

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-3**  
**October 22, 2024**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner Melissa Castro**

**Commissioner Ariel Fernandez**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**

**City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Commissioner Ken Russell**

**Steven Leidner**

**Noel Cleland**

**Marcelo Balladares**

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Agenda Item F-3 [11:20 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission encouraging Miami-Dade County to delay its decision on the location of a new waste to energy facility in order to explore alternative options, conduct a detailed cost analysis, and adopt an updated solid waste management master plan. (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto the next item.

City Clerk Urquia: Its F-3, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, F-3, thank you very much. And then we'll do F-11 and then we'll move on. Go ahead. Item F-3, Madam Vice Mayor.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: Sorry, my computer decided to reboot in the middle of the meeting.

City Attorney Suarez: So, I read it while you, Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

City Attorney Suarez: So, F-3 is a Resolution of the City Commission encouraging Miami-Dade County to delay its decision on the location of a new waste to energy facility in order to explore alternative options, conduct a detailed cost analysis, and adopt an updated solid waste management master plan.

Vice Mayor Anderson: This is an item that came after going to a wonderful presentation that the Sierra Club put on and Commissioner Russell was there advocating on the behalf of it, and I believe he's put in a speaker card. And just by way of summary, our goal here is to have our county do a further study before proceeding on a decision on an incinerator, and if the Clerk has available the slide that I sent you, I think it would help tell the story as to why this is important now. Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: If Cable TV could share my screen.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, this is what Broward County is doing and its in line with the direction the city wants to go to try to bring down our waste fees. 31.5 percent of what Broward County is doing with their waste is compostable and the yard waste being made into mulch, and then you have your other recycling matters. So, you have a total amount of recyclability here of 62 percent of everything that's picked up by Broward County. I think Commissioner Russell, if you would bless us with your presence and explain what your goal here is with this resolution, because you were the reason I brought this here today.

Commissioner Russell: Thank you, Madam Vice Chair, and good morning to your residents. Thank you to your administration. Commissioners, Vice Mayor and Mr. Mayor, of course. My name is Ken Russell, I'm at 3142 Ohio Street, Little Bahamas of Coconut Grove. I'm here representing Sierra Club in favor of F-3, to ask the county to delay their decision to create a new incinerator or to relocate it out of Doral. As many of you know, the incinerator that the county operated with burned down a year and-a-half ago, and they've been very quickly moving toward building a new incinerator which would be the largest in the country. And the reason Sierra Club engaged me was as a former elected, I was very proud of the fact that we burned all of our garbage in the City of Miami, and we had what was quote-unquote, a zero-waste solution, a non-landfill solution at the City of Miami. I only came to learn later from experts that were working together with Sierra Club that incineration is now an old technology and there are new opportunities being used throughout the country and the world, that we could follow as a county; and the incinerators still produce CO2 gasses and greenhouse gasses without mitigation. There is no sequestration. By the county's own study for the greenhouse gasses produced. So, they may make it smell better,

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they may make it a little bit cleaner, but they will be creating the country's largest producer of greenhouse gas in terms of an incinerator right here in our county, when we are trying to fight that. Now your question may be, why should Coral Gables be involved in such a discussion when your city is not one of the target cities where they would relocate. They are looking at putting it out near the Everglades, they could leave it in Doral, there are a few different locations, and the cities are fighting amongst themselves where they don't want it. Well, 34 cities in the county produce the garbage that is consumed by the county, and I would venture a guess that Coral Gables has not been brought to the table on the additional cost that you will incur for changing that transportation location. If you have to haul your garbage all the way out to the Everglades versus Doral, for example, what is that additional cost, who will bear that? Will it be the county, will it be Doral, or will it be your residents, and as an elected who dealt with waste management costs, I know it's a loss leader. I know that you already subsidize your residents for the cost of garbage, and this could make it worst, but we don't know, it just hasn't been studied yet. So, the idea is a simple ask to the county, because their current schedule is on November 6<sup>th</sup> to choose that new location. The perspective location is the Everglades, abutting the Everglades outside of the urban development boundary. Sierra Club is in favor of no incinerator, and we would like the county to study the true zero waste solution, including other cities comparable to this county that have found ways to divert their waste in ways that don't need incineration, but they are on a single track right now for incineration and it will affect your city and county. I would like to remind you that it was Coral Gables that actually shut down the old smokey incinerator in the City of Miami decades ago, because of the waste it was producing and its affect on residents. So, thank you very much for your time and this opportunity to talk with you. I'm happy to answer any questions and there are also some folks from Sierra Club here who would like to speak as well.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll add that this site is contaminated, so that particular site where it was shut down is contaminated now, so that's another factor we have to consider. Mr. Clerk, I think we have some additional speakers who would like to add.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes ma'am. Next speaker is Steven Leidner.

