

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-1
December 7, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Michael Mena
Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Jorge Fors
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Parking Director, Kevin Kinney
Finance Director, Diana Gomez
Planning and Zoning Director, Ramon Trias

Public Speaker(s)

Carlos Valera
Shamim Ahmadzadegan
Maria Cruz
Sue Kawalerski
Jose Amezaga
Gordon Sokoloff
Karelia Carbonell
Anthony De Yurre

Agenda Item I-1 [10:16 a.m.]

Discussion regarding the materials to be used on the exterior façade of the Mobility Hub.

Mayor Lago: Let's move on to our 10 AM time certain. I apologize that we're 15 minutes late.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we have a financial presentation because it was discussed that the garage would lose money, so we have the Finance Director and the Parking Director providing a financial presentation on the mobility hub.

Mayor Lago: Yes. So, just really quickly before we get into that, I want to talk about -- I want to give a little bit of background in regard to why we're having this financial presentation and why we're having this discussion on parking. I want to have a positive, constructive conversation today about this issue. We're moving forward. This is a project that needs to be addressed for the health of our downtown to ensure that almost 27 percent of our tax base which comes to the downtown is positioned for success. But what I want to make sure is when we agree it's beautiful, but when we disagree, we disagree in a manner that's collegial, that's based on facts. That's why I put -- I try to put as many things on the record, even though I felt that we shouldn't have had to put the stadium issue on the record because it was just rumors, but it's gotten to that point. I asked the Manager to please give us facts on parking and facts on the finances of our current parking garages and the proposed parking garages. I'd also like to put on the record that I have met with two individuals, not once, but twice, one of them with Diana to discuss the numbers and some of the parking data was called into question, and that's why we're going to discuss it today. So, what I'd love nothing more is to have a real conversation and put these numbers in front of everyone so they understand what the real numbers are and lay that to rest and move on from that issue, and then continue having the conversation as Commissioner Anderson would like in regards to the skin.

City Manager Iglesias: And Mayor, before we start, I would like to say that this also deals with an elevated park.

Mayor Lago: Of course.

City Manager Iglesias: And we don't have return on investment in parks.

Mayor Lago: I understand.

City Manager Iglesias: When we invest in parks, there is no return on investment. There is more maintenance and more time involved.

Mayor Lago: I agree.

City Manager Iglesias: So, those are amenities that we provide the residents without looking at a return on investment, so this does have an elevated park. And we...

Mayor Lago: And we do -- but if I may interrupt, Mr. Manager -- and I apologize for interrupting you -- if you remember the comments that I just made three minutes ago, four minutes ago, we are going to see a return on investment. It is based on either protecting the 27 percent tax base that we have in our downtown or increasing that number, which will allow us to have significantly more money to address resident concerns, quality of life issues. My goal is to continue to grow our tax base in our downtown, which will only benefit the community as a whole, and these are the type of amenities, these are the type of projects that will make our downtown even more attractive. So, I want to make sure that people understand that. The reason why we have the second lowest millage rate for a full-service city in Miami-Dade County is because we have a robust downtown, which subsidizes the residential neighborhoods, and we have to continue to invest. Case in point, our investment starting next year in regard to our cleanup of our downtown, ensuring that windows are cleaned, sidewalks are clean, that swales are clean, that trees are planted, that people are held accountable in regards to the development agreements, that light posts are working, along with the investment in all the new surface parking lots that we've just completed that are opening or about to open. Also, the investment in this parking garage, the Public Safety Building, the adjacent surface -- excuse me, new parking garage, which is under construction.

These are investments in our tax base, which are critically important to the protection of the City of Coral Gables.

City Manager Iglesias: And I agree with you completely with that, Mayor. And -- but in addition to this, we do have the elevated park. We even have a return on investment on that. And so, it's -
- I just wanted to make that as an additional comment.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: But I completely agree with all your comments, Mayor. Thank you.

Parking Director Kinney: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, Commission. There were a few questions raised at the sunshine meeting related to traffic and revenue and financing that Diana and I would like to kind of clarify and make sure everybody understands well. But before we get into the presentation, I do need -- I feel compelled to respond a little bit or modify slightly the comments from Mr. Holmes. The -- our Aragon garages, it is true they are -- people perceive them as dark, and some people are even possibly claustrophobic in those facilities and the corners are tight. But I need to make sure nobody walks away thinking those garages are dangerous. And I would invite the Chief to come up at any time and let you guys know that those garages -- our history, they have been safe and well used. They are uncomfortable for some people, but I don't want everybody to start using the term "dangerous" because we manage them as needed to keep them safe and secure. So, I appreciate the comments that Mr. Holmes made, but I would like to avoid using the word "dangerous." Now, if the PowerPoint could come up. As I said, there were some questions related to traffic, revenues, and financing. If you remember, some of you were on the Commission back in 2018 and early '19, and even back into 2017, for a number of years, the City, along with multiple consultants, dealt with proformas and parking studies in our parking system multiple times. Back in 2019, there was a financial proforma that was developed. It was developed based on actual traffic and permit sales from 2018. Generally speaking, all of the projections were based on an average peak daily occupancy of 80 percent in the system. Just a fact that's going to be important

in a moment here, in 2019, the City did vote for or have a modest rate increase in the parking garages that -- but for that rate increase, I will let you know that the pandemic would have been significantly more severe for our finances, but that was a saving grace. At that time, the projection in 2019, the projection was that when we had our first full year of operations in the new garage -- it was not a mobility hub at that time; it was a garage. And our projections for parking revenue were \$2,437,000. The projections for the first full year of operations at that time was 2024, and that projection also included five years after the previous, another modest rate increase that would go into effect in 2024. Now, when we're talking about parking revenues, this is only hourly parking and permit parking. It does not include other things that are now involved in the mobility hub, such as retail leases is in addition to that. We are talking to many, many vendors that provide mobility as a service. Those will be partners to the City. And all those mobility as service vendors, whether you're talking about Freebee, whether you're talking about Spin or Bird, or a carsharing service -- EVgo is one of the carsharing services we're talking to -- whether all of those will generate streams of revenue, but those conversations are just at the infancy now. Also, we currently -- the City provides at the City's cost, the power to charge our now 30 electric charging stations for vehicles. I will tell you that is not an expense that the City can bear forever. Sooner or later -- and I believe it will probably be next year with the implementation of the 40-plus charging stations in the new Minorca garage -- we will begin to pass the cost of charging on to the customer. So, that will be another revenue stream. And then also...

Mayor Lago: Mr. Kinney, can I interrupt you there for one second?

Parking Director Kinney: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I enjoy parking my electric vehicle in the Aragon parking garage and not paying for electricity. Not to be discussed right now, but can you give me an idea of what the costs are after this meeting? Not now, not now. Can you give me --? Just you and I can meet next week, and I'd like to talk about what the costs are to see if maybe we implement a minimal charge just to cover -- I don't want to make money because...

Parking Director Kinney: No, no, no, no.

Mayor Lago: What I want to do is I want to continue to promote...

Parking Director Kinney: The intent is not to make money.

Mayor Lago: I want to continue to promote people using EVs. And I know that this building is going to have solar, so potentially we could incorporate some of the solar one way or another, if there's enough capacity.

Parking Director Kinney: Yes, yes. No, absolutely. Our conversations have been about recovering costs, not making money.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Anderson.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, I played around with the math one time when I traveled up to Winter Park and I paid for charging my vehicle, and it was under 30 cents per gallon equivalent if it would have been traveling up there. So, I think it was around 26. I'll try to run that experiment again and let you know, but I have no problem paying that kind of mileage cost for charging my vehicle.

Parking Director Kinney: The price per mile is significantly less...

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Parking Director Kinney: But it is a recovery. Right now, I will tell you that the City is paying approximately -- on our first 18 charging stations, we are paying approximately \$1,000 a month.

But the plan -- once the mobility hub is in place -- is we will have between 150 and 200 charging stations. So, if those...

Commissioner Anderson: I appreciate you doing that. And I just want to clarify, I meant per gallon -- if I misspoke -- per gallon cost equivalent.

Parking Director Kinney: Yeah. So, anyway, and then the last one was one that the Mayor and the Manager were just speaking about is we know that the event space on the roof is going to generate revenue, and that's something we haven't calculated. And in fact, we just are now working through it because the programming has finally been approved for this facility. When we get to the pandemic, I mean, it's clear that the pandemic impacted every aspect of our lives, and that includes parking in downtown Coral Gables. What I have here is just two simple graphs. The one on the left relates to our visitors. That's the number of hours someone paid to park in Garage 1 and 4; the red being Garage 1 and the blue being Garage 4. That's just simply number of hours that were paid. You can see in 2020 -- which was the most severe year with the most severe impacts -- the number of hours paid for parking was less than 50 percent of a typical year. If you average 2018 and 2019, I would say that that would be a typical year. Now, that would mean that instead of \$800,000, which we made roughly in 2018 and 2019, we would have expected to make \$500,000. We actually did much better, but that was, again, because of that modest rate increase that we had in 2019. Now, we did see the start of a recovery in 2021. And then you see the shadow area; that's what we have budgeted for this year. We anticipate that the recovery will continue. Our expectation is 2023 is when things will be back to normal. What I can tell you is in the first two months of this year, fiscal year 2022, we are 71 percent ahead of last year, so the recovery is actually coming in or appears to be coming in a little quicker than Finance and Parking expected. But we do expect by 2023 that transient parking in the garages will be back to normal. The other thing I would mention is this is just Garage 1 and 4. Garages have lagged from other divisions. At this point, I can comfortably say that on-street parking lots and a few other areas have essentially recovered. The lagging sector is the parking garages. On the right, you have another graph that just deals with permit sales. Now, Garages 1 and 4 are kind of unique in that we limit the number

of permits that we sell there because they are so popular for short-term parking. But our typical 465, 470 permits are what we typically allow sales, but you can see even with that and the high demand in 2021, we were selling 80 percent of normal. I'm glad to say that in December, this month we're now, we have sold 462 permits in Garage 1 and 4. So, essentially, we are back to normal with the permit parking. Now, this is -- there was some question about the utilization of our garages and occupancies in our garages. And I'm paraphrasing, but essentially, the comment was that our garages are empty, always empty, always have been, always will be. This is a chart that we did show you back in 2018 and 2019. This is the history, a simple graph that shows how many hours of parking were purchased in our garages from 2005 until 2018. Now, when we had our consultants do the projections back in 2018 and 2019, they were aware of this information. We told them to do projections based on flat growth. So, after 2018, we told them not to expect this to continue because we wanted to be conservative with what we were looking at as far as projections. But this is 14 years of our actual experience. So, our garages over time have become extremely popular to visitors to downtown. And no, we are not back to the almost 2 million hours of parking, but we expect that we will be in that neighborhood by 2023. Then the last one is taking all of this data and kind of putting it together and trying to come up with projections for revenue. This is revenue -- and you can see at the top of each column, it kind of explains so that when we go out into the future years where we're doing projections, you can see what kind of facility we're talking about is you can see where our revenue is. The blue and the red are actual revenues received for permits and for hourly parking. What you will see in '19, '20 and 2021, the green is if the traffic had come in at a normal level, that is what we would have expected in revenue. But the green is the shortfall that was caused by the pandemic. So, we consider that the loss of 800,000 hours of parking was directly related to the pandemic, and we're covering from that, and we have seen significant recovery to date. So, the green is money that was not received because of the pandemic. If -- one of the comments was that in 2021 we made just under \$1.3 million. If we made \$1.3 million in 2021, how can we budget in 2024, \$2.4 million? Well, the answer is one of the reasons we only had \$1.3 million in 2021 was the pandemic, and the pandemic's impact was half a million dollars. So, what I would -- the good news that I can share with you now is 2022, that is a projection because we're in the first quarter of 2022 right now. When we budgeted, we

budgeted 2022 at \$1.5 million for these two facilities, expecting that we would still have 3 or \$400,000 of impact from the pandemic. The truth of the matter is the first two months -- it's only two months; don't want to get too excited -- but we're 71 percent ahead of last year. So, our expectation is our shortfall is not going to be as severe as we expected. Now, what you see in 2023 is a dramatic drop, but that dramatic drop happens because that's the year Garage 1 goes out of service so we can go into construction of the new mobility hub. That means it's one facility trying to cover for both, so we fully expect, and we are aware that that's going to be a difficult year. Now, what happens in 2024 is probably somewhere midyear -- it's hard to know exactly how the construction project's going to go -- we will get the mobility hub. But a big chunk of 2024, we are also only going to be operating with one garage on Andalusia, so that year is going to be a shortfall. But if we apply what we know is the normal traffic numbers with no expected large growth like we've seen through our history, in 2020 -- or the first full year of operations, which now is projected to be 2025, we would expect to hit the \$2.437 million, which is an important number for Diana. And now she'll kind of walk through some of the financing numbers for you.

Finance Director Gomez: Okay, so good morning. So, as we saw, the Parking Director has just estimated the parking revenues operating in the full -- the first full year of the mobility hub operations would be about \$2.437 million at 80 percent capacity. So, for the purposes of my analysis, I'm using only 90 percent of that number in the first two years of operation, so you'll see in year three, what I call Y3, year three, 2025, which is the first full year of operations. I'm not considering any revenues and expenditures in year one and two because that's construction, so we're not -- I'm leaving that blank. Any expenditures whatever will be absorbed overall in the parking system, but starting in year three, revenues of just parking revenues, I'm taking 90 percent of the 80 percent capacity, which is essentially 72 percent capacity of that garage. That revenue number is used for the first two years, as I mentioned, and then in year five and six, I go to 80 percent capacity, which is that \$2.43 million number. And then year seven and forward, I use 90 percent of capacity, but I also add in a 20 percent increase because, in 2029, there's an expected 20 percent increase to the rates, so that's kind of how the revenue numbers are structured so that

you can see there's no real other growth than just the rate increases and we're not using 100 percent capacity in any of our years. In terms of...

City Manager Iglesias: Diana, if I may add, that's 90 percent capacity with a reduction of 10 percent.

Finance Director Gomez: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: So, that's 90 percent on 90 percent, which would be a capacity of about 81 percent.

