then we can evaluate what appropriate extension may be necessary.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you.

Commissioner Fernandez: I know Mr. Prescott had asked to be able to address the Commission as well so I'd like you to come up at this point. I'll reserve my comments after your -- your comments.

Tom Prescott: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, the Commissioners, Mr. Manager. I think that the Asset Manager and the City Manager kind of summed it up perfectly, which was we are working together in unison to obviously go through all the various areas that need to be addressed. I appreciate the candor and the feedback that I've received from other stakeholders in the City, residents and friends alike. And so, all of those things have been very useful, and I feel that the path forward that was laid out by the Asset Manager is the correct path forward, and we will work diligently to achieve that.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Fernandez: I mean, I had concerns going into last meeting. I have more concerns following the information that there was work done in the fitness center as well that was not done with permits. There's been a fire in that location. You know, whether it's related or not, I don't know. But I just want to make sure, the biggest concern that I get from residents is, okay, we're here now, we found these issues, we're going to work on a path towards restoring the lower lobby and addressing the other issues. What assurances can you give us as a Commission this isn't going to happen again? Because I mean, we're in a situation now where we keep peeling this onion, we continue to find other things that have taken place. Where does it end and what assurances do we have? We have a long-term agreement with you. You know, we need to be able to, as a city, trust that we can give you the keys to the Biltmore Hotel, it's going to be preserved, it's going to be taken care of. Is that going to require us having somebody on site full-time to keep an eye on things? What is it going to take and what assurances can you give us that this isn't going to happen again?

Mr. Prescott: So, through these meetings with City staff, we've had some clarification points that enabled us to know what we can and cannot do without obviously consulting with the City. That has been very useful because some of the things that we viewed as cosmetic and part of the ongoing operational aspect of the hotel, obviously, because our charge is coupled with maintaining the landmark, to obviously maintain it as a luxury hotel property envisioned by George Merrick. So, now we have those clarification points which has enabled us to know, okay, now we need to go back further, ask, and do those things moving forward. Some of those areas of what I would call ambiguity in the beginning are no longer an issue. There are still some that remain, and we are in the consultations with the City to get those points. But yes, obviously, me being here as, you know, the steward of the hotel with -- or the landmark with all of you, I take it very seriously. And obviously, if I'm here to stipulate that point with you, that is the best that I can do. I would not -- I mean it's your choice and if you want to put somebody there full time for staff, but I don't think that's necessary. I mean, I'm speaking here to this point. I spoke to all of you individually, the City career staff, to the residences in an attempt -- the residents in an attempt to ensure and assuage those concerns that you just outlined.

City Manager Rojas: And Commissioner, just so you know that I am going to request that staff periodically on a regular basis go to the Biltmore, talk to the staff and walk to the Biltmore and do

inspections more frequently than we've done in the past. I'll take responsibility for that. We probably should have been doing that a long time ago, but moving forward, we will make sure that -- and I will make sure that we have our departments go in there and inspect to make sure that they are in compliance. But I don't foresee a major issue moving forward with the Biltmore staff.

Commissioner Fernandez: Now there were issues we were having -- there were areas where we were having issues, like accessing because of folks who were currently staying at the Biltmore or because it was space that was rented out. Have we been able to access those spaces yet or is there a plan in place?

City Manager Rojas: We have not gone back since the first inspection that we did that you were at. We're waiting for the information that we requested from them, and then it would be up to the Biltmore to determine what day those areas are vacant, and then we'll go in there and inspect those particular areas.

Mr. Prescott: As the Asset Manager mentioned, it's a good problem to have that we're sold out. I'm sure you all are happy about that as well. As it gets colder in the north, more people tend to come down to Florida, which is fantastic. And so, our point is to find a time that's not disruptive to the business, that's convenient, obviously, for City staff to come through, and they'll see everything. They have not been restricted in any way, shape, or form, obviously, from any area that they want to see.

Commissioner Fernandez: I was there for something completely different, pickleball, and I walked into the first floor of the parking garage, and I was concerned to see tons of construction supplies there. Are those -- is that just staging for future construction? Is that supplies left over from other constructions? Because I mean, there's enough there to build a second Biltmore Hotel.

Mr. Prescott: Well, I don't know if that's an accurate statement.

Commissioner Fernandez: There's...

Mr. Prescott: But...

Commissioner Fernandez: It's an entire first floor of a parking garage.

Mr. Prescott: It -- well, no, it's one section, which I know when you were there to obviously survey that area looking at pickleball, and I think it was more a concern with parking, which I understand.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct, that's why I was in here.

Mr. Prescott: I understand. But no, that is some of the leftover from the prior projects, including the golf building, which we obviously renovated recently. But it only is taking 10 spots currently. It's not on the other side. That's fully occupied by vehicles. So, I assure you it's not enough to rebuild another Biltmore.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay. Because I know that parking is an issue that you've had in the past. Is there any way to clear that up so that we have the additional parking spaces? Because if we're short on parking, we shouldn't be taking up the parking for something else.

Mr. Prescott: Right. Some of the parking spaces, as you know, are assigned to tenants in that area. The other is, of course, our west lot, which, as the Commission knows, I feel is something we should talk about in the future because we don't have sufficient parking, but those 10 spaces are not going to address the overarching problem that we have with the lack of parking.

Commissioner Fernandez: But it will help. I mean...

Mr. Prescott: Every bit helps.

Commissioner Fernandez: Ten parking spaces helps.

Mr. Prescott: True.

Commissioner Fernandez: That's 10 rooms that you have spaces for.