Mr. Leidner: Good morning, Steven Leidner, 1131 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Bay Harbor Island. Hello Commissioners, Mayor, Vice Mayor, I serve as the Conservation Chair for the Miami group of the Sierra Club. Ken also really said enough, and I would add that, if this incinerator goes into, is realized that it will produce approximately 4,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> into our atmosphere. So, you mentioned earlier, about the cost of insurance. Its all driven by our hurricanes, our flooding, our heat waves, so if you want to reduce costs, we're going to have to start addressing what the fundamentals of what's driving those costs. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Noel Cleland.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Cleland: Good morning, my name is Noel Cleland, I live at 5990 S.W. 50<sup>th</sup> Street. First, I wanted to start off by thank you all for acknowledging Dan Finora and his service and recognizing the role that teachers play for all of us, because its literally thousands of people. Seems like everybody has a Dan Finora story. Well, I went to Southwest High, but my mother was a teacher at Coral Gables for 35 years and she worked in the typing department with Dan, and she always had good things to say about him. So, thank you for acknowledging that and also the role of teachers, because Confucious once said, if you want to plant for a year, plant rice. If you want to plant for ten years, plants trees. If you want to plant for 100 years, educate children. So, one of the things they are asking me here with the Sierra Club is to be forward thinking, because with the decision that the county is trying to make for an incinerator is going to affect people for the next 30 to 40 years. Its going to take about 8 to 10 years to build an incinerator, and then if it goes to plans, they are going to keep it going for another 30 years. So, we are talking about the decision now that our kids and our grandkids are going to be facing, and its important to realize this incineration as Ken said is old technology. If you look around the country, the incinerators are being decommissioned, not being built, and the reality is by 2060, we may be the only city or the only county in the country that actually has an incinerator going, because since we built that incinerator in Doral, there is a lot of technology available for ways to divert or waste from the landfill. We are not trying to fill up the landfill, but the reality is, if we do a better job recycling, composting, getting the debris from construction and demolition, we can divert a lot of that and reuse that material and stop trying to destroy our planet. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And thank you for your comments and effort. I think you are the last speaker.

City Clerk Urquia: I have one more. Marcelo Balladares.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Marcelo, come on in.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Balladares: Hi there. Marcelo Balladares, 16171 S.W. 73<sup>rd</sup> Street. I am also here with the Sierra Club supporting Ken and my great friends Steven and Noel. One point I want to add onto what Noel had mentioned about being sort of committed to this for 30 years, along with that commitment comes in most operational contracts for incinerators is what is known as a put or pay, where essentially, if you are not generating or supplying enough waste to feed the operational

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capacity of the incinerator, the county has to pay the operator of that incinerator for that missing waste essentially, because they are not using it to their full capacity. So, not only would it potentially lock in the county to generating or supplying a certain amount of waste, it would also work against zero waste energy, zero waste initiatives and renewable energy goals in the long term. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