Finance Director Gomez: Right, for years seven through ten in this example. We have for expenditures -- based on the information given from the previous reports as well as discussions with Mr. Kinney -- expenditures for the parking garage, we're estimating them at \$500,000, and then estimating \$200,000 of expenditures for operation of the park. So, we're allocating \$700,000 towards expenditures for this facility with a 2 percent increase each year in expenditures. So, in this scenario, we're -- this scenario is going to be talking about if we keep Garage 4, meaning we don't use any proceeds to reduce debt. We keep it, whatever we do with it, we do with it, but it doesn't get factored into the debt for this garage. The next scenario I'll show you is if we sell and use the proceeds. So, in this scenario, if we keep Garage 4, you'll see that the annual debt service on the mobility hub is listed there. It does ramp up just because that's normal -- how that normally works because it's an op -- we don't pay any debt service on the first two years while it's under construction, and then we kind of ramp into it to make sure that the revenues are generated enough to cover the costs of the debt service. And that gets a certain net cash flow to City after debt service. But then we also have other factors and -- to consider that are proper of the mobility hub, such as the real estate taxes on the first-floor retail space, as well as the event space and the retail rental income on that event -- on that first floor level. For our purposes, we have estimated these revenues at 75 percent for the first two years of capacity as well -- and then in year -- the third year, we're at 90 percent, and then 100 percent from that point forward with a 3 percent escalation

because normally our lease agreements have at least a 3 percent rent escalator. So, in the -- these are the way that -- I'm just trying to explain the numbers and how I derived them and showing there is conservatism in the numbers, and it shows that we will have an excess in every single year of the -- of operations and with a constant increase of over \$400,000 ongoing after those first few years of operations. If you go to the next slide. And then the next slide is the same information, except that it shows that we are selling Garage 4 and utilizing the proceeds to pay down the debt at the start of year six. So, the revenues are the same revenue that we had -- I explained in the previous slide. The expenditures are the same. In year six, you see that there is a revenue, sale of garage, \$17.5 million. We're only using \$17.5 million as a conservative number. It probably will sell for more. This is just because if we structure the debt this way, we have to have a set number. So, if we sell it for \$30 million, 17.5 of it will be used to pay down the debt, and the rest of it will be used for the City's coffers. So, this shows a debt service. As you can see, the debt service does increase in the first couple of years, and then it stays constant. That's about a million dollars less than it was in the previous scenario. So, in this situation, the only additional revenue that is added here is real estate taxes on whatever is developed in Garage 4 because something will be developed. So, in year seven, 30 percent of that value for land cost -- right? -- because they're still developing, and then year eight and forward, we added the full development. And we're only assuming a \$65 million added to the tax roll building, or whatever they do, whatever it is developed for. I don't know if that's -- you know, it's just a fair -- could be more, it could be less, but more or less, that's what the basis of the rent real estate tax is estimated in my scenario here. So, you'll see there in these scenarios, we still have a surplus. And in the ongoing surplus will be \$1.7 million moving forward. So, what these numbers wanted to show you is just how the revenues being conservative from our standpoint, still warrant and it makes the facility affordable in either scenario. It also shows that -- sorry -- it shows that we know that either way that we go, the revenue -- the garage will support itself. And this is looking at a garage as an individual cost center. In general, parking systems don't usually look individually at garages as their individual cost centers because they don't always cover their own expenditures. In this case, we can see that it does while being conservative, as well as the fact that we have the parking system as a whole that helps to support it when there are downturns or things that can't -- that -- where it may not be able to support

itself. So, as I mentioned in the past, I mean, it is my recommendation that we do sell Garage 4 and use the proceeds towards the pay down of the debt. From a finance perspective, you know, it's -- it will lessen our debt load over time, and it will help us -- give us more flexibility to do other things in the future with the available capacity. We do have an 8 percent debt ratio internal policy that we use. Currently, it's about at 4.9 percent. If we were to keep Garage 4, that debt ratio will go to about 6.2 percent. If we were to sell it, the ratio would go from 4.9 to 5.7. So, obviously, taking on any additional debt will increase the debt ratio. We're still well within our internal mandate of keeping us at 8 percent or lower, so -- but I just wanted to let you know that that -- those are the factors when we considered debt and whether we take out more debt or not. But it's always a good idea to keep the ability for additional debt because you never know what's going to come up in the future.

City Manager Iglesias: I think that the bottom line is that if we don't sell Garage 4, we'll be in the black by about \$400,000 ongoing. If we do sell Garage 4, we'll be about -- in the black by \$1.7 million ongoing. This does not take into account anything -- any revenues that would be generated by Garage 4, which the Mayor and I have been talking...

Mayor Lago: I was going to mention that right now.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, about that, that we have businesses that would like to lease the entire Garage 4.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: So, this does not include any of those revenues. It also does not affect our triple triple rating because it keeps us below -- certainly, well below 8 percent.

Mayor Lago: So, with that being said, I just want to talk about a few things, and we'll turn the page. I know that Commissioner Anderson's got a few items that she wants to discuss and actual

presentation. First off, I want to lay this to rest. This is a public meeting. I want the Excel spreadsheets, the presentation that you gave, I want them to be made public. I want anybody that asks, Mr. Clerk, for a copy of this, for this excerpt explaining the finances and the parking, for that to be given to them in an expeditious manner. These are the actual numbers that the City is presenting. No more misinformation, no more going at 1 in the morning and looking. Oh, there's 500 parking spaces open. Let's use that number to calculate, you know, whether we need this building or not. These are the numbers that are backed by our Finance Department and by our Parking Department. These are the actual numbers. So, moving forward, let's provide this documentation to anyone that asks. Let's put it -- I'll go one step further. Let's put this on the website, please, this portion that we're discussing right now.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Put it on there, an item about, you know, a decision based on the mobility hub, so that's number one. Number two, in regard to the parking garage, the Manager and I have been working for about four or five months on a potential tenant, which it's up to us; it's not up to the tenant, it's up to us. But they've already engaged us and said we'll take the entire Garage 4, the entire Garage 4. We'll pay market rate. We just need to have the parking. We're willing to do whatever terms you're willing to give us in regard to time. We just need the spaces. What are you willing to charge us? I know that people who visit this community do not like the park in that -- it's not -- you know, it's not the most attractive structure to park in. It's a little tight. It's a little old, outdated, even though we have made some corrections to it to make it as pleasant experience as possible, even though it's very difficult due to the current circumstances. But we have somebody that's willing to engage us right now and take that off our hands, so there will be a significant increase in revenue on a structure that most people don't want to park in due to the outdated nature of the structure, so that's number two. Number three is the issue now. I want to get away from the finances. We can talk about finances. We can talk about parking numbers all day. I don't have a problem. We can be here as long as we like. But what I really want to concentrate now after we've cleared the air in regard to the finances and the parking is the issue of aesthetics and the issue of

the skin because that's up -- what's for question today. I don't want to muddy the conversation anymore about whether this doesn't make financial sense, whether the park -- whether we need the parking or not. The facts are here. They've been presented. This is a sunshine meeting. It's a public meeting. Anyone can speak about the issue. What we're really discussing today is the aesthetics and the skin. So, moving on. Do we have any other presentations from staff, anything else that needs to be discussed?

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we have our consultant, Gensler, here. They can answer any question concerning the design issues.

Mayor Lago: I think Gensler has already presented twice.

City Manager Iglesias: And we presented at the sunshine meeting.

Mayor Lago: Again, I want to put this on the record. If you would like to present again, we can bring that again, but I don't want to take up anybody's time. I know that we're short on time, and I want to make sure that we can hear the public, and I also want to give Commissioner Anderson all the time that she needs to discuss this issue. But please, can we come to the agreement that the finances portion is no longer an issue, and the parking is no longer an issue? We have that? Everybody agree with that? Okay, perfect. Moving on from that, Commissioner Anderson, would you like to --? The floor is yours.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you. And I'm going to do my best to keep this to 15 minutes. I know we're short on time, and hopefully, we can make this fun. So, can we bring it up? Okay, it's a little small, so that's why I gave you guys the paper version. I don't have a professional PowerPoint here, but I wanted to share with you some of the thoughts that have driven me on some of the conclusions, not just for my fellow Commissioners, but also for the public. Because we can't agree on everything, and there's things that have shaped my opinion. And I started with the fact that architecture impacts our mood and our business activity. As Winston Churchill once said,

we shape our buildings, and afterwards, our buildings shape of us. The psychological impact of buildings on our mood and the enjoyment of the spaces around us cannot be underestimated. The ICAA has noted that studies have shown that people tend to walk faster through dead spaces of ill-conceived architecture. But when there's delight with the beautiful building and composition, people will slow their pace and feel the physical and emotional connection to their surroundings. And we do have an esteemed architect in the room that has created many wonderful projects that cause us to do just that. In downtown Manhattan, a virtual reality experiment that measured participant's psychological responses while viewing street scenes using wearable devices showed that street scenes with the most architectural variation are the most mentally engaging. Another virtual reality study showed that most people feel better in rooms with curved edges, rounded corners than in sharp-edged rectangular rooms. Though tellingly, perhaps, the design students were among the participants that preferred the opposite. There's reasons for these comments as a preface to what I'm going to share with the residents. Some residents don't want the retail at the ground level. I'm supportive of relevant ground level retail. We need -- a bike shop is -- would be handy there because you can drop off your bike and pick it up. Grab and go type foods for those who are biking in or driving in and wanting to pick up the trolley and head on downtown. An informational kiosk because there's been more than once that I've been stopped by people visiting our great city wanting to know where can I go to the cinema. You can have a ticket booth for Actor's Playhouse. You can have a ticket booth for the cinema sort of like they do in downtown Manhattan when you go to the playhouse there. There's great things we can do at this ground level that will cause people to pause and walk and enjoy the street rather than the fast pace they go through there now, not only because it's boring, but it's extremely hot. So, the height issue is permitted in the Zoning Code. And if anybody wants to talk to me more that's a resident about that, I can go through the minutia of that. It's similar to the Colonnade garage and less than the residential condominiums that are going to be built along Andalusia as well. What I want to talk to you about is the aesthetic and environmental design features that must be incorporated in this garage if we are truly going to have something that is world class. We have -- we've talked about the heat island, but we didn't -- have not talked about the reflective light value of the heat. The laws of physics govern here. We cannot escape them. Putting some white paint on aluminum is

not going to change that. It may be the next Pass It Forward Flower where we see the paint dulling over a period of short years. It'll be a maintenance nightmare. Look at the paint on your car. Has it lasted 10 years? Many cars don't, not in the South Florida heat. We can use substances. You know, there's been PVC that's -- you know, the depth of it. We can use metals. It depends on the angle. The angle will determine where the heat goes. The angle will determine where the light goes, and it won't make it a dark garage either; it'll make it safe. And coming from a woman that has been attempted mugged or mugged more than once in downtown Miami -- fortunately able to fight it off -- I feel safe in our city. I am proud of our city, and I'm proud of our police department for what they do. So, you know, the heat on the street of Andalusia -- and my office is within a block of it -- decreases the foot traffic of businesses significantly. I don't want to walk on that street. It decreases the outdoor dining because you're reflecting a light down and the heat down into those businesses, whether it's concave or convex doesn't matter, whether it's refracted or not doesn't matter. It depends on where it's aimed. And if it's aimed down at the street, if it's aimed into the outdoor dining, it is not going to be attractive or a good place to go dining. It impacts the trees that can be planted along the way, and I've mentioned that to you all on some of the trees -- a couple of little trees that are on Andalusia right now at Publix. Without the reflective light coming down, they perished because of the heat that's on the current asphalt. As UM biology professor Ken Feeley recently reported in a comprehensive study of nearly 20,000 species of trees, the research showed that plant communities are shifting to include more heat-loving species as a result of climate change. Although our beloved oak trees are common in South Florida today, Ken Feeley said their time here may be fleeting. With climate change pushing up temperatures, the oaks, which favor cooler conditions, could soon decline in the region, and be replaced with more tropical heat-loving species, such as gumbo, limbo, or mahogany trees. I provided you the link to the article. I also attached the article at the end so that you can enjoy it more. And I'm terrible with the clicker, so I did promise to go fast, so we're going to go right through that, reflective heat, and let's get to the fun part, which is the diagrams. This is on the internet, folks. I didn't draw this one. If we can reflect heat up, we can avoid it going down in the streets. Notice that the diagram, which I enhanced with the -- how do you get this to go down? -- down onto road is considered bad. We don't want that. We want the light to reflect up, so how do we do that? We use time-

tested design features with louvers and other things that can reflect the light up into the garage, allow the visibility into the garage, and we can determine where that light is going to go, as well as the air flow. It'll be completely safe for both, invisible from the inside and the out. So, I'm going to go through a few photos right now of other buildings that you can look at on the internet with design. Some of the stuff is -- you know, we have some great decking out there now that's made out of PVC materials. Buildings so you can have the vertical ones when at least the hottest heat is hitting at the noon hour, the light's going directly in. Otherwise, it's refracting in at an angle into the building. There's one with some greenery. I understand from the contractor is that the City staff wanted less green. I urge you to contact Adina and ask her about the appropriate plan in the right place. I have stuff I don't ever water, I don't do anything to, and it's green all the time. Here's your horizontal ones. This is at a campus. This is another design. Those are different types of louvers, so you can see it's very artistic. The detail in those louvers as opposed to the pegboard design that we have that's very monotonous, and quite frankly, boring. This is another idea for different type of louvers. We have a Board of Architects. This is my hand drawing. And the point I'm trying to make here is at the lower level, you angle the louvers so that you don't see the lights from the vehicles. They're angled up to screen -- and you can put a screen behind it. On the upper level, you can have them horizontal so that you have complete visibility, but still that light is reflecting into the building as opposed to reflecting down on the street. Here it is, I scaled it to the actual skin that we have on there now. When this skin scans, it kind of looks bluish, but that was not my fault, but you can see that it will work in. Here's another detail of a design that I plagiarized off of somebody else. Here's your existing building. To the left, that thing that looks like a boat is actually a wind turbine. So, if we're going to celebrate movement, I think we need to celebrate stuff that shows that we're going to be a sustainable city, a city that wants to encourage people to do the right thing. So, in the dark section in the center there is our ramp, which there's the building I plagiarized. There's another building using screening, another design. Here's our ramp. When I showed this picture to occasional people, they said, "Oh, is that really what it looks like? Just a bunch of wires? Is that all we're getting in Coral Gables?" That looks like it belongs in an industrial park. I'm sorry to disagree with you all. Screen the headlights from the rooftop and dining for residents. Our Zoning Code requires it. There's no basis for us to say that it is in the

best interest of our residents to have blue xenon headlights going into the residential windows or as they try to dine across the street at Bulla and other facilities that we hope to open up in the future. Our job is to screen the garage openings and screen the -- minimize visible interior lights and car headlights. We have no justifiable reason here for not doing so; none has been cited. There is no reason not to screen the headlights on this building. So, I shared with you the email conversation I had with our City Attorney that provided the basis upon which we can alleviate certain requirements in the Code. Certainly, in residential areas, we can alleviate requirements where we want to put in parks. We need to put in fire stations. We need to do things so that we facilitate response times for our police and the fire department. This Commission in its discretion can only do so when it's in the public interest to do so, and if the equities weigh in favor of doing so. Since I see no equities on the side of the scale to allow the headlights to go into adjacent properties, I submit to you it's a huge mistake not to do so. So, I saw this picture, and on an article about why isn't everyone afraid of heights. And I got to tell you, City Manager, I thought of you immediately. (INAUDIBLE) a little younger back then, so I told you I wanted to make it fun but suffering from a little vertigo -- and I don't know about you, but as I get older and I close my eyes and I'm in that shower stall, things move a little bit, and you have to grab onto something. It's not the same as when I was 20, or when I was a kid, and I could go spinning around in the carnival rides. Those days are over for me, and we have to, you know, embrace everyone in our community. So, here's your -- you can read the details on that article, and somewhere along the line, I missed the -- oh, there we go, here we go. Some wind turbines. I was a little too fast on that one. Yeah, here's a closeup. Here, you can see how much you can generate. That's -- there's a couple of these up in Iceland. Here's one of the Indiana University. We can celebrate movement with those. And if you don't want to do that, we can use art, where there's wind turbines out there. These are made in the United States. This is an Arizona company that makes those. And here is the complete article and on the global warming is changing our plant communities, University of Miami study. So, that's the end. I hope you all appreciate the effort that went through to draw the palm fronds and these buildings because it was all a pencil drawing, okay.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner. I commend your efforts.