Mr. Prescott: I understand.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, it's not -- it's not a small quantity. It is something that will -- will help with the overarching problem that we do have.

Mr. Prescott: Respectfully, it will help, but it won't solve by any means...

Commissioner Fernandez: Agreed.

Mr. Prescott: The problem that we have still with parking.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yeah.

Mr. Prescott: People are still parking on the swale.

Commissioner Fernandez: And we'll be talking about pickleball later, so that may...

Mr. Prescott: Yes, I...

Commissioner Fernandez: Those spaces may be needed for that as well.

Mr. Prescott: That would be a challenge for us, because like I said, we're already short on that, but that's something for a subsequent conversation.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yeah. Look, I mean, I just want to make sure that going forward, we're not back here again two years, three years down the road, dealing with another situation like this. This is our treasure as a city. You talked about Coral Gables, the building everybody thinks of is the Biltmore Hotel. And you and your family have been great stewards of that facility for years, and we appreciate the fact that you have been partners for the City. We can move past this going forward. We just need to find a path where what residents are asking for is a restoration of that lower lobby. I know that there's interest in keeping some of it. I don't think that's something that there's an appetite for right now. I think the interest that residents have expressed is in restoring the lower lobby of the Biltmore Hotel.

Mr. Prescott: Mr. Mayor, may I...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Mr. Prescott: Take a little bit more time?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mr. Prescott: So, I understand. I've talked to many of those same residents that you're pointing out, and I listened to a number of the comments this morning, which was on a different subject matter, but Karelia and others that have come in and talked about the evolving, you know, different architectural designs that come into what we view as the City Beautiful and how we do that in such a manner that is consistent, again, with or harmonious with, you know, the landmark itself, but it still addresses some of the shortcomings that were in different areas. I personally -- and I brought the designer who actually did all of the design, who originally met with Ms. Parks and others to talk about things throughout the hotel. I don't see it the same way that you're describing, the lower lobby being the former motor level, obviously. I've consulted, you know, with Ms. Burness and others to find out and make sure that we have not touched areas we believe that are historic or somehow took away from what the landmark was. I believe that Mr. Greene, who is one of the gentlemen that actually did the painting in the lower lobby of some of the stencil work, I've been in discussions with him, with Burton Hirsch, with others, to ensure that we do things in a manner that are consistent with what you have mentioned. But at the same time, we, as a luxury property, need to address certain areas in such a manner that will allow businesses and other groups to continue to want to come back to us. If not, they'll go elsewhere. And one of the biggest issues or comments that we got time and time again was that lower lobby area. It was a lack of seating. It was that it looked very dated, and as a result, we thought by cosmetically addressing it that would

assuage some of those concerns and at the same time not take away. In fact, Ms. Malone can talk about her design and how it pulls together the historic courtyard, the outside green foliage of Coral Gables in such a manner that actually activated the lower lobby space. And again, she's much better than you and I are on, you know, describing that design, but that was the intent. That was the purpose. It was not to do something that would take away, would try to do something that would be unique, but at the same time, again, you know, harmonious with what it is we're all trying to achieve. Did we get it absolutely right? It sounds like some people disagree. I know that I've talked to a number of people that are very happy with it, but again, it's all subjective. What the main point was is that, to your point, moving forward, we will ensure that all stakeholders are obviously a part of this, they participate in that. But again, one of my charges is to maintain this as a luxury property, and I have to do that because a -- I know some have talked about a living museum versus an operating property. They go hand in hand. And so, if one allows us to achieve, you know, the generation of revenue that we need to obviously put into that, I never need to come back to this body then and ask for supplemental funds because there are better purposes that I would like the City to obviously focus on. That being said, I am sensitized to and will ensure that I'm not divorced from that aspect of the landmark and what it means and how it all ties together. And that's the best promise that I can give.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, through the Mayor, I want to see if I can try to dovetail into your -- your concerns. And having had the opportunity to spend so much time on the Planning and Zoning Board and looking at historic properties and if you're going to do an addition to it, that it has to be compatible. And ultimately, that's what the Historic Preservation Board looks for. If you're doing an addition to a piece of property, that it needs to be compatible. Is it possible that, you know, the colors could be updated and still be compatible? That may be possible, but that's going to be the venue of the specialists in our department to make that determination. I know that some folks are concerned, you know, that we can't restore it. If Notre Dame can be restored after burning down, I know that we can address the needs that we have at the Biltmore Hotel. It's just going to be a process. I mean, I've done a number of remediation cases, albeit those were dealing with disabilities. You do a Rule 45 inspection, you have this process once you get the inspection done of addressing how each item is going to be remediated. And I think that's what we need to be doing here. And each goal post has to be reached so that, you know, it doesn't languish. So, I understand the 45 days and then we move for another period of time for, whether it's another 45 or whatever period of time is determined appropriate from our staff. So, I'm confident that we can reach the goal that will make both the residents happy and bring you revenue. Take a look at the Marriott Custom House in Boston. It's marketed as a historic property. It attracts people because it's a historic property. It doesn't look downtrodden or dingy. I'm not saying that that particular motif is appropriate in the Biltmore Hotel, but I think there's a balance there that can be struck by staff that are experts in historic preservation, okay.

