

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C
August 27, 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)

Maria Cruz

Sonia Virtle

David Renshaw

Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item C [9:43 a.m.]

Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Now moving onto Public Comment.

City Clerk Urquia: The first speaker this morning, Mr. Mayor, is Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Maria Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Its wonderful to live in the City of Coral Gables, the City Beautiful. As usual, this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad. Thank you. Have a wonderful day.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Sonia Virtle.

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Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Virtle: Good morning. My name is Sonia Vertle. I live at 730 Anastasia Avenue. I have been living there since 1991. I have not had the pleasure of meeting you all, because since then this Commission has changed and the last time, I came was back in the year 2012. And as you can see, my request is to speak to you, because I think none of you are aware or were aware of the covenant that exist between the Biltmore Neighborhood Association and the Somerset/Academica Charter Schools. This association BNA has fought endlessly to come to that agreement, to block it to 260-sum students, which apparently has gone up from the agreement, some 20-plus students. Now, Somerset/Academica has come back to you, the Commissioners and the Mayor to increase that to over 700 students. As you know, Anastasia has always, always been used as an in and out street. I have seen Presidents since 1991, going back to Reagan. I have seen Reagan. I have seen Clinton. I have seen Obama, and I don't know who will be the next President that I will have the pleasure to see travelling on my street. I want to remind you that during Andrew, you used the Biltmore, the city used the Biltmore for the National Guards. That is a very important street, an extremely important street for this city, because it travels in and out. For some reason, it was designated, I don't know why. However, having said that, but besides all that, that is just additional information. We have an agreement with Somerset Academica that none of you, I repeat, were aware of because it has changed. Twelve years later, you're all new on this, so you were not aware of it. So, I'm here coming to you and telling you, I am not – I am telling you that there is an agreement with Somerset Academica, and we urge you to do your share. I understand its an agreement between BNA and the Charter Schools. However, you as city officials have a responsibility to the people who pay taxes, who live in the city, before anybody else who has a for-profit entity, and you know, I don't have to go into details, this is not a real public school. You know how the system works. And another school in the Gables is not really in the corner of our street. So, I'm here to urge you to do your share as elected officials. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I'm going to Zoom next. Speaker is going to be David Renshaw.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Renshaw, good morning.

Mr. Renshaw: Good morning. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Mr. Renshaw: Thank you. Good morning to all, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, Department Heads and also residents. I am speaking and proposed on behalf of the general employees pertaining to the potential resolution bill that maybe subsequently proposed, the reduction of certain general employee positions that Teamsters Local 769 fundamentally objects to. I'll address a few as we go. Code Enforcement – We need the Code Enforcement as the city continues to grow.

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We need the Code Enforcement because currently and recently long-term employees have left. We need those positions fulfilled. You referenced a part-time maintenance worker. The residents, the police, the fire, we all need adequate, appropriate fitting signs out there. Pertaining to the elimination of two fulltime or proposed elimination of two fulltime solid waste workers. You compared 2021 to 2023 and compare it to 2024 of the unprecedented heat related matters within the outdoor industry that we are currently occurring with and currently dealing with. In addition to those two, that department needs more, because of the rotation that we're going to need. The parking enforcements. Parking within itself quadrupled of those, and you want to put them to a part-time position. How is a part-time employee going to grow in the beautiful City of Coral Gables. Furthermore, it talks about 15 positions to be untouched, where we do not protest those. We support those. For the record, those are all for Police, Fire and IT. In closing, on behalf of the general employees, this is a setback. Instead of moving forward, we are now setback again because we are now having to claw back, okay. We are no longer retention and attraction. We need to be competitive. This does not put us in a competitive atmosphere. We look forward to a fruitful contract negotiation with the city scheduled tomorrow. That's all I have. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes, good morning.

Mr. Holmes: Okay. Three minutes begin. Thank you all so much. I want to thank again our City Manager, Amos Rojas for making City Commission a friendly place. Moving on. How hot have you all been. Have you been steaming. Have we entered global warming. No, sorry. I've got to revise that. Have we entered global boiling. I have a slideshow. I'm afraid to say, you know the Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Gutierrez, perhaps coined this phrase when he stated a few months back that we have moved from global warming to global boiling and now, I'm going to do a slideshow showing that I think we have. How hot have you been in the month of August. This shows the hottest day on record, August 16th. So, your fears – your experiences confirmed. That's the first slide. National Weather Service, they are the authority, that's the government. And then we had the hottest May in history here in Miami. So that's incredible, right. And then the hottest day on Earth, the hottest day on Earth, July 21st. So, then we wonder, what about the rest of the world, right. So, we get to that. Look at this one. In Australia, they are boiling. And even in Iran, I don't know if you have been studying the Persian Gulf, they are boiling a lot. So, you know, I don't know if my three minutes have run out yet, hopefully not. I'm afraid this has very serious implications for us. Think of our tourism, how much of a hit this is going to take, and we need, I think, to protest in every manner that we can find. We have a governor who is in denial of this, therefore he's part of the problem, etc. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

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