Commissioner Anderson: How many minutes did I take?

Mayor Lago: You're -- listen, you can have as much time as you like. You can continue. I take a lot of pride in...

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, wait.

Mayor Lago: And I always...

Commissioner Anderson: I do want to clear up one thing because I did...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Anderson: I did have a resident meeting yesterday, which totally threw my psyche off because I'm used to doing them on Friday, and I thought it was Friday, and I thought I'd have two days off. But folks brought up the email from Dona Spain.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: And they misinterpreted it. They felt that it was an endorsement of the building, and I re-read it to them. I said, "No, it's not an endorsement of the building." What's it's endorsing is the fact that we're not required to do Mediterranean in the area and agree with you. We're not required to do Mediterranean. What I respectfully suggest is we take the advantage of the beautiful talents that we have on our Board of Architects, send them directions that we want a modern building, that we want a building that decreases the heat on our street, and you know, you can share whatever ideas you have for that to decrease the heat. But as I have learned throughout my career it's not the first draft that's the winner. It's not even the second draft that's the winner. And I'm sure that the architects in the room could tell you it sometimes takes hundreds of drafts,

and Hemingway did over 100 drafts of his book, For Whom the Bells Tolls, before he reached the final end product, the award-winning product. We can do an award-winning mobility hub here. I'm very excited about us moving this forward. Don't let the anxiety of, you know, having to push this thing forward not take us -- take the time and pause for our Board of Architects to do that. I think they're ready, willing, and able to do it in December and bring us back to something that is world class. So, thank you for your time and patience.

Mayor Lago: At all, please, thank you for a very thorough presentation. And I take a lot of pride in putting together, like I've said before, memos and different opportunities to really get our message across. But I want to make sure that we put on the record that we will take as much time as needed to have this discussion. And I think that it's important to really understand where you're coming from, and I think you did a great job really detailing that and making us understand what your concerns are and what you think could make this project even a better project than today. So, do my colleagues have any comments, or any concerns, or any ideas in regards to Commissioner Anderson's presentation?

Commissioner Fors: I have two random comments. I'm not going to go on about it for the third time now, about all my thoughts on the project, but two random comments for discussion. First, I did want to note that the transparent -- not transparent, but the car ramp, which makes it visual to the street, Commissioner Anderson included a photograph here. And I did want to clarify that the intent is to put some art on the backdrop of that, so it won't look -- it'll look a little nicer than the one that's in the photograph here. Secondly, regarding the screening of the building, specifically with reference to Section -- I think it's 10 -- what is it again? -- 10 -- what is it, 10-105?

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yeah, so I know it's somewhere in here. To me, screening means covering with a screen. And when I stop to think about what a screen is, it's a plane, I guess you could say, with holes or with perforations to sort of not just to be there, but not be entirely there in terms of

surface area. So, just my thoughts on the application of 10-105 is when I say -- when I read that it shall be screened, and I look at what the current proposed skin is, I mean, to me, that's exactly what is being done, it's being screened. That's my disconnect when it comes specifically to Section 10-105. So, I was -- I read screen, and I think that's a screen. So, I think it's actually being fully complied with, and I'm just talking about -- really talking about more about interpretation of 10-105 than I am about the design of the building. But those are my thoughts on that.

Mayor Lago: Could I touch base on that, Commissioner Fors? I also tend to agree with you on that front, but I'd like to hear from staff on that point. Maybe someone could come before -- Ramon, Mr. Trias, or the architect can discuss a little bit about it and provide some clarity in regard to whether we're on solid footing in regards to that question or that interpretation in regards to screening.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Yes, sir. I fully agree with the interpretation. I think you're on solid footing. Keep in mind that that section talks about two types of light; one is the headlights, true, but also the ambient light of the parking garage. Most of the time, that lighting is not designed with great detail. In this case, it's part of the concept of the design. So, I think it's fully complied with, and I think that that was the spirit of the language when it was discussed by the Planning and Zoning.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Trias. But I'd like to hear from the architect just really briefly about that, just literally a few moments just to...

Commissioner Anderson: Before they stand up...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Anderson: Since I was a member of the Planning and Zoning Board at the time, the type of screening that they're talking about is a much more aggressive screening where you'd

be deflecting the light, and that's why I suggested the louvers be angled like this. The light deflects up as opposed to out and have these gaps that currently exist between these pegboard panels right now.

Vice Mayor Mena: But there's nothing in the transcript of those discussions that says that so...

Commissioner Anderson: That was the...

Vice Mayor Mena: That's what you're saying today, and I appreciate that perspective. But what was passed is this language. And I have not seen any record -- and I've looked at the records -- that says that it was intended to be anything different.

Commissioner Anderson: I can tell you that it was...

Vice Mayor Mena: And so, you know, I agree with Commissioner Fors about the word "screened." I think the word "minimize" is also important. I think any time you look at regulations or statutes, you know, the words are intentional. And I think when we as a Commission passed this Zoning Code section, we certainly had the ability to say that the lights shall be totally blocked from any visibility, or that it could have been completely eliminated, but that's not what we did. We said it would be screened, and we said it would minimize the visible interior lights and car headlights. You know, I would also add that -- and I think it's an important point that Ramon just made about it not just applying to the car headlights, but also the interior lighting of the garage. When you have parking garages -- which many are -- which only have walling or screening up to, you know, let's say, four feet or so, and then open on top, that does eliminate headlights, but it does not in any way screen the interior lighting of the garage, the ceiling lighting, if you will, from inside the garage. So, in a way, the screening here, which goes all the way through, one could frankly argue that it screens the interior lights -- not the headlights -- the interior lights even more than most parking garage designs do. And by the way, I don't necessarily think -- I'll let the architects speak for themselves -- but I don't necessarily think that was required by this Zoning Code. I think it's

inherent in the design concept of the building, which as we've talked about many times, is intended to create the veiled effect, the illumination of the building in a way that's done tastefully rather than seeing just sort of unscreened light emanating from the portions in between horizontal slabs, you have a consistent screening throughout that creates a more subtle translucent effect than if you only add horizontal up to four feet and then open above that. So, that's my perspective on just this aspect of the application of the Zoning Code, but I'm happy to have the architects, obviously, address the Mayor's question.

Commissioner Anderson: Right. And I just wanted to clarify for you, the originator of that Zoning Code section was not the Commission. I was a member of the Planning and Zoning Board who was an architect. And the discussion portion preceded the actual passage of it, so you're not apparently -- you know, you won't necessarily see it connected to the passage of it. And it was to screen particularly the headlights, which we're failing to do so here, because I asked for the panels to be connected, and we still have gaps between them that allow the xenon headlights to point out. I agree with you that the upper lights are something that need to be dealt with. Those are a lot easier to deal with than the xenon headlights because we can control the Kelvin rating, we can control the angle that those are mounted and shining. So, thank you...

Vice Mayor Mena: I mean...

Commissioner Anderson: For your comments.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, sure. I mean, I would argue that those are almost more important because, again, cars park and then they turn off.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: And then the lights are not shining, 24/7. The interior lighting of the garage is always on.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: And so, I would argue that the screening of that is almost more important, and again, that I think this design actually screens that light more than most garages. Again, as to the discussion that happened before it was originated at Planning and Zoning, again, I haven't seen anything that says otherwise. And bottom line, it's not in our Zoning Code until this Commission reviews it and approves it, and ultimately, it's in the Zoning Code because this Commission reviewed it, approved it, and approved this language. And again, everybody's interpretation seems to be that this complies. I understand you have a different interpretation, and that's certainly your prerogative. But I'm comfortable with the fact that this addresses this.

Commissioner Fors: Two quick questions. Just out of curiosity, who was the Planning and Zoning -- if you know the Planning and Zoning board member.

Commissioner Anderson: He's since sunsetted off the board. The name is evading me right now.

Commissioner Fors: Not important. I was just curious.

Planning and Zoning Director Trias: Based on my recollection, that was Julio Grabiell. He made the comment that the lighting, especially in the roof, was a problem and also talked about the headlights.

Commissioner Fors: And some of these modern headlights, I wonder -- I know the ones in my car do -- they turn off when there's sufficient light. I'd be curious to see if the cars that have that function, if their headlights turn off when they enter the lit garage. If I had to guess, I'd say no, but I don't know.

Mayor Lago: I mean, I think it's a healthy discussion. I mean, obviously, like the Vice Mayor mentioned, and obviously, Commissioner Anderson stated, what transpired in the Planning and Zoning Board, we have legislation now and we have to interpret what we have before us. And I want to understand, like staff has been very clear in regard to whether this complies. And now, I'd like to hear from the architects. You're the professionals. Tell me where you stand on this issue to address Commissioner Anderson's concerns, along with the Vice Mayor's comments.

Carlos Valera: Thank you. So, we do take the Code through a very responsible approach, which is that we're not asking for this building -- or we're not designing this building to not be Code compliant or safe. So, this building is being designed in a way that is going to be safe and Code compliant. In relation to Section 10-105(c) -- if we pull up the language on the screen again -- it does say very clearly -- and we took at this, you know, a serious look -- that the intent is to minimize. It doesn't say to block or eliminate. And we're screening the building in a way that in our interpretation of this section, that we're Code compliant. So, as we look at the different views or interpretations, it will be very clear if it would have said block or eliminate, but the language is very clear. It says to minimize visible interior lights and car headlights, and that's what we're doing with the information that we showed during the sunshine meeting about how we can create a higher density and a different type of screening at the headlight level. And I thought that the information was shown very clearly last week.

Commissioner Anderson: A couple questions. I had made the suggestion that you have in between in the gaps on those panels, a piece to be like a scooped piece, you can have it separate, you can have it connected. Why was the decision made to allow the gaps where the headlights can come through to create more of a strobe effect as the cars are going through the building?

Carlos Valera: Again, when we look at the Code and the interpretation of the Code that we have as you described, we see our design as Code compliant and also complying with the overall look that we want to create for the building. So, there is not an (INAUDIBLE) approach as to what kind of experience we want to create for within the building or outside the building, and we believe

that the proposed design as it is today is, again, Code compliant and the aesthetics is world class as well.

Commissioner Anderson: Could you not have baffles that go up and still create the appearance of that light coming through without the piercing nature of the blue xenon headlights in between the panels, the perforated panels?

Carlos Valera: There is probably infinite ways about how we can come up with alternative solutions. But again, Commissioner, we believe that the solution we have designed and proposed is the right solution for this condition. And I'm going to ask also my colleague here to address the information that was shared today about the (INAUDIBLE) approach. They also have some counters to it they would like to address really quickly.

Shamim Ahmadzadegan: Just to reiterate...

Mayor Lago: Good morning. How are you?

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Thank you. How are you?

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here. I appreciate it.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Of course, our pleasure. First of all, we're very excited about this project. I just wanted to reiterate that. And we do fundamentally believe that this is the right approach. We firmly stand behind the design. We have -- I mean, we did go through a series of options and optionality with our client, the City, and we believe that this particular design really hits all of the issues that we wanted to hit. In terms of one of the questions you had asked, Commissioner Anderson, about the spacing, that's also dealing with another technical issue, which is the mechanical ventilation requirements for the building because we're not mechanically ventilated. It's naturally ventilated, and so we need to have a certain amount of opening within that. So, given

those parameters and kind of the design aesthetic that we took, we just have to have a certain amount of open space to be Code compliant.

Mayor Lago: Could I ask you...?

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Anderson, I just have a few questions in regard to that.

Carlos Valera: Yep.

Mayor Lago: Because I didn't think about this before, and I have built parking garages before.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: But when you enter a parking garage, there's excessive noise, obviously, because of the ventilation.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Yes.

Mayor Lago: That's required because the building is a box.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Yep.