Mr. Prescott: If I may just add one last point to the Vice Mayor's comments. Our designer obviously took a lot of what you see at what they did at the Breakers Hotel, which I know you've referenced in the past meeting. And so, they achieve that full expression of different architectural

design if you look at the lobby area. And again, we have a little different -- we have an upper lobby at the Biltmore and a lower lobby. The upper lobby has not been touched just to assuage any concerns, but I know that Ms. Malone spoke to Ms. Parks about that in detail. And if you look at the Breakers lobby, you look at that same style that actually is there with vibrant colors, which I know they were trying to find that balance as well. We thought that we were trying to work towards that same concept. Again, that's what we tried to do in all earnest, you know, good feeling. But again, as the Vice Mayor mentioned, we'll work in collaboration moving forward and be sure.

Commissioner Castro: It is -- it is my honest suggestion that we need to follow the process, and we need to leave it up to the City to go ahead and evaluate what has to be restored and what doesn't have to be restored and follow the Code. And I'm -- and I'm pretty sure we're going to end up with a perfect conclusion and product.

Mr. Prescott: Yes ma'am.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to add, you know, we spoke recently, and I just said at this point, work with the City, do what the City is asking. I think you made an important point that, you know, a reminder that we all want the Biltmore to be successful as an economic engine for our community. But first and foremost, let's deal with the issues at hand, the architecture, the changes that have been taking place. I think after that's done, we need to perhaps come back together and see what we as a city can help you do so that you can continue bringing in -- have a full house at the Biltmore Hotel. I don't know if it's, you know, my observation, but it looks like your clientele has changed over the years.

Mr. Prescott: Sure.

Commissioner Menendez: I think my observation, you're drawing a younger demographic perhaps, but -- and I know there's a lot of competition in the area to get people into the hotel, so I think as a city, we want you to succeed. So, I ask that after these changes or whatever repairs or restorations need to be done, that we circle back and see how we can help you all be successful, because if you're successful, then our City is successful.

Mr. Prescott: I agree. Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: I had a resident make a suggestion, and I wanted to really bounce it off of the Commission, was the potential of creating a Biltmore Hotel Advisory Board to the Commission, where we would have representatives from -- who participate in the Biltmore -- in the Kerdyk Tennis Center, the Golf Club, in the Fitness Center, somebody with historic experience. They can meet on a regular basis and give the Commission suggestions on things that the City can do to improve things at the Biltmore Hotel. So, it's something I wanted to bounce off the Commission. Obviously, this is first I'm bringing it up. We can have this discussion maybe at another Commission meeting, but I wanted to put that out there as something we can have as a

Commission, which provides us a little bit of oversight where we would have somebody on site who's reporting back on things that may be taking place that that we can improve on or that you can improve on that can help with the -- with the facility. It's just something I wanted to put out there.

Mr. Prescott: I can promise you that I hear directly from all members of the community, as you can imagine, on the smallest things to some of the largest, so I do hear them directly. I promise you that.

Mayor Lago: Anything else from the Commission? I'll be brief. First off, thank you for being here again. I think it's -- you're always putting your best foot forward in an effort to address the issues that we're facing today. I'm a believer that what's done is done. We need to move forward. I think bringing you here every single month is not going to achieve our goal. You're our partner for the next 60 plus years. Whether somebody likes it or not, we've got to work together. I've always had a very fond relationship with yourself and your father. As a matter of fact, everything that's being talked about here, we've already done. The oversight, I passed a legislation where Zeida has to go and visit every single one of our properties and sit down with our tenants. How often, Zeida?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Yearly. If they want to do it quarterly, if they want to do it monthly, that's perfectly fine. It's just a lot more work. You may not be able to do it with one person. So, this already exists. This already exists. What I think we need to do right now is very simple. Like my colleague to the right said, we need to now work with staff, our Historic Preservation team, our Procurement team, our Public Works team, the Manager's Office, Code Enforcement, we all need to sit down and review, not us, they need to sit down and review where we currently stand and move forward. I think having you here on a monthly basis is not in the best interest of the property or the City of Coral Gables. We can't go back; what's done is done. If you could, you would, right? You would get in a DeLorean, and you would head back.

Mr. Prescott: A DeLorean. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Taking it back in a DeLorean. I don't know of any other time travel machines out there, but you would go back, and you would not have done that renovation on the lower floor. But I also think we need to come to an understanding. We need to be honest with ourselves. And I'm looking at the Historic Preservation Officer here, and we've had conversations about this. What's historic is historic. What's not is not. But that doesn't mean that we just go out and do whatever we want. We have to, you know, renovate it in a certain taste, with a certain design concept in mind. But I want to move forward. I don't -- I don't want to beat you over the head anymore, okay? What's done is done. It's very clear, okay? Let's move forward, work with staff, work with the Manager's Office, keep doing what we're doing, and let's get this addressed. It's

not going to take six months. It's going to take a year, and potentially even longer, to address what needs to be addressed. I wish we could do it from one minute to the next, because by the time the plan is finally delivered, you've got to now bring a permit. You've got to get plans done. You've got to do everything to do it the right way. I imagine we can expedite it through the City in one form or another, and I look forward to that. It's the Manager's purview, not mine. But at the end of the day, I think we need to push forward together. I think that's the best thing for the asset, all right? So, I appreciate you being here a lot, as always, that you're a gentleman. You take it right on the chin. You don't shy away from the contact, and that means a lot, and we'll move -- we'll move on from here. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Prescott: Thank you as well.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you too.

Mayor Lago: So, moving on to the next item.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I have members of the public...