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

Mayor Lago: Done Mr. Clerk.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Mayor Lago: May I just say one thing, if I may. One of the things that I was talking to the Commissioner and the Commissioner, and I have a long-standing relationship well before he was even elected is the concern that we should always, and I welcome you to come up, because you have a much better handle than I think anybody else does here in regard to this issue. I think this is a critically important issue as we try to divert as much waste as possible from getting into the waste stream. One of the issues that I'd love to hear now a little bit more, maybe in the future from staff, if they can work together with the Sierra Club to get more information is, one of the things that we face as a city is the continued increase of garbage fees from the county every single year. These tipping fees continue to go up and up and up, and what they do, they pass them through from the county to the city, and then we have to make a decision on whether we absorb them or we pass them on as increase to the residents. Commissioner, will you talk a little bit about very briefly, because we have a long agenda, and I want to respect the agenda. Can you talk a little bit about the issue of the travel time and where its currently being proposed. If we were to do an incinerator and I think many people would say, we don't want to do an incinerator. We want to move as much waste from this type of disposal as possible. We want to do something that's a lot more sustainable. But if we were to go with the proposal from the county, what would be the proposed implications to cities like ours in regard to the additional trucking fees and the cost. What are we looking at. How dramatic could the increase be?

Commissioner Russell: Yes. It's a simple calculation of the tonnage of waste that you transport right now to the Doral location and calculating how much it would cost to take it that further north and west to the Everglades location, and that's different for every city, obviously based on where they are located and whether there are transfers needed, etc., but its something your administration could work together with the county to calculate if the county had you at the table.

Mayor Lago: Also, on that front, the big issue here is, its pretty obvious, I don't want to speak for the county, but the county is not going to absorb that cost. The county is going to pass it through,

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obviously to the cities, so it would be an additional cost that we as a city would have to make a decision on whether we pass it through to the residents or we absorb it again as a city, we have to vote on that every single time. So that's something that I wanted to bring to the attention of my colleagues on the Commission and to the city and to the residents, because while it sounds great that we are going to build a new facility, whether its more sustainable or less, something's got to be done, right, at the end of the day, something's got to be done. This is potentially about \$8 billion dollars is the number I heard, is that correct.

Commissioner Russell: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Around \$8 billion dollars, a huge investment in the future of how we get rid of our waste here in the city, but also the cost, as gas prices continue to go up and they haven't found a real reliable way to truck things and reduce the gas prices and insurance prices, trucking only continues to go up. Its an industry that's seeing a boom in price increases. So, I foresee that cost being past onto cities and being a major issue in the near future.

Commissioner Russell: Yes. And personally, I'd like to thank you and the City of Coral Gables long before I was an elected official, I was just a resident with a closed park in front of my house, because of incinerator ash and I reached out to every elected I could think of or find and the first person that responded was Commissioner Vince Lago, even though you weren't the Commissioner of my city, your residents use that Merry Christmas Park across LeJeune and you helped me. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: I forgot about that. I remember that.

Commissioner Russell: It was our first contact ever.

Mayor Lago: That's amazing. I can't believe you remembered that. Thank you, Commissioner. I appreciate your advocacy, okay. It's awesome. Thank you. Yes sir.

Mr. Leidner: I have another relevant point in terms of the cost that you were bringing up. One of the reasons is the county is working on one site, a central site for all of our waste is because an incinerator by design is a big complex and it needs to have all of our trash in one place so they can burn it. If we eliminate the incinerator from the equation, the idea of decentralized waste recovery facilities that are smaller in nature, we could have one for South Dade, one for North Dade, one central, I don't know what the formula would be, but if we just take the incinerator out of the equation then the cost for each individual city would go down if we had a decentralized waste collection.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for bringing that to our attention. Thank you, sir. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We have a motion, and we have a second.

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City Clerk Urquia: Yes, we do.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: (He stepped out)

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you to everyone from the Sierra Club for being here, as always and being advocates on behalf of our community and the environment. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you all.