Mayor Lago: It's a box fully encased in CBS block, where there's window openings. Obviously, there (INAUDIBLE) windows there because there's louvers of some sort to allow for the air as per Code.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: And you have the extraction fans that are pushing the air out. You go to Aragon, you'll notice it. A lot of us have become immune to it because we already hear it. We're so used to the noise that we kind of look the other way, or we forget to actually hear it. We just don't hear it at all.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: In my case, I think I don't hear it all. Maybe I need to check my hearing. Talk to me a little bit about not only the cost savings, but the benefits of being -- of not having that type of ventilation system. I know there's obviously cost benefits in the long run. There's maintenance benefits but talk to me a little bit about that. I'd like to know.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: So, from an experiential perspective, which is -- and again, just to put everything in perspective, the way we approach design is not only from a technical perspective. Obviously, those things all have to be compliant.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: So, any discussions about code and safety, that's Architecture 101, that's the basics of design. And there's no way that we cannot do that because we have our own regulatory bodies that we have to go through. So, everything will be Code compliant; everything will be safe. The thing that actually takes it to the next level and what we really focus on is the experience and how can we heighten the human experience through the structure. And the naturally ventilated system is one way of doing that. And you'd already stated it minimizes the noise that you hear throughout the actual structure, and it promotes naturally ventilated spaces, which obviously are better for human comfort. So, from those perspectives and from the experience, we think that it's a much better solution.

Mayor Lago: So, when you talk about experience -- this is my last question. (INAUDIBLE) my statement evolves because I think about other experiences that I've had in very similar parking garage. This is going to be the premiere parking structure, mobility hub...

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Right.

Mayor Lago: In South Florida. But I've been in similar structures. The experience is obviously it's better lit. You experience the wind that comes in and out.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Right.

Mayor Lago: So, would you say on the record that this would be a better ventilated structure than, for example, the Aragon parking garage, which is a box?

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Yeah, I mean, I'm not so familiar with the Aragon structure for me to be able to make a definitive comment. But what I can say is theoretically a naturally ventilated system obviously is a more open-air system.

Mayor Lago: It's a more pleasant experience.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: And it's a more pleasant experience.

Mayor Lago: I think you hit it on -- when you talked about experiential. I think that's the key.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Yes.

Parking Director Kinney: Mr. Mayor, I know Shamim knows these two terms, but I just want to put these actual terms out there. One is green design.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Yes.

Parking Director Kinney: Naturally ventilated is green design. And what was the other thing?
No, no, no, no.

Carlos Valera: More sustaining, more resilient.

Parking Director Kinney: Yeah, when we go to get LEED and when we get Parksmart certification, this will help. So, I just wanted to make sure that specific issue was on the record with the open -- and then, oh, the other term that I need to put out there is one of the reasons we like nice open facilities is it is a passive security measure. I mentioned that the Aragon garage, you know, tight corners, close spaces, essentially dark, even though it's painted white, and it has good lighting, it's essentially dark. Those -- and there's dark corners and there's enclosed stairwells. With an open facility, you get passive security. It's not necessarily that the closed facility is dangerous, as I stated earlier, but with the open well-lit facility, it's passive. It makes people feel better, the people experience.

Carlos Valera: And I wanted to add a couple more things that are important. Mayor, to your point earlier, one of the things that we can achieve, given that we don't have to introduce mechanically ventilated system into the building, is that, A, we're elevating the health and wellness for the users of the building. But B, we are also reducing cost of what the infrastructure of this building will be, and also, we're creating a more resilient, sustainable overall design, which again, elevates what the users are going to be experiencing as a result. And the energy consumption also goes down.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Anderson: Just a couple follow-up...

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Anderson.

Commissioner Anderson: A couple of follow-up things. We have 12-foot ceilings, and the screening requirements for vehicles is somewhere between 36 and 40 inches, depending on where the headlights are. A continuous panel would, you know, possibly block some airflow at a short level that you can also offset the panels. But you have not responded at all to louver design option, which permits complete airflow. We use them on air conditioning ducts. We use them all over the place. And you get 100 percent airflow and no restrictive element there, and you still have the increased lighting because you're actually refracting light into the facility as opposed to refracting it out and down on the street at the ground level where we don't want the heat, where we want people to be able to walk, where we want people to slow down and visit the stores that are at the ground level. Those issues have not been addressed, and instead, we have a one-sided approach, where we want a pegboard panel, which quite frankly, I've received -- 80 percent of the emails I've received are not in favor of the design. I understand you guys are designers. You're probably in that narrow part of folks where they don't want the curved lines. They don't want that. You see it from your perspective. But from the viewpoint of residents that want to use the facility, it's industrial looking. It's cold looking. It doesn't fit within the Mile itself. And again, I didn't say it had to be a Mediterranean design. I didn't say it had -- not to be open, but we need to be open and be open-minded to other types of design ideas other than a flat panel that reflects the light down on the street and heats the street and makes it more difficult for the trees to survive.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Just a point of clarification. It's not a flat panel. It's actually a scalloped panel.

Commissioner Anderson: It's -- yeah, I understand...

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: It is curved, but...

Commissioner Anderson: I understand it's curved.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: But allow me to finish, Councilor Anderson. It is curved and it is soft, which is actually the two points that you made that were positive. So, it is important to focus on the actual design that was presented. It is not a flat panel. The whole point was to soften the design by creating scalloped panels.

Commissioner Anderson: I've seen well-designed, ventilated panels, and one example was put up in my presentation.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: They're not boring, and they don't look like a pegboard.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: And that's in your opinion.

Commissioner Anderson: They have art. I know.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Yeah, this is an aesthetic discussion at this point, which I don't believe is the intention of, you know, which specific direction we're going. But this is the direction that we believe is the correct direction, and this is what we're putting forth.

Mayor Lago: Well, listen, I think -- again, we've already approved the site plan.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Right.

Mayor Lago: And we're moving forward. Today, we're here to have as much conversation as needed in regard to the exterior skin of the building.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Sure.

Mayor Lago: But a vote is not needed today. Today is just another opportunity -- like we've had already, multiple -- to continue to have public comment, to continue to have comment from the Commission, but to come to a final decision today and say we're moving forward on the entire structure, no longer piecemeal. What I'd like to do really quickly is I'd like to have the Clerk, you know, advise if we have any public comment. How many public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: At this time, we have six.

Mayor Lago: Okay, what I'd like to do is -- Madam City Attorney, with deference to my colleague, Commissioner Anderson, we have an 11:30 time certain, and I want to make sure that we don't lose anybody in the Commission. How long do you think the 11:30 will take?

Commissioner Anderson: It depends on how many people are here to speak. I don't know who signed up for that. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: At this point, we have about 8 for the 11:30.

Mayor Lago: Okay, let's finish up with what we're doing now. So, let's have public comment in regard to our 10 AM time certain.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay. The first person who signed up to speak, Mr. Mayor...

Mayor Lago: Thank you, gentlemen. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Ahmadzadegan: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, good morning. The floor is yours.

Maria Cruz: First of all, let me make just a little comment. Sitting back there it's very hard to not make this comment. Commissioner Anderson was talking. I saw part of the design team snickering at her comments. I saw people at the dais looking at their phones. Let me tell you, we're here to listen to everyone. And when we do not respect everyone -- I'm sorry, you know what, we have a design team that we pay \$2 million to, and the least they can do is be respectful, okay? And we're not here to be reprimanded. This is not what we're supposed to be talking today. I'm sorry. That's not up to them, it's up to you all. If in fact we're so sure that this is the right thing to do -- and you may be right, you may be absolutely right. Last sunshine meeting -- the only sunshine meeting we've had on this, we were told that there was various designs. We haven't seen anything but this one. The public have never been exposed to anything except this design. We didn't see anything before today. As a matter of fact, the gentleman that corrected us said that he had been discussing with the City, that the City is deciding. Well, the City is us. The City is not you all. And we haven't had any discussion about it. I'm sorry. I know that you're pressed for time. I know that you're pressed for time. But you know what, I know that something went wrong with the design group because they should have had all this sooner than now, and it's not our fault that that happened, okay? So, don't push the people -- don't take the time off the people because it took longer to design than expected, okay? That -- there is something wrong with that, okay. Through public records, 1,794 email comments were received about the mobility hub that I refuse to call that. I always call it the garage because that's what we were told it would be. We found 33 comments against this project, and we found three in favor: two from...

Vice Mayor Mena: Maria, can I ask you a question?

Ms. Cruz: Ex-employees.

Vice Mayor Mena: Sorry, I just want to make sure I under...

Ms. Cruz: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: I didn't understand that. You said you found 1,700 what, I'm sorry?

Ms. Cruz: I said we got -- through public record -- 1,794 emails, pages, okay?

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Ms. Cruz: 1-7-9-4.

Vice Mayor Mena: About the mobility?

Ms. Cruz: About the mobility hub. There were 33 specifically against this project, 33. Actually, one that was the one that Ms. Anderson mentioned from Dona Spain that was not really -- you know, she was talking about the Mediterranean issue, but it was not either -- neither pro nor against. And there were three in favor, okay. Actually -- yeah, three in favor, and one was for an ex-employee that seems to be looking for good graces with the Administration at this point, and I'm not going to say anything else about that, okay. I'm not an expert. I am far from being an architect or an engineer. I'm a simple schoolteacher, but I assure you that the experts could come up with something that would be more acceptable to the residents. I am sure, okay. I am sure they could come up with a way to make it more pleasant if they wanted to, if they were not given the go ahead, this is what we want, and this is what we're going to do because this is perhaps my legacy. I'm sorry. Now, we keep talking about \$42 million. Okay, well, we forget that we already paid -- well, we already have a contract for two, so it's actually 44 -- 42 plus the 2 for design. Well, has anybody built lately? Has anybody had anything to do with construction recently? Let me tell you, 42 million could very well be 45 or 46 at the rate that things are now, and I'm sure you all have seen it, okay. So, forget about that. As of October 1, this year -- okay? -- the money that we have borrowed for projects, we owe -- special obligation bonds -- \$123 million. And the debt

service for that is 51, so we're in the hole for about \$175 million. I know for you, millions may not be -- if I were in the hole \$175,000, I would be concerned, okay. But 175 for the City is nothing because we have a very good financial status. But how many of you thought three years ago that we would have a pandemic and that things would go as bad as they went? How many of you? None of us did. What if it happens --? What if something happens? Today is Pearl Harbor Day, and we haven't thought about it, but you know what? What if we have a big war? What happens with the debt we have, okay? Now, the people -- and I know that we like to talk about petitions. By the way, I do, write petitions on my own on what my mind tells me, my brain agrees, and I put them out there. We have almost a thousand people, 900 something people that have said they don't like this -- okay? -- and I know it's not important because you all are going to make the decisions. But you know what, you need to listen. You need to listen. This is not the Maria Cruz legacy. This is not this Commission legacy. This is not Valdes-Fauli's legacy. This is our City's project.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, if I may -- if I may, and I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Ms. Cruz: Yes, that's okay.

Mayor Lago: I apologize. We have a very limited time, and I want to get...

Ms. Cruz: Yes, I'm almost done.

Mayor Lago: I want to get everybody's time in because we have one of the...

Ms. Cruz: I'm at the end, I'm at the end.

Mayor Lago: Please.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. From what I hear from the people, they want something less massive. They want something shorter, and I'm sure that we could come up with a little lower and more

compatible. This is the big issue that we have, okay. We have Garage 4 that the possibility is we can sell it. You know what, how are you going to tell developers when they come and say, "Look, it's compatible to what you already built." How are you going to say, "Oh no, there are rules. You can't do that." That would not work, okay? So please, please listen, not just here, listen to what we're saying. A month more, a month less is not going to make an impact. You can put -- you can demolish, and you can start without having a definite thing. And I'm sorry, I'm sorry, but you know what? We're really off track. We're not listening.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz if I may.

Ms. Cruz: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: I'd like to respond to your comment at the end.

Ms. Cruz: Of course.

Mayor Lago: And I was going to save this for the end of the conversation, but we'll -- I'll mention it today. I am not in favor of selling Garage 4, so let's put that out there. Take advantage of the sunshine.

Ms. Cruz: That would make me feel very good.

Mayor Lago: I'm not in favor of selling Garage 4 -- okay? -- so let's keep that out there. Let's rent it to that entity which I will not name right now, which is a very reputable, probably Fortune 50 company, Fortune 100 company in the world, that is interested in renting that entire building from us for whatever length of time we're able to give them, okay. I'm not interested in selling that property. I want to keep that asset; that's number one. So, there will be no discussion with a developer who buys that because I don't want to sell that piece of property. So -- and by the way, if a developer were hypothetically to build that, kind of similar to the hypothetical conversation

that was being had by certain people in regards to the stadium that was going to build -- that we were going to build at Coral Gables Senior High School -- that that property belongs to Miami-Dade County Public Schools. If a developer was going to build that for some way or somehow, demolish it overnight and build a building somehow, some way, there's already allowed 190 feet on that property. It's already zoned for that, correct, Mr. Manager?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: So, if they want to reach 190 feet, they just have to build the building in a Mediterranean style.

City Manager Iglesias: Mediterranean (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Lago: To get that bonus, they have to design it in Mediterranean. So, if we were to sell that property and a developer were to pay a significant amount of money, they would have to build it to 190 feet to maximize the capacity of that building, so they'd have to build it in a Mediterranean style building. But guess what, I don't want to sell the property and I don't need to sell the property.

Ms. Cruz: But Mayor, do you know what the problem is?

Mayor Lago: What's the problem?

Ms. Cruz: Let me tell you what the problem is. In the 40 some years that I've lived here, I've seen many covenants, many promises, and you're sitting here today, and this Commission is here today. Ten years from now, this Commission is not here, you're not here, and guess what? We need the money, and it will be sold unless you build something there, unless you do something that will keep it from being sold. Listen, as you know, I live next to University. We were promised things and guess what? Then they come back to the City and say, "Oh, you know, we couldn't do it," and

you let them off the hook. And this will happen again and again, so unless -- if you're willing to rent it for 99 years, I can live because you know what? I will not be here 99 years from now.

Mayor Lago: So, let me also give you one last point, and this is something that we were discussing with Naomi and the City Manager, and my colleagues will now be aware of it because we're taking advantage of the sunshine. One of the conversations that Commissioner Anderson and Commissioner Fors were privy to in Tallahassee was by the Department of Transportation -- we were on a Zoom call with the director -- was about the federal funding that's coming for infrastructure. And if we take advantage of a project of this magnitude that will be shovel-ready within six months, we can apply for 1.5 trillion or 2 trillion dollars' worth of federal funding just dedicated for infrastructure. I'm not saying the whole project's going to be paid for, but a big portion of it or a significant portion could be potentially paid for with that infrastructure bill which is forthcoming. And we are planning -- Naomi and the Manager's team are already moving in that direction to ensure that we can take advantage to hopefully qualify and be ready and be one of the first projects that is shovel ready to take advantage of that infrastructure money that's coming throughout the United States.