Mayor Lago: You have people? Okay. Perfect. I didn't know we had public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Sorry, sir. First speaker, Ms. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Good afternoon, Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, a resident of the City Beautiful since 1976. I'm very confused. I know some of you here have rental property, have property that you lease. The City leases property. I have never heard of somebody who's renting or leasing to take -- make decisions on how to change a property. We're not talking cosmetic. Cosmetic is painting. Cosmetic doesn't mean changing the look of the place. I'm sorry. And when we talk about stakeholders, you know who the stakeholders are? Not you all, we all. The people, the residents of this city, the taxpayers of this city. And I find it very interesting that, you know, what's done is done. Oh, wonderful. Can we make that a blanket statement to all the residents? Do whatever you want, and what is done is done. The City will permit it. Don't worry about it. You can violate all the rules. It's done. No, it's not done. No. And if this is -- comparing it to the Breakers, you know, frankly, I don't care what the Breakers looks like. This is our crown jewel. And if the arrangement that we have, if the contract we have, and I'm going to tell you, through the years, I've seen many compromises on money issues. If it's not good, let's put it out to a bid. Let's see if another company wants to do it. Come on, guys. I mean, let me tell you, I don't do well -- I do not do well with threats. If this is not a good agreement, my goodness, open it. Let's see how many people, how many other companies would like to get involved. I've never heard such double talk. I cannot promise. I don't know what we can do. No, no, no, no, no, no. We're taking everything that's said face value. How can we take things face value when this was done under our nose, nobody knew what was going on, nobody saw it happening, and then you all go there and there's some areas that you cannot look at. So, you are telling me that you're believing

everything that you've been told. The place has been rented forever and ever more. It hasn't been empty. That room that you wanted to see hasn't been empty one day. It's been full. I mean people -- I mean, they didn't even have time to clean. One rent -- one company, one group, one couple went into that room and the next one came in before they even changed the sheets because you couldn't go in. You know, you go to a hotel, you cannot go in immediately. There's a period of time that they need to go in. You all could have gone in. Come on, guys. I mean, this sounds like the dog ate my -- I didn't bring my homework because the dog ate it. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. This is not what the residents of the City of Coral Gables is asking you to do. This is not what the -- frankly, whether it's historic or not is irrelevant. The issue at hand is why did it get to this point? And if you're ready to make a blanket statement that people can violate our zoning, our building, all our codes, and then they come in, you know, we didn't know that we had to do it, and you're going to say, okay, it's done, it's done, we'll give you the permit and move on. No, no, that's not the way it works. The City is what the city is because of our rules, because of our codes, because of what we have in place for everybody, not just for the little people, not just for the well-off people, not just for the people elected, not for the people that are not elected, for everyone. The rules apply for everybody. You don't believe it? Go to Planning and Zoning. Go to the Board of Architects. Go to the Board of Adjustment. It doesn't make a difference who you are. If the rule is the rule, then we have to apply the rule for everybody. I'm telling you, I am so insulted. I came with a very objective mind. I thought we were going to hear, you know, we're in place. We're going to -- no, you didn't get a commitment. Well, I cannot assure you I can do that. Well, I don't know what we will be doing. No, I have a design team that's going to tell you. I don't need a design team. We need the Biltmore to be the way it was when we handed it over. Period. The end. If I rent my house tomorrow, which I'm not planning to do, and I take pictures of how I gave it to the renters, when I come back, unless I gave permission to change the green to red, they better paint it the way I left it. That's the way it is. I think we're being extremely nice. We're bending backwards. Why we're afraid no other company will grab this. I suggest that you ask around. Put a little request someplace and say, and I bet you that somebody will come in. I'm sorry. This is very insulting. I mean, this is -- we did have an asset management -- manager. Where were we? We had Code Enforcement. We have Public Works. Nobody saw anything. Do you really think that if we knew that we were doing something right, we would have done it in the middle of the night? Oh, that's what the gardeners do. They come and mow your lawn on holidays when Code Enforcement is not working. That doesn't make it right. The fact that it was done this way indicates to any normal person with a brain that they knew they shouldn't have done it or else they would have done it openly so everybody could see it. That's not the way it happened. I'm sorry. You need to listen to the voice of the people, the owners of the Biltmore. And it's not the five of you, it's not the employees, it's the people. That building belongs to us. And no deals should be cut, no exceptions should be made because we want it the way it was. You know what refurbishing is? The furniture is a little dated. You know, you can recover, you can get something similar. You're not going to change the Biltmore to look like South Beach. I'm sorry. If the people that want to come to a Biltmore expect to go to a club in South Beach, they need to go someplace else. That's not what we have here. And if we cannot attract the people, the right people to come, maybe we're not doing good PR or good promoting because, you know, anytime you talk to people, they

go to the Biltmore and whatever other place. There is another Biltmore. People come back and are mesmerized by how beautiful it is. It's antique, it's old. People don't go there expecting to see the disco ball rolling. This is what the people want. And I suggest that before you make any decisions, maybe it's time to get the people involved. Because you're going to be surprised how many people want all those mirrors out of there, even though some people like it. You know what? If it were my house, yeah, but it's not your house. It's the people's house, and we -- we all have to have a say.

Commissioner Fernandez: Perhaps I didn't understand. Because I was under the impression we're going to work towards a restoration of the lower lobby. Is that not the plan? Because if the plan is to leave it as is, then that does not work for me.

Asset Manager Sardinias: No, sir. What we -- what we are planning to do is meet with the design team and look at conceptualls and begin to work towards a resolution to see. Number one, also Historic's been doing a lot of research about what was there, what was, what was painted over, what wasn't, the stencils, it's a lot of detailed work. And that is what we're hoping to do, is to have an initial meeting with the design team that would have conceptual concept of what is there now recreated for us to be able to look at and say this, you know, with the evaluation from Historic, this works, this doesn't work, and get to a resolution of what actually works. It's not about keeping what's there or it's not about returning (INAUDIBLE) what it was. It's we have to make those decisions as we study the problem together. And that's the -- that's the next meeting that we are going to have is -- is to get there. We also want to do a full walkthrough of the property and talk about this in several areas that you all know we have identified, right? We have several areas that we would like to do that as well, and that is what the Biltmore has agreed to do.

