

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-7
May 11, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge L. Fors, Jr.

Commissioner Kirk R. Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item G-7 [Start: 2:24 p.m.]

A discussion regarding parking fees for seniors at the Adult Activity Center.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)

Mayor Lago: You want to move onto G-7.

Commissioner Anderson: G-7 – yes. I put it on really, the City Manager has taken a lead on this particular issue. I want to make sure that the public got notice that its going to be discussed; and City Manager, can you please let the public know what you’ve been able to accomplish.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes Commissioner. I went to the Senior Advisory Board meeting Thursday, and advised them that we would continue to provide vouchers, but that we had 35 parking valet spots that were not being used and would be for free, and I asked them to try to use them as much as possible. We had a very good meeting. Many of the seniors agreed to do that and I thought it

City Commission Meeting

was a very productive meeting. But we will continue to provide vouchers, but if we could certainly use, especially the seniors are there for 4-5 hours that can valet park, and I think it was a very good meeting, and from what I've heard from our Parks Director, I think we have many of their support.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Anderson, if I may, I've been working with the Manager on this issue for probably about three weeks now. I've gotten a lot of e-mails. I know we've all gotten e-mails on this issue, and I was having a conversation with Maria in regard to this issue. I understand what the members of our senior community want, and I understand, but we also need to find a balance, because this is a significant amount of money. Coming out of Covid we need to find as much money in every bucket, and as part of my strategic plan, and I spoke with the Manager yesterday and I requested an audit and an efficiency study, because we need to find ways to save as much money as possible. The Palace is not playing ball with us on this issue, and we need to find a way to play ball on this issue. I want to make it as easier as possible for the residents, the senior residents. I think that the valet is a stone's throw away from the entrance of the Senior Center, of the Adult Activity Center, excuse me, and I want to see how this works out. But my understanding is that we were spending, was it close to \$50,000?

City Manager Iglesias: \$40,000.

Mayor Lago: \$40,000 a year. So this will probably be brought up in the audit and the efficiency study; and to me, I think it's a travesty, we are just a few feet away, and the valet, I know some people may have concerns as a result of Covid, but if somebody is spending 4 or 5 hours at the Adult Activity Center, please consider using the valet, because you are helping the city. Maybe we can use that money for programming, maybe we can use it for additional programming, for additional services. This is important. We want to tighten the ship as much as possible. We have a little bit of loose ends. This is an example of \$40,000 that we can potentially save.

Vice Mayor Mena: Where does the valet park? – in the same garage?

Mayor Lago: Same.

Commissioner Anderson: I think a lot of people didn't understand that the valet was at no cost.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: But if you park it yourself its costing the city money, and a significant amount of money.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: It makes no sense, but...

Mayor Lago: I'm happy that the Manager went and addressed the issue, and let's try to wean everyone off and move them in a direction of valet, and you'll see as we get out of Covid, people will have more and more faith that the valet works. It's a stone's throw away, literally you've got to just cross the street and got to make it as safe as possible for people to cross the street and just keep us up to date and if it becomes a problem, I don't have an issue going to speak to the Adult Activity Center and explaining.

City Manager Iglesias: I believe it was a productive meeting Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Good. Good. Anything else Commissioner Anderson?

Commissioner Anderson: No, not at this time.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, Ms. Maria Cruz would like to speak on this.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, please give us your name and address for the record just in case I forgot.

Ms. Cruz: And you know we agree to disagree, right. Okay. Since I sat, what was it called, that board, the Senior Citizen Board, I think it was called.

Mayor Lago: Who appointed you?

Ms. Cruz: You.

Mayor Lago: I may have to take you off that board.

Ms. Cruz: Well, when we, the board, fought for many years to have this Adult Activity Center, we were promised that they would have the two kinds of parking, we were promised, okay, number one. Number two, I know that for some of you, for most of you they are very able and young crossing the street is not a big issue. For people that are, like my age and maybe a little older, leaving the car there waiting for the valet, crossing the street, you know it does rain in Miami sometimes, and sometimes its hot, is an inconvenience, okay. So, I've been thinking. There are some perks that we give some people that served this wonderful city for a few months, maybe a year, maybe two, maybe ten, they are called Medallions, Parking Medallions. If you served as a

City Commission Meeting

Commissioner, you have a Parking Medallion for life. If you are one of the high employees in this city, not only do you get a good salary, but you also get a Parking Medallion. Maybe we need to address how much money we do not make by having the Parking Medallions and use that for the elderly people, because we certainly do not expect people to go to the Youth Center to pay for parking. Oh, they are young, they could park two miles away and walk, we can't. Let me tell you, I understand that \$40,000 is a lot of money, so do the elderly. You have a lot of people, please do not believe that everybody in Coral Gables is so filthy rich that they can afford to pay parking. You are creating, let me tell you, and Peter was there, because I attended that meeting, the amount of calls that I got from people crying, you know I won't be able to go. I will not might as well, okay. There are people in this city that will not pay for parking creates an inconvenience. There are people in this community – you are young, you don't mind valet parking, the elderly in general do not like people driving their cars, I'm sorry, it goes with the age, I guess, with our generation, okay. We accommodate for a lot of people, its time to accommodate for the elderly.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. I'm sorry, I am sorry Mayor, you know I love you, but I disagree, and I have to defend, and I love Michael, he was very nice to me the other day. I got a very wonderful Mother's Day message from him.

Mayor Lago: Listen to me.

Ms. Cruz: No, but in reality...

Mayor Lago: I'm going to tell you. Listen, we are going to have certain people try the valet, if it works, others can park as they currently do, and we'll see if it catches interest, but I also want to have an opportunity through the Manager to have a conversation with the Palace, see what they can do for us.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. Let me tell you about the Palace. You know that building, the parking building was supposed to be connected to the other side, but we gave them permission not to do it. This is the issue what I'm telling you. People promised, developers promised and then we say, oh you know, its not a big deal, oh yes, you don't have to do it, University of Miami, the same thing. They gave us a million dollars to do things around my neighborhood, your neighborhood, and guess what, a few meetings later they came and told the city, oh you know, we have so much to do, we need you to give us back \$750,000, so we ended up with \$250,000. You all need to be less generous to the big people and more generous to the little people.

Mayor Lago: We are having that same issue again in my neighborhood too.

Ms. Cruz: Love you.

Mayor Lago: So, listen, love you. Have a wonderful, wonderful day. Thank you, Maria.