Ms. Cruz: And if you bear with me, my last comment.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Ms. Cruz: We have the Renaissance project, or whatever it was called, all our streets were going to be taking care of. You've seen your street, you've seen mine. You see an area, pavement is broken. We have chicken pox on the street, and guess what? We were promised; it was not delivered. I'm tired of promises. I want to see delivery.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Sue Kawalerski.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. The floor is yours.

Sue Kawalerski: Good morning. Actually, I have two speaker cards and I just want some clarification. The first issue will be as a result of a Transportation Advisory Board resolution, so I'm speaking on behalf of the Transportation Advisory Board as the chair. But I also would like to speak later on or right after regarding this project from a resident's standpoint. So, I don't know what the procedure will be, but I do want to get both in, if I can, please.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Then let's keep each comment under three minutes, if possible, please.

Ms. Kawalerski: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Kawalerski: Thank you. And good morning, Commissioners, Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Manager. The City's Transport -- by the way, my name is Sue Kawalerski. I am the chair of the Transportation Advisory Board. I live at 6830 Gratian Street. The City's Transportation Advisory Board passed a resolution at the last board meeting with the following observations and suggestions regarding the proposed mobility hub as it pertains to transportation and traffic. The board does not see the current configuration which allows for only minimal substandard and inadequate parking for bicycles on the open ground floor level and parking of scooters with charging stations on the second level to be a well thought out plan for micro-mobility. The board is recommending safe, secure parking for bicycles on the ground level with charging stations for pedal-assist bikes and scooter parking and charging stations on the ground level. Anyone who rides a bicycle or a scooter knows that inclines like a ramp can create instability for the user, and therefore, a liability for the City. Elevators are not large enough to transport bicycles, scooters, and users to other floors. In addition, in order to accommodate the foreseen increase of bicycle and scooter usage at this mobility hub, the board is strongly recommending the entire ground floor

be dedicated to micro-mobility options and accommodations versus retail space. Those accommodations could include storage lockers for commuter cyclists needing a place to store bicycle helmets and gear so they can be unencumbered to continue their day in their workplace or enjoy shopping and dining at downtown establishments. A bicycle scooter store and repair shop on the ground level would make perfect sense to service these micro-mobility options and create an increased incentive for residents to frequent the hub. Ground floor bikeshare and scooter share businesses should also be considered part of the ground floor micro-mobility focus. Finally, access to the mobility hub should be part of the entire project. The Transportation Advisory Board strongly recommends design and implementation of a true protected bike lane on the south side of Andalusia by removing the on-street parking. After all, isn't that why we're building this garage, so vehicles are parked in a better place? Of course, mid-block crosswalks on Andalusia are also necessary, and they're a part of connecting the protected bike lane to the entrance to the ground floor mobility hub micro-mobility station. The TAB sees this protected bike lane on Andalusia as perhaps the start of a citywide protected bike lane network built on arterial roadways, not residential roads, to encourage more residents to travel by bicycle in a safe environment free from potential intrusion by motor vehicles. We urge the Commission and the City Manager to task the mobility hub architects to take the suggestions from the City's Transportation Advisory Board in redesigning the ground floor for expanded and exclusive micro-mobility options. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. The design team -- and I think we've all spoken with the City Manager in regard to the issue of parking on the first floor for bicycles, that will be addressed. We've already had the discussion, and I've also requested, along with my colleagues on the Commission, for us to review Andalusia to ensure that there's adequate bike accessibility and the possibility of a bike lane of some sort. And we've asked -- I think it was two Commission meetings ago -- for staff and for the design team to bring us something back that addresses Andalusia, taking into advantage -- taking into consideration, excuse me, the simple fact that at Publix there will be a redevelopment in Publix, and that we should take advantage that Andalusia is prime for redevelopment in the sense of it's coming, one way or another, and we might as well install that infrastructure now so we can have a way to traverse the city.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, one of the key issues with this project is flexibility.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: And the bottom area is flexible. It can go into completely micro-mobility when needed. But the question is, when is that needed? So, we've incorporated flexibility. The second floor will be -- will -- scooters will not be going up the ramp. The second floor is for whatever scooter company we have, for actual charging. We intend to put everything at the bottom floor, but we have to progress to that. We cannot leave those areas open for that. So, the flexibility in the building, the fact that we have flexibility in the right-of-way, which would require removing parking, so all those issues are incorporated into the project and will be built as those are needed, so that flexibility is what we have in this building, the fact that the building can grow and change with our needs.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect.

Ms. Kawalerski: And if I can interrupt and say this. Once you start leasing space, there goes your flexibility.

Mayor Lago: Okay, but we -- we're not -- I don't want to play hypothetical. I want to -- you would like to answer? Yes, sir. Let's let the architects who are actually designing the building provide us with further guidance.

Carlos Valera: So, we did prepare a micro-mobility plan that we presented last week during the sunshine meeting. And my colleague here is going to talk about the features that were brought up today as a concern and how we're incorporating them into the design.

Carlos Valera: Thank you everybody for your time. And to build upon the previous points that were made today, we have -- according to our study -- provided ample space for the current climate of micro-mobility, not to mention both charging stations for bicycles and scooters, as well as static storage in the present configuration. We have also noted that to her point is that we're providing for future capabilities. So, today's demand is just today's demand, and that the flexibility of the ground floor is in fact flexible. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Carlos Valera: There is one last point about the safety that we had talked about before and the welfare of the residents. So, as it was mentioned by the City Manager, the second floor is dedicated to fleet management, and the ground floor is dedicated completely to residents as it was mentioned today.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

Ms. Kawalerski: And I would like to put the TAB remarks in the public record, so I will hand this to the City Clerk afterwards. Now, I'm representing the Coral Gables Neighbors Association. I'm the president. Again, Sue Kawalerski, 6830 Gratian Street. I'm going to try to keep this short. I know your time is short. But the petition that Maria Cruz and the CGNA endorsed that was sent out to approximately 16,000 residents, we received -- as of 8 o'clock this morning -- 961 signatures on this petition. There were 81 people that took the time to actually make comments, and the comments are very telling. I would like to stand here and read all 81 comments, but I know we're short on time, so I'm going to put this in the public record. But most of these comments address, number one, the look, which we're talking about today, the skin. They are very, very disturbed by this design. They do not feel it is appropriate for Coral Gables. There's Brickell, Brickell, Brickell on this list of comments. They're saying it looks like Brickell, it looks like Miami. Why do we want to replicate Miami in Coral Gables? Coral Gables is a special place. Why are we trying to

destroy it? We have a character. Why don't we conform to it? 81 comments. Please consider this when you look at the skin of this design. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Jose Amezaga.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir. The floor is yours.

Jose Amezaga: Good morning. I'm Jose Amezaga, and I live on Palermo Avenue. I'm going to be brief. I'm an engineer by trade, and I think -- and I've mentioned to you, Mr. Mayor, that this is a very nice-looking building, but it doesn't fit in Coral Gables. It would look fantastic I think in Brickell. It will look fantastic somewhere else. I believe we do have the capacity to do something that will be blending in more with what the city looks like, even being modernistic. But this is a lovely building and it's an eyesore for Coral Gables. We only ask you to listen to the residents. They are telling you we don't like that building. And if that's going to be your legacy, it will be a horrendous legacy that you leave behind. So, we -- all we want is a parking building. Nobody's opposed to building a parking garage, which is probably less in height. We don't need a 12 -- 10, \$12 million rooftop, and the commercial properties below. I think what you mentioned are great ideas, but we don't need restaurants down there to compete against the struggling Miracle Mile and other businesses. And that's all I have to say. Listen to the residents, you know. They are the ones who are telling us what shouldn't be going there. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Can I --? May I respond to you, sir?

Mr. Amezaga: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Because I've known you for such a long time, and I think you're a patient of my father's.

Mr. Amezaga: Yes.

Mayor Lago: How many times have you and I met in the last month?

Mr. Amezaga: You have been kind enough to...

Mayor Lago: No, no, but -- I'm not kind; that's my job.

Mr. Amezaga: Twice.

Mayor Lago: Twice. We've met. We've met with staff. We've met with our Finance Director.

Mr. Amezaga: Right.

Mayor Lago: We've met with our team to discuss. We're providing ample time now during the Commission meeting to have a conversation. We had a sunshine meeting. You know, I think that this Commission -- and I want to be candid with you. I think that this Commission listens. I think this Commission and this Administration listens. While we may disagree -- we may disagree on one reason or another, but I think that you and I and this Commission have agreed more often than not.

Mr. Amezaga: Correct.

Mayor Lago: And what I think we need to concentrate on is while we may not always be on the same page, for example, on whether we like the skin of this building, or we think it could be more Mediterranean, or it could be less, I think what we need to do is continue working together. But this idea that, you know, this is our legacy, and this is going to define the hard work that this Commission and these residents and the staff does, you know, I think that -- I don't think it's good

when we put that out there because when we look at issues that you've written to me about in the past or any of the individuals like Dr. Sokoloff or Ms. Cruz have written to me about issues in the past, I think we agree more than we disagree. So, like I told you when I met with you, we're not always going to be able to agree and be on the same page. When we met with Mr. O'Malley, we had a conversation about the finances and about the parking. We directed staff to present today to clarify the issues of the parking and of the finances. I have asked that those be put on the website, that those be made public and it's easily accessible for anybody who is interested in understanding that information. We want to clear the air. We want to make sure that we're not muddying the waters, and what we're talking about today is whether we agree or not on the skin of the building. But the finances make sense, and this is needed for the future of our downtown in regards to parking.

Mr. Amezaga: Yeah, the finances, I -- you know, you and I and Tom have -- we've gone back and forth. I was -- I used to run a \$120 million in my own company, so the finances can go one way or another. But at the end of the day, they are finances, and they add up or not add up. I'm not going to question that because it's not my place. I think a parking garage is needed. And I think that there are many things that we can do, whether we agree or disagree on some issues, like you said. You listen, and I know you listen.

Mayor Lago: We all listen.

Mr. Amezaga: No, no, in particular, only about you because I -- the only one I know is you. you listen most of the time with (INAUDIBLE). But a structure can be done in such a way that it pleases the residents of the City. And that -- I think that's something that has been missed. You may approve it, but you may be going against the entire residents of the -- the silent majority of the City.

Mayor Lago: But you do understand that I've agreed with you, and I've gone down the litany of projects and the things that I have opposed, and many of the members of the Commission have

opposed -- well, that was before many of these Commissioners were here, and that we fought to ensure -- and I put my vote on the record. But I have to vote my conscience at the end of the day.

Mr. Amezaga: Yes, you have, and I'm fine with it.

Mayor Lago: And I have to vote the way that I feel whether I like something or not.

Mr. Amezaga: And at the end of the day, I'm fine with it because that's the way you feel about it.

Mayor Lago: And I just want to put that on the record because I have a lot of respect for everyone who's speaking today, and this shouldn't be personal. This should be an issue about that you have a Commission which is going to vote their conscience and has supported on issues like, you know, ensuring that Miracle Mile stays low scale, you know, ensuring that a massive parking garage wasn't built on Andalusia, you know, doing -- using, in my opinion, models that shouldn't be used anymore, where we do P3 models, which puts the City in a precarious position financially for 99 years. And there are situations like that, case in point, Merrick Park. I'm sorry, it's not the best deal for the City. Case in point, the deal that we had with the country club was not the best financial deal for the City, but it is what it is. We're moving forward. And I know -- and I said it from the beginning, we could build this project ourselves and control the future and the destiny of our parking system. We don't have to depend on anybody else. And like I said, I put it on the record, and I'll say it again. I don't want to sell Garage 4. I'm not in the business of selling assets unless we're buying assets with that money. So, I just wanted you to be aware, and I wanted to put it on the record, and I know I'm speaking for my colleagues that we take our jobs very seriously, and we're not always going to agree, but we're going to do it in a way that's respectful. And we're going to -- and I want you to understand that that...

Mr. Amezaga: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: I don't have a dog in this fight. I just -- I think the building is a nice-looking building. And I have -- we have fought for historic preservation. We have a fought for Mediterranean. You know, we commended Commissioner Anderson on her comments. By the way, those comments weren't even started by Commissioner Anderson. Those comments were started by Commissioner -- by Vice Mayor Mena four years ago, and Commissioner Anderson has worked together with the Vice Mayor to push a tightening of the Mediterranean bonus, and I commend my colleagues for working in a collegial fashion to really get that done. So, I just want to put it out there, and it's not -- I mentioned to you, by the way -- and please, you know, come to bat for me. I said this to you when I met with you and Mr. O'Malley. I said the same things I'm saying now. We may disagree, but always know that this Commission is trying to do the best that it can for the City as a whole.

Mr. Amezaga: But if you're doing the best you can, the only thing I ask is not just to listen to me. I lived here for 35 years, and more and more, I see taller structures everywhere I go. Listen to what the silent majority of us are saying. We are fine with the building. We just don't like the structure. We don't like the skin. We don't like the way it's going in such a nice area. That's all I have to say.

Mayor Lago: And I appreciate it. Thank you, Doctor.

Commissioner Fors: And I'll say, about the term, you know, "silent majority," they're not very silent, the majority. They're very outspoken. But one thing I just want to note because it keeps on coming up under the concept of this mobility hub and other things before that is, you know, I don't know how we could be so confident in saying that this is what the majority of residents want. It's -- the petition got less than a thousand signatures. That is less than 2 percent of the population of Coral Gables. Since the first concept of this mobility hub was published, I -- it's only natural, and I'm sure everybody else has been showing a photograph to everybody they know that lives in the Gables -- that's not scientific. It's no more scientific than the petition -- asking for people's opinions. And believe it or not -- and we talk about it like it's outside the realm of possibility -- believe it or not, there's a lot of people who think the project looks great, there really is. You

know, I think, on the contrary, I think that the folks who don't agree with the aesthetic or don't like the aesthetics as much, they do a much better job, which is not a novel concept -- they do a much better job of voicing their opposition to it than the people who do like it. And that results in, you know, 33 emails, I think -- what is -- in opposition to it. So, without a doubt, we listen very loud and clear to the folks that are opposed to it, but it's intellectually dishonest to jump to the conclusion that this is what the majority of residents want or don't want. Maybe it is, maybe it's not, but I don't think the 33 emails and the petition with less than a thousand signatures really tells us whether that's the case or not. And I think at the end of the day, we do try to determine what the majority of people want, but it's not as simple as just a petition or 33 emails. There's a lot of people that don't email, and none of these, including my own informal campaign where I've been talking to everybody about it for months, is indicative of what the true majority wants. And the best we can do is to try to ascertain what that is. But we can't say so confident, this is what the majority wants, this is what the majority doesn't want. It's just -- it's not the case.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: Just briefly. In my lifetime here in Coral Gables, I remember many occasions, 10, 20, 30 years ago, where something was going to be decided, a project, something was going to be built. And there was a lot of concern in the community, a lot of things said. And once certain things were completed, those very same people that were opposed to it, actually over the years, were able to enjoy those facilities. Merrick Park, I agree with the Mayor with regards to the finances, but...