Commissioner Fernandez: But as far as the lower lobby, I think if what I'm -- if I'm hearing you correctly, you're saying we're going to go over their conceptual designs and try to figure out what works and what doesn't work. I think what we've heard from residents over the last month and a half is none of it works. So, we need to go back to where we were. If that's not on the table, then we need to find a path forward because our residents, who are our employers, are telling us that doesn't work. None of it works. Throw it out and bring it back to what it was supposed to be. And that's, I think, where things are getting lost in translation. And I think I heard the same thing from Mr. Prescott. Well, you know, we'll see what works, what doesn't work. None of it works. Zero. All of it should be tossed in a truck, hauled off, and bring it back. That's what -- that's what residents continue to tell us. And you can do the public records request for the emails if you'd like. I'm sure that others will. People don't like this. They don't like any of it. This was our Historic Biltmore Hotel. Whether that room was historic or not, really is irrelevant. It is the theme of the hotel that should have been maintained. Now we're look -- walking into the Loews in the first floor. That's not what people are trying to stay at the Historic Biltmore Hotel for. They're here to stay at the Biltmore Hotel that George Merrick built in 1926. That's what people want. They don't want the Biltmore Hotel that we designed in 2025 because that's not what people are

looking for. So, if the option on the table is let's review their design drawings based on what they currently have, I'm not okay with that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So...

City Manager Rojas: And Commissioner...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think that's what staff is trying to say. We're talking about the word is compatibility and it has to be consistent with the historic building. That's why I used the addition to a historic building. It has to go with the same theme. You're not going to put a modern structure and connect it to a historic building. You're going to have to have something that thematically is the same, architecturally is the same, but it doesn't mean that it's going to be precisely the same, you know, grade of plaster or whatever. But I think that's what Historic is going to do, and they're better equipped and better educated on this than we are to make these determinations. So, I would like to let them do their work, and then they can meet with us individually.

City Manager Rojas: The other -- if I may, Mayor. I don't want anybody to leave with the impression that the City did not take any -- a strong position on this issue. We did issue a letter of default, and I'm sure the City Attorney can explain it much better than I as to the meaning of that. So, it wasn't that they, the Biltmore, received a pass on this whole issue. It's we took action that we were legally authorized to do to put them on notice and so that we could start moving forward. All the issues that were done before that need to be corrected will be corrected. Permits now have to be pulled, and then we're looking at the future involvement, including working with the Historical, our Preservation, and as the Vice Mayor said, they would be the ones, the experts to say what is of the period and what would work well here. But I don't want the impression that we just said, okay, move forward. No, we issued that letter of default to put them on notice that the City wasn't very happy with what had occurred.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think Director Pernas had something she wanted to say.

Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Director Pernas: Good afternoon, Anna Pernas, the Preservation Officer. Just to kind of reiterate, we have some of the same concerns, but our goal is, you know, we review modifications to historic buildings every day, and our goal is to make sure that it's appropriate. That's kind of -- that's why our permit is called a Certificate of Appropriateness. So, we'll work -- our goal was to work with the design team to come up with a plan to make something that is compatible with the historic character of the building, which is what we are here to protect, and that's what's listed in the -- in the lease, and we'll move forward that way to make sure it is.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay, thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Honestly speaking, I think what staff is trying to say is that it's not 100 percent going to be restored. I think we're going to have to find that balance of whatever -- let's say he didn't do all of these fixtures, and maybe he would have applied for a permit, and whatever would have gotten approved probably could stay, and then whatever has to be restored will be restored, but I really don't think our end result is going to be for it to be 100 percent restored. I don't know if the Commission is okay with that. I am completely okay leaving it to City staff.

Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Director Pernas: No, we understand that for historic buildings there sometimes has to be changes. We -- these buildings need to come up to modern standards, and like you said, it needs to be able to run a hotel out of this space. So, we want to work with them to make sure that what's being done is appropriate and protects the historic character of the building, but again, can run as a modern hotel.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, Jackson "Rip" Holmes.

Jackson Holmes: Thank you all very much. I think that we should put out an RFP or an RFQ and find another operator. The idea that the Biltmore, the Prescotts, have the right to break the Zoning Code and do what they want on City property, to me -- look, the rest of us then, that makes the rest of us chumps, right? I have a retail store on Miracle Mile. There are certain Zoning Code requirements that I have to follow. I don't have the right to say, well, I'm going to do these things. Look at all the people that have residents that have been waiting too long for permits, right? They don't -- they can't say, well, I'm going to go ahead and do whatever I want with my house and I'm above the law. If they think they're above the law, which they clearly think, I think we should get a different operator that wants to comply with the City's Zoning Code. Let's find someone else.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Darriel Gonzalez.

Mayor Lago: Sir, good afternoon.

Darriel Gonzalez: Howdy y'all, that's a lot. So, I'm a bit against that. I -- I mean, the Prescotts and his family...

City Clerk Urquia: Sir, you have to speak into the mic.

Mr. Gonzalez: I'm sorry.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mr. Gonzalez: Sorry, I'm much shorter than Mr. Holmes. The Prescotts and their family have been operators for much longer than I've been alive, so I don't think we should just rip this up just

because of one little mistake. Every relationship that lasts years and years has little tuffles here and there. That being said, as I'm sure you know, I'm someone who really values Mr. Merrick's legacy. In fact, I wish we were in City Hall, like normally at events like this I point at Mr. Merrick's painting. You should bring that in here. So, to speak about the lower lobby, I mean, the heritage of the City is deeply rooted in its Mediterranean design. I mean, Mr. Merrick's own cousin, H. G. Fink, is credited as creating that style. But that being said, the whole thing is it has to be harmonious with the current design. In 1986, when Mayor Thomson, who was here earlier, and Ellen Uguccioni were in charge of that restoration, they deliberately chose to maintain that harmony when they redid that lower lobby. That lower lobby isn't technically historic. I mean, if we see the original blueprints, that whole space was supposed to be a sort of like a mall area with little independent stores and a men's locker room. That, of course, doesn't exist, but even so, under their leadership, it was restored. And it was in keeping with the historic character and the style of the interior. It was done with great care to the great kind of respect to that hotel's original vision. Of course, these efforts ensure that the lobby harmonized with the rest of the Mediterranean hotel. So, I think it's really important that this sort of thing doesn't set good precedent, especially now as we go towards the City's centennial and then a year later the hotel centennial. It's really important that we try to restore the hotel as best as possible. Even if we can't go back to exactly what Ellen and Mayor Thomson did in 1986, we should still try to keep in mind what the City founders had in mind when they built this. What Mr. Merrick and Mr. Bowman put together should still be here in some sense. That's it. It shouldn't be political. I mean, I don't know why the press is here for this. They should have been here earlier today for the Mediterranean Bonus. In my opinion, that's a far more important issue. But yet, this is being politicized. There's no reason for that. It's a really important issue. It shouldn't be political. We should all really come together for this and vote unanimously on restoring the hotel. That's it. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Sir, if I may add something. I think your comments are spot on on every single point that you said. I was very clear. We should no longer have these public spectacles. We should be -- we should allow staff to do what they need to do. Let me remind everybody, and it's a great opportunity, we have our Historic Preservation Officer here. I can't remember the exact date. It's probably got to be five or six years ago when we -- when we purchased the George Fink studio. That was a gem that I found through a realtor, and it was hitting the market for the first time in 50, 60 years. I brought it to then City Manager, Cathy Swanson, and we were able to purchase it on behalf of the City. We had kind of a back and forth on how to restore the building and what our plans were. If you go visit that building, and I -- our Historic Preservation Officer, I would love to hear your input, please. This is your expertise. Just like in the museum, there are -- just like in a museum, there are areas that are restored and there are areas that are ultra-contemporary. Just go to the George Fink studio. I'm not saying that I agree with the design or the feel of the lower lobby, but there comes a point that if you're going to be -- if you're going to come to the 21st century and you're going to attract people to your hotel, you've got to take certain areas, and you see it in most places like ceilings, frescoes. The furniture cannot remain the same. You know, there's got to be an update. Paint colors change. Lighting changes. There has to be small details that are upgraded. Sometimes even flooring changes because, for example, I did a

beautiful historic building in downtown that actually won some awards where Heisenbottle was the actual architect on it. And we actually did a fountain together in Miami Beach, an amazing architect also. And that fountain won some awards. We weren't able to find the pieces to replace certain parts of the flooring. So, the historic building, we had to replace a lot of the flooring with a similar flooring, but it was still contemporary in nature. So, I go back to what I said, and I agree with you heartily. Let's let staff do their job, sit down with the Biltmore, continue to explore the issues at hand, find a solution in regards to the interior design and move forward. You know, and come back -- if it's in five months, six months, three months, two months, whenever it is, come back with an actual plan. We still don't even have staff's final findings and we're having this meeting once again, and the media somehow some way finds out -- finds out about this. So, I'm all about moving on, and if you want -- if you need examples, go look at the museum. It's a prime example. Go look at George Fink studio. I don't know, I'm not the expert. Dariel, the Historic Preservation Officer, outside of the Biltmore, is the Fink Studio possibly the City's most important building, you know, in regards to that it has all the features?

Mr. Gonzalez: I think it's the best example (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: The best example, okay. So, that's my intent outside of the Biltmore. So, I think that you can see that in probably the best example outside of the Biltmore, you still have contemporary features that are used within the interiors of the building. Everything from doors, paint colors, furniture, baseboards, flooring material, but if you look at the exterior, the exterior is flawlessly, flawlessly renovated historically as per -- I think we spent close to \$3 million possibly on that small building back then which was -- Madam Director, was that three years ago?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Three or four years ago.

Historical Resources & Cultural Arts Director Pernas: It was before my time.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, so three or four years ago. So, we spent a lot of money to bring it back to its old glory. So, that's just my opinion. I think that some of us on this Commission, I think think that that's the most appropriate path moving forward, not having, you know, this type of interaction multiple, multiple times.

Commissioner Menendez: Mayor, if I may, something that I just remembered when the Biltmore was restored to the state where it is today, there was outrage in the community because of the exterior color of the Biltmore. They were about to come out with, you know, pitchforks and go after the Biltmore. They thought it was horrendous. It was outrageous, that color.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I remember that.