Mayor Lago: It's a great facility by the way.

Commissioner Menendez: Phenomenal.

Mayor Lago: Phenomenal.

Commissioner Menendez: And I remember the opposition, the things that were said, the heated debates. And we were at the tree lighting about a week or two ago. It was packed with kids, packed with families. I just got a resident who wanted -- wants to meet with me this week and go, "Can we have coffee at Merrick Park?" It's a place you can go to. But at that time when they were, I think, I don't know what you call, where you fix the City vehicles, the trucks, you know, that's what it was for years, was an eyesore. But there was so much opposition, but now we actually enjoy it to a certain extent. It's a beautiful place. An example that I don't think anyone knows or remembers, the Coral Gables Youth Center, when the third version of the Youth Center was built in the '90s, the engineers came up with the field lights were taller. And everybody -- I thought they were going to burn down the City because they said, "No, we want the field lights to be the same height. If you go taller, it's going to flood the neighborhood with light," and they explained that no, the light's taller are going to point straight down. So, there was opposition. It got very ugly, honestly. And the day they did the ribbon cutting and they turned on the lights, the very same neighbors that lived across the street walked as if they were seeing the sky opened up and they go it really does work. It does do what you said it did. And the reason I say it, I'm not telling you we're on the right side of this discussion. I'm not saying we're the wrong side of the discussion, but there is a chance that at some point, as time goes by, we all look back and go, "You know what, it may not be as bad as we thought it was, and we might say it may not be as good as if we thought it was," but as long as we have the interaction, we can move on from one item to the other and have this debate. That's what it's about. And I guess I've lived long enough to see those battles, and we have survived all those battles, and I know we'll survive this one and whatever other battles are down the line. That's what I have to say.

Mayor Lago: Can we...?

Commissioner Anderson: One follow-up comment. You know, we've had some great projects, and Merrick Park was one of them. The benefit we had there though is we had the involvement of the Board of Architects. It is my motion that we send this to the Board of Architects with their touch with the direction for a modern design and bring it back to us on January 11.

Mayor Lago: So, before we do that, Commissioner, I'd like to hear the end of public comment if possible.

Commissioner Anderson: Certainly.

City Clerk Urquia: Dr. Gordon Sokoloff.

Gordon Sokoloff: Hi, good morning or good afternoon.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, Doctor -- good afternoon.

Mr. Sokoloff: I second your motion. Thank you. I love that idea.

Commissioner Anderson: (INAUDIBLE) on this side.

Mr. Sokoloff: I wish I could. The -- I think one of the biggest issues with this mobility hub is the hurried approach. This all happened so quickly that there wasn't ample opportunity to engage the residents in a way that, you know, they could really opine on it. And at the end of the day, it's a parking garage and that's it. It's a parking garage, and we're not really too far apart from what everyone wants, but you know, what your side wants and what I think the CGNA people want. My question is for the City Manager, did --? I mean, how many versions of this were ultimately shown? How many versions of it did you all see? One.

Commissioner Anderson: I saw one.

Mr. Sokoloff: So, that's disappointing for \$2 million. For \$2 million, you're just shown one version and that's it, hit or miss. Vote for it or not. I think that's really disappointing. Do you go to a car dealership and just say I want to see this one version? No. With this kind of money, the residents,

you, you're spending our money. We deserve to see more than one version from what Gensler pointed out. And then from the very first Commission meeting when I read off some quotes -- and I've already spoken on this and I've written a couple of editorials -- the first Commission meeting, there were some very cogent remarks that Commissioner Anderson brought up. And then at the sunshine meeting, and then many of the residents brought up, including myself. And when you began at the sunshine meeting, you turned to Gensler and you said, "Have you made any of those changes?" And the answer was a resounding no. So, while you may be listening, there's no compromising going on here. I don't see what's being done, because obviously, the aesthetic, which is the only component that people are concerned about, we all want -- to Mr. Holmes' satisfaction, who doesn't want a safe garage? Of course, we want safety. We want something that's well-lit. We want something that is state-of-the art. We want something that has video surveillance where the cameras work. We want something that has an efficient ingress and egress off a little, you know, two-lane street, Andalusia. We want something that supports micro-mobility. And of course, we want something that is well ventilated, you know, with the holes, but we want it done properly. Now, some of the words to describe what many residents don't want would be something that's oversized, over-reaching -- by that I mean event space. I just don't fathom event space in a parking garage. You know, let's go to the top of the garage and have coffee or lunch. I mean, I don't know where that's done.

Vice Mayor Mena: Many places, Dr. Sokoloff.

Mr. Sokoloff: Well, I just don't see it because this is adjacent to Miracle Mile. And I know Miracle Mile is making a comeback, but with those people that are up having coffee on the top of this roof of a parking garage are not having coffee on Miracle Mile. I think this is...

Mayor Lago: Can I give you a...?

Mr. Sokoloff: This should be serving Miracle Mile.

Mayor Lago: Can I give you an example, Doctor?

Mr. Sokoloff: Sure.

Mayor Lago: There's a beautiful parking garage, which I've attended many events at off of Lincoln Road.

Mr. Sokoloff: Off Lincoln.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, it's a beautiful modern building. I think it's the Herzog and de Meuron.

Vice Mayor Mena: 11-11, I think.

Mayor Lago: Herzog -- I don't want to...

Mr. Sokoloff: Is that the Robert Wennett building?

Mayor Lago: The de Meuron designed building that has received international acclaim.

Mr. Sokoloff: Juvia -- where Juvia is?

Vice Mayor Mena: That's correct, yeah.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, yeah.

Mayor Lago: So, that has a...

Mr. Sokoloff: I know the developer, yeah.

Mayor Lago: And not only a beautiful restaurant at the rooftop, but it also hosts daily, if not weekly, events.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Mayor Lago: And it also has an apartment where the owner of the building lives on the top in a beautiful apartment, which I've visited one time for an art event. So, that's an example of a world-class building that is receiving international acclaim that is in our backyard and is on a main street like Lincoln Road, which we can consider like Miracle Mile.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, I acknowledge that, and I happen to know the owner and the guy who lives there. He's a patient of mine, a very nice guy. However, Lincoln Road has been suffering and is trying to stage a comeback. Remember those people that are up there are not on Lincoln Road, and Lincoln Road -- if Mr. Bittel has his way -- could go the same way as Lincoln Road.

Vice Mayor Mena: But -- okay, I'll let you finish in a minute, but...

Mr. Sokoloff: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: Lincoln Road is not failing because of this parking garage -- right? -- it's failing for a variety of reasons, and it was failing, frankly, even before the parking garage.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think the point we're trying to make, nobody wants this to be Lincoln Road.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: But the point that "I've never heard of events on the top of a facility like this," I think all of -- the only point we're trying to make to you is that that is something that occurs.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: People have weddings up there. I've been to weddings up there. I've been to Art Basel events up there.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, there -- that's what I mean by an event. You're talking about having a cup of coffee, that's different. That's...

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Everyday sort of event. I mean, you know, events events, you know.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: With a baby shower or a -- you know, again, an art exhibition or whatever it might be.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: A charity fundraiser. There's a -- I've been -- for what it's worth, I forget the name of the building now on Ponce -- near -- on Ponce Circle, the Zubi building.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: As a rooftop space.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: I've attended fundraisers for the Mayor's mayoral campaign. I've been to other charity fundraisers there. You know, that's the type of thing I think people foresee for a rooftop.

Mr. Sokoloff: Okay. I...

Vice Mayor Mena: That's all.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah. I mean, who doesn't like a cool view and to go up high and look down in the city. It is cool. We don't have a lot of that, I agree. But just to finish my list...

Mayor Lago: No worries.

Vice Mayor Mena: Take your time.

Mr. Sokoloff: I do think it's incompatible with the other area. It doesn't have to be Mediterranean. I think it's compatible -- I use the word "sore thumb." Too many bells and whistles, overpriced, and I just think it's uncompromising, and that's what's bothered me. Yes, you've listened, but I think to talk about the aesthetic, the skin, I think that's something we could come to an agreement with. We were shown one version. I agree with the motion. Let the Board of Architects who already, I believe, opined on it and we're not, you know, supportive of it. And I think let -- you know, the structure of the City is that you have committees and boards that are made up of residents. And if you allow those residents to look at it and comment, and those who are qualified on the Board of Architects, I think you might get some opinions and let them work and tweak the aesthetic component. All those other features we want, everything else. But let's maybe beyond listening, maybe put for \$2 million Gensler to task to soften that appearance and do something

that's going to be more environmentally better for the area, according to Commissioner Anderson's analysis, and something that's more aesthetically pleasing. And I would say to you, Commissioner Fors, that when you -- and you, Commissioner Mean -- when most of you went door to door and you're putting your finger on the pulse of the residents, I guarantee you that if you went door to door and showed the picture, you would get the majority of residents would be against that thing. I really do believe it. I -- and when you all were doing that, you know the one thing that residents were against was overdevelopment in the City. You're about to lose this whole church, you know, right across, the Methodist Church is being bid upon. It's going to be knocked down. You're going to have more development right there. We have enough overdevelopment that you're challenged by developers. Don't let the City of Coral Gables shoot itself in the foot by being an over-developer too, making this building a little bit, you know, less than what it should be in the Coral Gables aesthetic. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just -- Dr. Sokoloff, just to address that last part, look, I understand the point you're making. I -- we're...

Mr. Sokoloff: You can agree with me; it's okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: We do that -- no, we do that -- we're doing that every day.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: I mean when I tell you we get calls. People come speak to us anywhere I go eat. I mean, every day people are coming up and talking to us about a variety of issues, but it's usually whatever the sort of hot button issue of the day is, and the hot button issue of the day for the last couple months has been this project; it's no secret. And so...

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: We've been getting lots of people coming up to us. And all I can tell you anecdotally, as Commissioner Fors did, is honestly, the level of sort of comments is really on both sides of the issues. More so than usual, I've had a lot of really positive remarks from people who really like the idea. They think it's going to be good for downtown. A lot of them referenced the garage that the Mayor referenced as, you know, a place that's inviting, where you want to park, that makes it easier to access Miracle Mile. A lot of the people who were upset that the streetscape got done without addressing parking first are happy. So, you know, I -- again, all of that's anecdotal. I can't -- you know, I can't give you survey results.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I also want to be careful with that we don't swing too far the other way because sometimes when we disagree on substance, which again, we can disagree on the aesthetic of the building. It's a subjective sort of issue, you know.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: I appreciate that.

Mr. Sokoloff: And I think we could find middle ground there.

Vice Mayor Mena: Sure. But you know, sometimes -- and the conversation turns to other things that I think are really distractions in a lot of ways.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: And you know, suggesting that we're approving this be -- and I'm not saying you did this, but just broadly -- because of some anxiety about a deadline or because, you know, we're in some sort of rush, you know, I can't speak for everybody else. I can speak for myself,

which is, I'm approving it because I like the design, because I think the world-class firm we hired did a great job on it, and I've considered all the facts. I think the factors you listed in the first part of your list; I think it checks every one of those boxes. And...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Again, we may have disagreement, Commissioner Anderson and I may disagree on certain aspects of this. I respect her opinion on it, but at the same time, when I'm thinking about what about the environmental factors of the building, I'm told the building's going to be LEED certified. I mean, there's objective criteria that are applied to this that, you know, I have to sort of rely on. And so, okay, I'm told the building's LEED certified, told it's going to be secure, you know, I'm told it's going to have the right experience. We're addressing the micro-mobility issues. We are checking all those boxes. At the end of the day, I would agree with the point that you end up on aesthetic.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: You work through all those issues because other things can be tweaked and are probably not monumental issues, but you get down to aesthetic. And I said from day one, I said, "There's going to be people who don't like this approach. They're going to want the traditional Mediterranean design." We get that.

Mr. Sokoloff: True.

Vice Mayor Mena: But there's a lot of people -- and I can read your emails, you know, from people saying, you know -- people have different perspectives. The gentleman who just spoke talked about the silent majority. Somebody else called it literally the opposite, the vocal minority, you know, literally the opposite description. And I'm not here to judge that one way or another. All I can tell you is anecdotally speaking to people...

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know, we're going to disagree sometimes, and other times, we're going to agree.

Mr. Sokoloff: True.

Vice Mayor Mena: Don't assume because we disagree that we're not listening.

Mr. Sokoloff: Okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's a difference.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think we've been listening for years. I think we're doing better. And I just - these conversations sometimes turn to a place that make it seem like -- you know, I heard the phrase "destroy Coral Gables" earlier about a garage. I mean, the City of Coral Gables is doing great.

Mr. Sokoloff: I believe so.

Vice Mayor Mena: Great. The City of Coral Gables financially -- and we talked about pandemic and could there be a war -- financially could not be more sound. We've been very conservative. We've been addressing the pension, and we could go on and on about that. You know, property values are just -- continue to go up and up because it's a desirable place to live, and apparently, is even more in demand than ever. And so, I just want to be careful when we get into some of the shortcomings, because they're short comings, like any city. We're not perfect. Not every street is

paved as it should be, not every sidewalk is as perfect as it should be. We need to do better on a lot of things.

Mr. Sokoloff: True.

Vice Mayor Mena: But let's be careful not to paint a picture -- and I'm not -- and again, you just happen to be the one standing up here, and I appreciate your comments because they're always very cogent and very thoughtful.

Mr. Sokoloff: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, I'm not necessarily addressing this to Dr. Sokoloff, but just broadly.

Mr. Sokoloff: I know.

Vice Mayor Mena: I just want to be careful that we don't go down a path that makes it seem like, you know, something else. I think this is a really exciting day for Coral Gables.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: I think the construction of this parking garage is going to be great for downtown. It's going to be great for the businesses; it's going to thrive. And I think we're finally going to be in a place where between the streetscape, now the parking that many bemoaned wasn't...

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: Built before...

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know, I think because we're really in a position post-pandemic to really take off. So, that's my sort of broader commentary. We listen. And listen, I get it all the time, I don't listen. I do listen.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know, I have people reach out, again, every day. I've seen a lot of excitement from a lot of people about...

Mr. Sokoloff: I just wish there is a little more for something more to choose from than the one; you didn't have that. And then when they were doing the Miracle Mile redo, they actually had a few storefronts where residents could go in and opine on do you like this brick or that brick, or that -- you know, I don't know if you remember that, but they did offer that opportunity. No one's doing that here. And...

Vice Mayor Mena: And despite that...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, and it still looks...

Vice Mayor Mena: Despite that...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Despite best efforts...

Mr. Sokoloff: I agree.

Vice Mayor Mena: When it was done, "Oh, my god. There's too many gaps in between the tiles. The cigarettes get in there. I don't like those light posts. I don't..." So -- and I'm not criticizing those critiques. I'm just saying that no matter what decision gets made...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's going to be people who like -- on aesthetics, there's going to be people who like it and people who don't. That's the tough thing about it, you know.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: And so...

Mr. Sokoloff: It would be nice if maybe you could ask Gensler to give us another option just to look at. It'd be kind of nice. Show me something else, you know. Let me look at something else. Wouldn't it be...

Vice Mayor Mena: Last point on that because -- and I know you were here, so I know you know this.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I say it for the benefit...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Of the public. And I see you in the back sometimes nodding your head in agreement and sometimes in disagreement.

Mr. Sokoloff: Usually.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I appreciate that too. We said this at the first time we talked about this. We have a great example of a Mediterranean parking garage right across the street. So, for those who prefer the Mediterranean aesthetic, that was done by a fantastic world-class architect who was done -- who was tasked to build it and design it within the confines of a Mediterranean design, and that was the outcome. So, it's right there. When you weigh it, you may say, "Well, I like that better." And I may say, "Well, I like this better." That's what the...

Mayor Lago: Can I ask you...?

Vice Mayor Mena: Ultimate decision is.

Mayor Lago: Can I ask you a question, Doctor?

Mr. Sokoloff: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Because I really...

Mr. Sokoloff: Sure.

Mayor Lago: I really respect your opinion. And I'm sorry to...

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no, please.

Mayor Lago: I apologize.

Vice Mayor Mena: I was done.

Mayor Lago: I'm sorry.

Vice Mayor Mena: I was actually done.

Mayor Lago: I'm just sorry to interrupt you. I don't like to interrupt anybody on the dais. But if you had -- if we could do it right now, would you build the Aragon parking garage on Andalusia right now? Just if you told me you would want that parking garage, to get the title, and to get the little windows, to get the banding the way it is, would you want me to do it -- would you want us to do a Mediterranean style, and that would appease you?

Mr. Sokoloff: I saw the rendering from Allen Morris, I saw that. And yes, if given the Allen Morris, which was Mediterranean, I would choose that. I would because I...

Vice Mayor Mena: He's asking you about the Aragon...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, I know, but -- which is Mediterranean.

Vice Mayor Mena: (INAUDIBLE).

Mr. Sokoloff: And so is this one. And this one actually was built to fit. I saw the Zyscovich drawings.

Mayor Lago: That was 170 feet.

Mr. Sokoloff: I think it was 95 feet.

Mayor Lago: No.

Commissioner Anderson: There were some...

Mayor Lago: Elements that were...

Commissioner Anderson: Comparisons...

Mayor Lago: 170 feet.

Commissioner Anderson: (INAUDIBLE) around some -- sorry to interrupt, Mayor -- some comparisons. There were different versions of it; one was taller, one was shorter. It was just because I was trying to get a perspective on the size. But just a little clarification point on LEED certification, that comes after the fact, so we really don't know the level. I think we can knock it out of the park if we don't reflect light down to the street. Hate to be beating a dead horse here, but no good deed goes unpunished...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Anderson: As we make these decisions here today. And someone did send me a drawing for a Mediterranean design, and I didn't like it because it looked like a prison, okay.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: That's not what I'm suggesting here. I want lots of airflow. I want lots of light. I want a modern design. I want it to be engaging. However...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah. I just think...

Commissioner Anderson: We disagree on...

Mr. Sokoloff: We can do better.

Commissioner Anderson: Aesthetics.

Vice Mayor Mena: Sure, sure, sure.

Commissioner Anderson: I don't like the pegboard.

Vice Mayor Mena: But to -- but one...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: But to your point...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Listening because (INAUDIBLE), we don't listen, right? We listened. The design you just pointed to, the Allen Morris one...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: You know what it came with on the other lot, right?

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, I do.

Vice Mayor Mena: And if I...

Mr. Sokoloff: I do.

Vice Mayor Mena: If we had approved...

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: That, you're telling me that that would have been listening to what the CGNA and -- because you guys were here at the time...

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Fighting against that.

Mr. Sokoloff: I'm just talking about...

Mayor Lago: No but wait.

Mr. Sokoloff: The aesthetic.

Mayor Lago: I think it's important.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I think that's a really important backdrop to how we got here because that's how we got here, right?

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, I don't want to launch into that aspect of it. I was just asked about the aesthetic. I live in a 1924 old Mediterranean home. That's just my preference over, you know, newer architecture. That's -- I would like something Mediterranean, but that's just me. It's just...

Vice Mayor Mena: Sure, and we respect that.

Commissioner Fors: And that's my...

Vice Mayor Mena: I can understand that.

Commissioner Fors: Preference for...

Mayor Lago: And Doctor...

Commissioner Fors: For homes. That's my preference too.

Mayor Lago: And Doctor...

Mr. Sokoloff: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: And I -- the reason why I bring it up -- you know how much respect I have for you. I just -- because it seems like it's a losing battle to make everybody happy.

Mr. Sokoloff: You can't when it comes to aesthetics.

Mayor Lago: No, and I -- and that's something that I've struggled. I know that my colleagues on the Commission have struggled with that, and it's not easy. It's not easy to do that because -- I mean, I'll show you a text message. Somebody says, "Listen, I don't like the design, but my husband loves the design." I have that text message right here, you know, from somebody who sent it to me. So, I mean, am I going to make my decisions based on a survey, or am I going to make my decisions based on what I truly feel is in the best interest of the City? Because like I mentioned to the gentleman before, who was a lifelong friend of our family, you know, they were happy with my vote on the Gables Station. They were happy with my vote on the Agave. They were happy with my vote on Miracle Mile. They were happy on my vote opposing the doubling of density in North Gables. They were happy on my vote opposing the parking garages. You know, they were happy on those votes.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right, right.

Mayor Lago: But I'm not always going to vote in the side that the resident wants you to vote because I have to vote my conscience at the end of the day. And sometimes the stars align, and sometimes they don't. I think what we can do is just have as much public comment, listen, be as respectful to each other, appreciate each other...

Mr. Sokoloff: Sure.

Mayor Lago: And I think that that's what this Commission, we try to strive to do that every day. Do we fall short? Yeah, we fall short. I fall short myself every day, but I just try to be better every day, and that's what I'm -- the promise that I'm making to you and to the residents.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah, thank you very -- oh, one last thing I want to say is just because they're changing the name to mobility hub, I do hope that that does not come with the TOD rights and regs that other mobility hubs along the Metrorail have, you know what I'm saying?

Mayor Lago: In what sense?

Mr. Sokoloff: That they can build anything they want, as tall as they want, you know, like along the Metrorail. I just want to make sure because this is a name...

Vice Mayor Mena: No.

Mr. Sokoloff: Change. I hope this is no covert...

Vice Mayor Mena: You're thinking of a -- what's it called? A -- what's the acronym?

Commissioner Fors: Rapid Transit Zone.

Vice Mayor Mena: Rapid -- RTZ.

Commissioner Anderson: RTZ.

Mr. Sokoloff: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: This is not that.

Mr. Sokoloff: I just don't want the name change to imply anything else as far as now it's a mobility hub, so we can go, you know...

Mayor Lago: To think about it...

Mr. Sokoloff: 300 stories.

Mayor Lago: We could build 190 feet as per right...

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Mayor Lago: On this property.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Mayor Lago: And we're building 130 feet, correct?

City Manager Iglesias: 134.

Mayor Lago: I want to be exact.

City Commission Meeting

December 7, 2021

Agenda Item I-1 - Discussion regarding the materials to be used on the exterior façade of the Mobility Hub.

City Manager Iglesias: 134.

Mayor Lago: 134, so we're building almost 60 feet less than what can be built there.

Mr. Sokoloff: Right.

Mayor Lago: I mean, that's pretty significant.

Mr. Sokoloff: Thank you all very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Doctor.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you so much.

Commissioner Anderson: And I could assure you that Commissioner Fors is taking care of the RTZ zone issue very carefully.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker I believe to be Ms. Karelia Carbonell, but it's via phone, so we're asking them to unmute.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Carbonell, do we have the pleasure of having you today here? Thank you for your patience if you're there.

Karelia Carbonell: Hello.

Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Carbonell: Can --? I'm having -- I'm just having audio (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: We can hear you. Would you like to proceed?

Ms. Carbonell: Okay. I do, but I'm having audio issues. I can't hear.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Clerk...

Ms. Carbonell: And it's -- there's static.

City Clerk Urquia: We can hear you well, ma'am.

Mayor Lago: We can hear you perfectly.

Ms. Carbonell: Okay, well, I'll talk then over the static. Thank you all for taking my call. First, I do want to just note something that Commissioner Fors mentioned, and it's about listening and about what he's mentioning that there's, you know, the silent majority or the, you know, the majority and you know, regarding this project. And there is a majority saying that we just don't like the concept. I believe the Commissioners -- there's -- you know, maybe you read one letter that fits that narrative that you are all obviously supporting, but then you don't really give credence to the thousands of signatures or even the thousands that the CGNA represents, which is, you know, over 6,000 residents. Of course, there's the HPACG chapter. And so, you know, there are -- there is a majority of people that just want to see other concepts. I agree with Dr. Sokoloff. I agree with Commissioner Anderson about bringing it back to the BOA. You know, this is important. Yes, you hear us, but you're not listening. I think that's the key. And you know, one letter or maybe a few letters liking the project and highlighting them and really discarding the

others is not fair. The other point I wanted to make is it's not about Mediterranean or modern. You know, it's about really fitting in with the aesthetic of our city. And people listen to what we're saying. We don't want it to look like Miami Beach. We don't want it to look like Brickell, you know, Lincoln Road. You know, those are not Coral Gables. You know, we are a very distinct city. And then the third point, I hear that the building is a LEED certified building. Well, yeah, of course it is because it's going to be a new building. But you know, the best LEED building, the best green building are the buildings that are there, and you know, refurbishing buildings are how we should be thinking. Think about demolition. That whole area is going to be demolished, which is going to be really adversely affecting the environment. Any demolition will bring its own adverse effects, including the pollution and including health effects, which are -- studies have already been written about it. So, yeah, it's a LEED building, but you know, we don't think about how it's going to affect before it gets there, which is, you know, a demolition that should be avoided any chance we can. So, thank you for listening, and please listen to us. We are a majority voice.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Carbonell: We're not one or two or three letters.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Karelia.

Ms. Carbonell: There is a movement saying...

Mayor Lago: I appreciate it.

Ms. Carbonell: We want to see something else.

Commissioner Fors: If I...

Ms. Carbonell: Thank you. Bye-bye.

Commissioner Fors: If I can briefly respond. Karelia -- and I'm not going to repeat that we listen and...

Ms. Carbonell: Yeah.

Commissioner Fors: I object that we don't give credence to it. I think if we didn't give -- well, if I didn't give credence to it, or we didn't give credence to it, we -- this would have been old news already three meetings ago. It's not a thousand signatures in the petition. It's not even a thousand signatures in the petition. Also...

Vice Mayor Mena: And they're not all Coral Gables residents.

Commissioner Fors: They're not all Coral Gables residents. Number three, you know, one issue I took with that petition is that the first, or second, or third word of it uses the word "monstrosity," implying that the size is really something that's up for debate when the size is really not part of the conversation because we know we have a need for X parking spaces, and we need to build a structure of that size or substantially that same size to create space for those X amount of parking spaces. So, sure, I'm sure a lot of folks who signed it thought that it was a question as to whether we should build it at all, and whether we could build something substantially smaller. But in sum, as we've repeatedly stated up here, we absolutely give credence to everybody who sends emails, even signs petitions, calls us, meets with us, et cetera.

Vice Mayor Mena: You can -- listen...

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: You could spin things however you want. I can say 15,000 people got that and didn't sign it because it was sent to 16,000 and 900 signed it. Okay, so that's all hyperbole.

That's all -- you know, we've got multiple meetings now. This is, I think, the third Commission meeting it's discussed at plus the sunshine meeting. And I'm listening, but I'm listening to the same folks who have attended each of those meetings. I've heard Maria speak on it several times. I respect her opinion. If we speak about it again at the next meeting, I'm sure she'll speak again as is her right. Ms. Kawalerski, Dr. Sokoloff -- we've engaged in dialogue on this issue with all of you. So, again, I appreciate that we don't agree on the aesthetic but...

Mayor Lago: I think Commissioner Menendez is the smartest guy in the room. Alright, Vice Mayor.

Commissioner Anderson: That's because you weren't here yesterday.

Mayor Lago: Alright.

Ms. Carbonell: Can you...

Mayor Lago: Thank...

Ms. Carbonell: Can you hear? What I'd like to say is that...

Mayor Lago: But hold on...

Ms. Carbonell: Maria Cruz and Sue Kawalerski represent many thousands of residents, so they're just not speaking on their own.

Vice Mayor Mena: And that's fine, neither are we.

Commissioner Fors: But wait, frankly...

Vice Mayor Mena: Neither are we.

Ms. Carbonell: (INAUDIBLE).