Commissioner Menendez: But the City -- yeah, exactly. And the City had to explain to the entire community that that was the original color of the Biltmore. People got used to 90 or 80 years' worth of a pale, you know, the traditional Coral Gables, peachy kind of color. And when they brought it to the original color, the community was outraged. So, the reason I say that is because, you know, there is a certain element of subjectivity. I think the fine line that we have to follow is the historic aspect of it. But there's going to be different views on both sides of this equation, but what I do ask the Administration is once the 45 days are done, if the Administration, along with the Biltmore team, can perhaps provide the community an update, a statement, just so that folks know how things are going. Because though it's not necessary to have, you know, the item come back every meeting, but it's important to keep the community informed because otherwise you have a little bit of a pressure cooker, and I don't think anyone's wants a pressure cooker. So, as long as we can keep the community updated on the findings and the path forward, I think we do a service to everybody.

City Clerk Urquia: Anthony Gomez.

Anthony Gomez: Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor...

Mayor Lago: How are you, sir?

Mr. Gomez: Vice Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager. Thank you for giving me your time today. My name is Anthony Gomez. I'm presently the president of the Latin Builders Association. We use the Biltmore at least four or five times a month. We -- many of you have been in our events. Thank you for joining us, by the way. I didn't hear what everybody was hearing today. I want to congratulate you guys to giving Mr. Prescott the opportunity to clear the air, and I'm sure that with your preservation and your historical liaisons that you have here present working with the City, Mr. Prescott is going to bring back the Biltmore to its past stage. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we're going to go to Zoom next. Karelia Carbonell.

Mayor Lago: Karelia, can you hear me?

City Clerk Urquia: We're asking her to unmute.

Karelia Carbonell: Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Carbonell: Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Ms. Carbonell: Okay. Well, you know, I'm kind of disappointed of what I've been hearing from -- from, you know, not every Commissioner, but you know, there's just a lot of double speak. And I just don't why this is taking so long to make a wrong a right. We cannot compare the Biltmore Hotel with the Fink Studio nor the Coral Gables Museum. The Biltmore Hotel is a national landmark. Only 3 percent of historic buildings make that cut. And it was -- it was recognized as a national landmark because of its furnishing, because of the style of the period, not just the walls. This was a package deal. The lower lobby, I keep hearing, well, it's not historic. It is historic. It is part of the complex. And it was restored in the 1980s using historic documentation back to its original or at least aligned with the original authenticity of the era. I -- I'm glad to hear from Historic because Historic hasn't been speaking on the subject. You know, it's the Asset Manager, it's other people speaking, but there's a lot of doublespeak. And you know, the other -- and I am going to read a short statement. There's a contradiction. There's a contradiction about -- and you know, I think we need to step back and understand that the Biltmore Hotel is unique. We cannot see it as every other building. And so, we're minimizing whatever it is, again, to meet with the design team, to see if the design is going to be appropriate. I think that should all be -- you know, it's -- again, I feel like this is really disappointing in what I hear. The latest enhancement at the hotel contradict Seaway's original intention made at the time the company was awarded its long-term lease in 1992. These latest enhancements were done without permits and not in accordance with Section 11.3 of the City of Coral Gables lease agreement. This situation could potentially place the hotel's national landmark status in jeopardy. Let's respect the historical integrity of this exceptional 1920s landmark and restore it back to the past. To close with Seaway's own words, restore -- and these are their words, his words, Mr. Prescott, the father's words, when he signed the lease -- quote, as it belongs to the old, as though George Merrick could have planned them, end of quote. Seaway owes it to the world, to the world, to get this right. This is not a modern hotel. I suggest that it belongs to the Historic Hotels of America. I don't know why the Biltmore isn't part of that group. It should be. So, you know, every time I hear, you know, all today, you know, when you're speaking on the subject, you know, I hear design, I hear let's meet with the design team. I -- you know, again, this is -- and you've heard from the residents. I am sure you have many letters. There's actually a group wanting to create a petition to get this, you know, restored back to what it should be. So, you know, again, I don't know how you are all going to vote, but you know, another 45 days, I mean, it's been now almost -- you know, it's going to be three months, and it's still there. People are still walking in there. People are still, you know, unhappy. And it's not the original intent of what the Biltmore should be. So, please, I ask you to really understand this is a very important landmark in the City and it should be respected, and it should stay that way. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Karelia.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, Mark Trowbridge.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Trowbridge.

Mark Trowbridge: Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be with you today. Mark Trowbridge, our Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, located here at 201 Alhambra Circle. I just want to echo what several of my colleagues have shared with you all during this public comment, and that is I want to commend the City leadership and staff will be working with Mr. Prescott and Tom Prescott and the team to continue to find a path forward. I think most of you know that for many years now, more than 20 years, we have hosted our monthly breakfast there every third Thursday of the month in beautiful Biltmore, whether it's in the Country Club Ballroom or one of the adjacent ballrooms like Granada or Alhambra. And we, our members, have always respected the Biltmore as a wonderful community partner and generous philanthropist. But we know also, of course, that this hotel is a beautiful, iconic gem of this community. And much like Coral Gables will turn 100 in April of this upcoming year, the Biltmore will have its 100th anniversary slightly after that in January of 2026. And so, we continue, I think, seeing this beautiful building and property as a storyteller, story of our history as it was envisioned by Mr. Merrick, but it is also a great property. And just a few months ago in October, I know many of you know, and we worked very collaboratively with the City for the Communities of Excellence Award, and we were able to bring that conference here from San Diego to Coral Gables because of the Biltmore Hotel. And we're just one of many stories, as you might imagine, about how this property does a great job of collaborating with community partners like us to bring national conferences here. And so, it's not just our monthly breakfast, it's opportunities to tell our story, our history. And so, I just want to say thank you again. Again, thank you so much for working together. And we look forward to finding a way to -- to go forward. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mark.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right. Sir?