Vice Mayor Mena: We represent all 50,000 plus of the residents in Coral Gables. We listen to them, they speak to us, we were elected to represent them. I don't know how many people are or are not in the CGNA. We receive their letters. I read every letter they send us. They've been sending us one more or less on every project. I appreciate it. They're insightful. It makes me understand their point in a written fashion, which is easy to follow. Mr. O'Malley spoke as the elected person at the last meeting. I gave him extra time to be able to set forth the CGNA's formal position on the issue.

Mayor Lago: I met with him twice, along with our Finance Director.

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Vice Mayor Mena: We came back today because he brought up issues about the finances and we had an entire presentation dedicated to the point that the CGNA's elected person to speak on this brought up. At the end of the day, you're not saying, "We don't listen." You're saying, "We don't agree." And I respect that. I understand it. I'm not even sure, Ms. Carbonell, frankly, what you're exactly advocating for personally at this point, because on the one hand, you're saying there shouldn't be any demolition, and which point, respectfully, that's a non-starter for me because keeping the existing garages...

Ms. Carbonell: Well...

Vice Mayor Mena: Is not a real option. And I don't think there's a reasonable way to retrofit them in a way that meets our needs. So, I know the CGNA's position because they've made it crystal clear, and frankly, the CGNA agrees with a lot of what's being proposed to be fair. The important aspects of it, I think the boxes have been checked. Dr. Sokoloff walked through some of them, and I think the important ones are dealt with. Again, to me, it all ultimately comes down to

aesthetic, which is a subjective issue that, you know, we've discussed I think ad nauseum at this point.

Mayor Lago: Vice Mayor, thank you.

Ms. Carbonell: Well, and -- with all due respect, Commissioners, the reason I brought up the demolition is because I think we need to start thinking -- it's not particularly to this project -- but we should start thinking about repurposing and re-adaptive reuse. And I think that it is going to be -- I, you know, hear about carbon neutral and really climate change and saving our environment and preserving our environment, and I think we need to start thinking that way, instead of building new buildings. Again, it doesn't have anything to do at this point because this is not -- you know, it's not on the agenda. But please...

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Ms. Carbonell: Start thinking about that.

Mayor Lago: It's -- Karelia, we...

Ms. Carbonell: (INAUDIBLE) talk about carbon neutrality.

Mayor Lago: Okay, we appreciate your comments. And to give you an idea of a building that we could have knocked down...

Ms. Carbonell: Okay.

Mayor Lago: That we didn't knock down was 427 next door. It's being completely remodeled, and that building could have been knocked down, and we could have built something.

Ms. Carbonell: I love it, I love it.

Mayor Lago: So, we are...

Ms. Carbonell: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: But let...

Ms. Carbonell: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: But -- okay. Okay.

Ms. Carbonell: That's how it should be.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Karelia, thank you very much. I appreciate you being here. Thank you so much. We're moving on to the next speaker and to the final speaker. Mr. Clerk, will you do me a favor? Will you please close the public comment in regards to this item?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: The last speaker is Mr. Anthony De Yurre.

Mayor Lago: Mr. De Yurre, the floor is yours. Can you please do me a favor? Can you try to stay under three minutes?

Anthony De Yurre: Yes, Mr. Mayor, I will keep it under three minutes. Anthony De Yurre, at 1450 Brickell Avenue, also a resident at 1451 Valencia Avenue. My comment was just in response

to specific -- and notes that were made about the Allen Morris project. It's your decision on this. I know that obviously there's a lot of public comment on it, as Vice Mayor Mena said. You know, there's a lot of subjective discussion, and it's just -- you know, the design is a departure. I don't think that that's subjective. I think that that's pretty factual. But I just -- I don't want -- I want to make sure that I correct comments about the Allen Morris project. It's the City's decision ultimately. I'm not here trying to fight and argue. But the Aragon project compared to what we proposed in our level of architecture is night and day, where we're doing something that was specifically designed by the same architect and the same exact level of detail and style as 121 Alhambra, which I believe is a different design than Aragon. And then the only other comment I wanted to make, again, just to point out, the garage that you're proposing is 134 feet. Our garage at G1 was 97 feet. There was a G4 -- a G4 building. The G4 building had a podium with a garage, a step back at 48 feet, then went to 129 feet, and then stepped back again to a penthouse unit, which is 141 feet. So, I just want to make sure for the record that we understood what the heights were. Our garage is 97, and then our G4 building, our podium was 48 feet, then stepped back at 129, again to penthouse unit at 141. I really under -- I appreciate the -- your navigating all the public comment. I just wanted to make sure that I spoke as to those numbers because there were a lot of numbers thrown around. And I appreciate the time. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Alright, very quickly.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it. That's it for public comments, Mr. Mayor. There was only one comment that I received via email, specifically asking me to read it into the record. It's from Mr. O'Malley. He wanted asked on the record, "Is it true that the rooftop park will have artificial grass, and will the plants around the rooftop park be plastic as well?"

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Manager, can you address that comment?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor. We will be using artificial grass at the rooftop.

Mayor Lago: Will the plants be artificial also? No, right? Obviously, we'll have trees that will be...

City Manager Iglesias: Trees...

Mayor Lago: Will be living organisms.

City Manager Iglesias: The plants will be live. The grass at the rooftop will be artificial grass.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Thank you very much. Alright, I think we've closed the public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Anderson: Mayor, I just had one other question. We haven't addressed the loading dock point that was brought up by the BID.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, if we're going to continue having this discussion, I want to potentially jump into J-1 because I know that Commissioner Menendez is going to step out. And before I do that, I also have people here who are sitting here. On F-1, can we do F-1 one second? Are there any changes to F-1?

City Attorney Ramos: So, Mayor, I'm sorry to interrupt.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Attorney Ramos: But there's a motion on the floor, and there's no second, so it's a little out of -- it's outside the rules to go to a different item without addressing whether there's a second on the motion.

Mayor Lago: I didn't even remember there was a motion on the floor to be honest with you.

Commissioner Anderson: Can I...?

City Attorney Ramos: Motion was to send the project to the Board of Architects.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, why don't I do this to move things along? I'll withdraw the motion, and I'll remake the motion.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Attorney Ramos: Okay.

Mayor Lago: I appreciate that.

City Attorney Ramos: Sounds good, okay.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

[Later...]

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, I don't believe we finished the mobility hub.

Mayor Lago: Oh, my gosh. I'm sorry about that. I apologize. I'm sorry about that. Let's go back to the mobility hub.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll reinstate my motion to have the matter reviewed by the Board of Architects immediately in December. I'm willing to come back for an additional vote on this after their review before our January meeting, or we can vote on in the January meeting.

Mayor Lago: So, Madam City Attorney, what -- in regards to Item I-1, City Manager item, does action need to be taken? Or obviously, I know that Commissioner has a motion on the floor, but we don't need to take any action today, do we?

City Attorney Ramos: Action does not need to be taken. There is a site plan that is approved. There is a motion on the floor though, so we need to ask for a second to see if there's room for discussion.

City Clerk Urquia: Is there a second on the motion?

Mayor Lago: Listen, I don't have a problem seconding the motion, but I want to be very clear -- I can't second the motion, number one. I can move the gavel -- here -- to show respect for my colleague, I'll do it. Here, I'll second the motion. But I'm perfectly fine with the way the building is. I'm ready to move forward.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: I'm just doing this to show respect and deference to Commissioner Anderson. I'm ready to move forward.

Vice Mayor Mena: Alright, Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, the loading and unloading zone too. We need to make sure it gets addressed.

Mayor Lago: Okay, do you want to...?

Vice Mayor Mena: No, no. Did we want to talk about that now or...?

Mayor Lago: Can I have the gavel back, or no? What do you want? I don't know what you want me to do. At this point, after the last thing, I don't even know who's the Mayor anymore.

City Attorney Ramos: So...

Mayor Lago: You know.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, you flip a coin on that.

City Attorney Ramos: So, we have a...

Mayor Lago: We may have to go back to instituting some of Valdes-Fauli's rules. We may have to start doing that.

City Attorney Ramos: So, we have a motion and a second to refer this back to the Board of Architects. And it would just be the design, of course, because the site plan has been approved.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

City Attorney Ramos: Do --? Are we going to discuss that, or do we want a roll call on that?

Commissioner Anderson: And it would be with direction that we want a model design.

Mayor Lago: But haven't we already taken this to the BOA?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, yes, Mayor. The BOA, their determination is that they feel this should be a Mediterranean type...

Commissioner Fors: And it's no...

City Manager Iglesias: Structure.

Commissioner Fors: It's no -- oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Commissioner Anderson: Well...

City Manager Iglesias: And so, we did not have to take it to the Board of Architects; we took it twice. Their feeling is it should be a Mediterranean-type structure, and that was very -- made very clear in a special board meeting that we had just for the mobility hub. So, we would like to -- we have the deadline of September 30th, and we would like to know if we can move forward with the current design to be able to make sure that we meet that September 30th deadline.

Commissioner Fors: And regarding the visit that this site plan took to the BOA, I found it odd that the BOA got into their opinions of whether it should be Mediterranean when the design did not -- was not seeking to take advantage of the Mediterranean bonus. So, if we're building a structure with the height and density required for the Med bonus, then I can see why they were even discussing Med bonus. I don't know why they were even discussing Med bonus at that stage, but I think I do know why at the same time. And correct me if I'm wrong, but when that went to BOA was in the middle -- ground zero -- of the discussion of the Mediterranean bonus rewrite, where the BOA's meetings were being televised and they were under that -- I guess that was the flavor of the day -- wasn't it? -- at the time.

City Manager Iglesias: They felt that it was a City building and it should be Mediterranean -- and it should be a Mediterranean-type structure. The problem that we have is the -- is that it is a parking garage. It does require circulation. It does require a lot of issues that really doesn't lend itself to the Mediterranean structure unless -- and we have the architects here who can verify what I'm saying -- and unless you design something similar to what's across the street.

Commissioner Anderson: Right. Well...

City Manager Iglesias: And...

Commissioner Anderson: Sorry.

City Manager Iglesias: And so that was the determination of the board. Again, we did not have to go to the board. We went to a board meeting, and then we went to a special board meeting on it. And so, I felt at that time that it should be a Commission decision as to what the style is. I -- we feel comfortable with the style. We feel it's going to be a world-class building, and we would like to proceed with the project.

Commissioner Anderson: Just a comment on that. Just like when any of us get hired here that are attorneys, we do have to listen to our clients. And I would think that the Board of Architects can review this under the prescription that we're providing that it needs to be a modern design, you know. That's what we have on that block on Andalusia and Miracle Mile is basically modern architecture, some of it with a little bit of our Art Deco flare, but we want it with certain prescriptive things, such as we want lighting to be in there. We want clear airflow to be in there and not have fans running in there. But they could add their technique as been historically done in this city to have the collaboration from the Board of Architects as to a modern design because I just think we can do better.

City Manager Iglesias: And let me say that it's not that they didn't incorporate anything. There were various comments that the architects incorporated. They just did not incorporate that Mediterranean exterior.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's an important point.

City Manager Iglesias: So...

Vice Mayor Mena: But we did get feedback from them and the (INAUDIBLE).

City Manager Iglesias: We did get feedback. There was a lot of interior work and a lot of things that were incorporated. The only one that we felt was the Mediterranean exterior.

Commissioner Anderson: How much would this really slow anything down if between -- in December, the Board of Architects looks at this again to provide their comments on how we can improve the modern design?

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, but if I may ask you -- so this would be a third time going to the BOA, and what would we -- what do you think that we could achieve by doing a third visit to the BOA? You think it would be just like forcing an overhaul of the design, asking for redesign? What would be the premise of going a third time to the BOA?

Commissioner Anderson: Going a third time to the BOA would be, number one, to focus them on a non-Mediterranean design. The comments that were given were under the auspices of the time period where they were really focusing on Mediterranean design and under the belief that the City had to and should exhibit a Mediterranean design. I've clearly stated that that's not what I'm seeking here, that I'd like to have a modern design, but I do believe that we can do much better than the pegboard design that's on those panels. Quite frankly, it's simplistic. It's boring. And amongst the ones that I did see, you know, when I was searching the Internet, I did see, you know, almost an identical pegboard design with the panels connected. I think we can do better. I really think we can do better. And we're spending this kind of money on something, let's have them put their touch on it, or as the City Manager -- you know, when we deal with landscape, you know, Adina (phonetic) has her touch, and she makes it beautiful. And I think we can make this more beautiful.

Vice Mayor Mena: I -- Listen, I didn't second the motion because I'm a no. It's already gone to the Board of Architects several times. I was just told there was comments to the existing design. I'm going to be honest with you. We talk about things that may happen if we do certain things, like we keep -- I keep hearing this point, \$2 million. We paid \$2 million to a world-class firm to get their design, and then we get it, we say it's boring and simplistic, and they -- tell them how to do it. And I just don't understand the logic behind that. Like if I go out and hire somebody that's best in class at their job, I'd let them do their job. I'd give them guidance. I'd give them parameters. I'd give them priorities, but I'm not going to sit here and tell you guys that it's a bunch of peg holes and a boring design because I totally disagree. I think it's a fantastic design. I think you guys did a good job. I think you incorporated the comments that you did already receive from the Board of Architects. And so, you know, we're talking about a mobility hub that's going to serve our community and our downtown area well, that checks so many of the boxes that we set out to check. And that's where I am with it. So, I'm a no vote on the motion when we're ready to take the roll. I'm ready to proceed.

Commissioner Fors: I'm also going to be a no vote. I think that's the point of the roll. But I'll be a no vote. I'll just tell Commissioner Anderson that I would consider going back to the BOA if it hadn't been there already. But because it already has been...

Vice Mayor Mena: Twice.

Commissioner Fors: That's why I'm going to vote no on it.

Commissioner Anderson: And just a note for the record. They rejected the design, okay. So, typically what happens when an item is deferred by the Board of Architects is you have to come back to the Board of Architects. And by your no votes, you're bypassing the Board of Architects, and I think they need due respect. Sorry, I disagree. I don't find anything pretty about this at all, you know. I've seen creative designs. I've seen good designs. We have good designs around here

on modern buildings. We can do better. So, I don't want to delay this any further. Let's move forward.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Alright, we'll move on Item I-2.

Vice Mayor Mena: No, we got to vote.

City Attorney Ramos: We need to take a vote.

Mayor Lago: Okay, we'll take a vote.

Commissioner Fors: No.

Vice Mayor Mena: No.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: No.

(Vote: 1-3)

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.