Commissioner Fernandez: No, just to sum up, I would like for staff to do their best to bring this back to what it should be, not what the design team wants it to be. Regarding the comment about being discussed in public, that's our duty and our responsibility to our residents, to ensure that they're aware of what's going on, to alleviate any concerns that they have. This has been an issue that has caused a lot of angst for members of our community, and the reason we're discussing this today is because, last commission meeting, we decided we should bring this back once a report was -- was submitted to us, a preliminary report, and so that Mr. Prescott could address the Commission while residents were here because last time, he wasn't available when the residents were in the room and to give him an opportunity to speak when it was at a time certain. So, I trust Director Pernas, you and your team on working on this. I think we've heard from residents; it's

been pretty resounding. They want a restoration, not a renovation. And those are just my two cents. Mr. Manager, I appreciate your leadership on this and working with the Biltmore on finding a solution. I know one of the concerns that Mr. Prescott brought up was the timeliness of getting some of the permits done, getting the approvals, and ensuring that there was somebody on staff that his team could go to to get things done in a timely manner, especially things that needed to be done quickly. So, I appreciate, I know that you and Doug and Zeida have been working on that to get that done. And Mr. ACM, Mr. DCM, for your efforts as well. I appreciate all the work that you've put in. I know that we put in a lot of staff time to get to where we are today. It was a lengthy report, and I know there's more to come once the new report is -- or the final report is completed. So, thank you for that. And I look forward to bringing this issue back up as soon as we have something to report.

Unidentified Speaker: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Castro: Would we like to move maybe to direct the City Manager to expedite this issue, the situation?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second.

Commissioner Fernandez: In what way?

Commissioner Castro: In the permitting way.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I really think...

Commissioner Castro: In not following the process of, if there's any permits that have been approved by Legal to maybe expedite those permits.

Commissioner Fernandez: I don't think -- I don't think -- the problem is, I don't think we're even there. I think we still haven't done the final assessment...

Commissioner Castro: Right.

Commissioner Fernandez: Of the -- of the hotel. That's going to take some time. I think the 45-day period, from the way I understand it, is literally just going to get us to the point where we may be ready to have a final report on -- on the Biltmore. So, I don't think we're even at a stage where approving permits is -- we're not even at the approval of permit stage.

Commissioner Castro: So, but I'm just...

Commissioner Fernandez: And I think the Mayor was right on that. This is not going to be a one-month or two-month...

Commissioner Castro: Absolutely.

Commissioner Fernandez: Return. I know Karelia has her concerns about, you know, how quickly we can get this done. Let's get it done right. You know, and if it does take, like the Mayor said, a year, let's make sure that it takes its course and that staff has whatever resources they need to ensure. And if -- Mr. Manager, if there's anything that we as a Commission need to approve or any directive that you need from us, let us know so that we can take action and -- and give you whatever.

Commissioner Castro: So, basically what I was really trying to say is put it as a priority.

City Manager Rojas: To make...

City Attorney Suárez: The rest of the case for the Manager, right? Mr. Manager, this is a priority for you already. This is...

City Manager Rojas: It is, and it has been the priority. All the historical buildings have been a priority since I've been here, especially when we started looking at the budget. So, we are going to make it a priority. It is a priority, but as the Commissioner Fernandez indicated, there's still a process that they have to go through. They have to submit their plans. They have to -- and we can help expedite some of that, but they still have to do some work. Our Preservation Officer can work with them to look at what work they want to do. But again, I'll go back to there's the past work that's been done that was unpermitted that needs to be corrected, and we'll work on that. And then there's the future of what they're going to do with the lobby and how it's going to be done. We can do it at the same time in conjunction, but there are two separate issues that need to be worked at the same time. I don't believe it's going to be something that in three months from now we can report that everything's been corrected and everything's back to normal at the Biltmore. But what I can do is provide updates as to the progress of where we're at.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to -- I'm going to clarify what I was saying, because when I said expedited, we do have some issues where for health and safety reasons, you do need to expedite, such as in the sauna area. Absolutely, that needs to be expedited. I don't expect, you know, in 45 days that we have a clear vision of exactly what needs to be done, because that is a lengthy process. It is a deliberative process, and it will require the expertise. And I don't think there is going to be any delay. I know that some folks would hope that we could get it done that quick, but the reality is this does take time. But the health and safety items I think need to be expedited.

City Manager Rojas: Absolutely. And you know, if we rush through this, we're going to have a mediocre product and results. We need to really take our time so that when it is corrected and

we've done the items that need to be fixed, it lasts for another hundred years. So, I don't want to rush this -- this whole process.

Mr. Gonzalez: Can I make a comment?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir. Go ahead.

Mr. Gonzalez: I don't know about rushing anything, but the entire hotel from groundbreaking to opening night dinner was 11 months. It'll take now a year and something to get some blueprints done? What's going on. Why would it take so long? Just put that on the record.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We have a much more robust permitting process than we did back then.

City Manager Rojas: And I don't think they paid overtime for workers to work and so on a night.

Commissioner Fernandez: You forget it took four years to get Burger Bob's done.

Mr. Gonzalez: That's not right. Exactly. That's not right.

Commissioner Fernandez: I agree.

Commissioner Castro: Okay, so even our own projects we don't expedite them when it comes to permitting. They go through the normal process as any resident or business would. So, when we do get to the permitting phase, which I understand is going to take a while, maybe we could consider, Doug, expediting that to have some faster results.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Anything else? All right, moving on.