

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item J-3
February 12, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Finance Director, Diana Gomez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item J-3 [12:15:21 p.m.]

A resolution authorizing an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Annual Budget to transfer from fund balance Park Impact Fees and to reappropriate such funds for the Ponce Circle Park Project.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: J-3.

City Attorney Ramos: J-3 is a resolution authorizing an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Annual Budget to transfer from fund balance Park Impact Fees and to reappropriate such funds for the Ponce Circle Park Project.

Vice Mayor Lago: If I may Mayor. I just wanted to mention that I wanted to have a little more time to discuss this. I'm in favor of what we are doing in Ponce Circle Park, but I just want to make sure that the money that we are allocating to this park really, at the end of the day, provides us with a product that will be used. Right now you see Ponce Circle Park that I feel that spending millions of dollars on this park, are people actually going to use it, because the situation that we have right now with traffic and crossing the median there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I fully support your suggestion that we postpone it for the May meeting.

Commissioner Keon: You know what, it was my understanding from staff that this was just to transfer, this is not enough to complete Ponce Circle Park. The Manager, could you explain what you are actually asking for here? It is not enough to complete the park. It is enough to do what?

City Manager Iglesias: We...the park as has been proposed is about a \$4-million-dollar project. This provides an additional one million dollars. The project we have a \$2-million-dollar proffer from Agave, so we are still short.

Commissioner Keon: A million. So this would just give you the \$3 million that you need, is that what you are saying?

City Manager Iglesias: It would be \$3 million, but we are still short...

Commissioner Keon: But you need an additional million.

City Manager Iglesias: Because there is more than just a park. There are also the streets around the park, which there are civil engineering work to be done in order to make the park more accessible.

Commissioner Keon: But is it imperative that this be done today?- I mean is there a timing issue between impact fees being paid and impact fees being allocated, is that an issue with this?

City Manager Iglesias: What we would like to do is have this park done at the same time as the Agave project is done.

Commissioner Keon: OK. But I know...

City Manager Iglesias: That's our timeframe.

Commissioner Keon: I understand. But I understand also that there is – you have to allocate impact fees, there is a period of time between the time the fee is paid and the fee is allocated. Are we at that time?- that's what I'm asking you.

Finance Director Gomez: So yes. There is a six-year timeframe...

Commissioner Mena: Six-year?

Finance Director Gomez: We have to appropriate the fund, per the ordinance, you have to appropriate the funds before the six-year timeframe and we appropriate all impact fees the year after it is collected within the budget.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just not an issue.

Finance Director Gomez: So it's really not an issue.

Commissioner Keon: This is not an issue.

Finance Director Gomez: Appropriation is not an issue.

Vice Mayor Lago: And the second point that I have a little bit of an issue with is, we have these impact fees that are coming in and we split the baby 65/35 in reference to acquisition and the improvement of existing parks. I just feel, I don't know if using these million dollars is in line with what we want to use these impact fees for. I would love to see it broken down the way that we had discussed the 65/35. I just don't feel comfortable right now voting on this issue. I don't know how you feel.

Commissioner Mena: There are two things here for me. One is that issue and maybe you can clarify a little bit when those funds came in. I know we had a bit of a discussion last time. The second thing is the broader question about this park and what is the smart investment here. I think that the Agave developers are going to do a world class public space abutting the circle and I question whether somebody is going to want to spend time in the park in the middle of the traffic circle, as opposed to in that space. I think for public events, big events, I totally agree with that.

Commissioner Keon: It's the public event space is what it is.

Commissioner Mena: That's the conversation I think we need to have. What is the appropriate thing to do for it to be adequate for public events, because I think it is appropriate for that, as opposed to a park?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I fully support this...so that we can have a lot more information, but I disagree with that. I think that that park hasn't been used because it's a horrible park with historic pine trees that are awful that don't provide any shade and it's difficult to get to it, and if we can do something with that park, I think it would be wonderful to have a center-like central park in New York or in Boston, the beautiful parks downtown. This would be the center of downtown, the southern center of downtown Coral Gables and the more we can with shade and

with fountains and things, encourage the usage of that park, I think it would be a much richer City.

Commissioner Quesada: So, I've written about this over the years quite a bit, this park, and I've given a whole bunch of ideas that no one liked. At one point I thought maybe, I think access to the park is the hardest part, because you've got two lanes and sometimes people going pretty quick there, so its uncomfortable to cross in there. I thought about going underneath with like a walkway, like they do in the northeast all the time.

Unidentified Speaker: Inaudible.

Commissioner Quesada: And that one is too expensive to go underneath. You know I was also thinking about what Commissioner Lago said, because he recalls when I brought that up a few years back saying, the two lanes that run south to north, the lane that's going to be directly in front of the Agave project. I said move those over to the other side of the street, have Agave give up public parking, now you have a much larger park. You actually pick up an additional almost three acres, but...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Then you are going to get much more difficult for people to access the park from east to west to the park.

Commissioner Quesada: But then you give them parking in the building on the other side, so at least you have somewhere to park more comfortably. Again, there is no perfect magic bullet. Peter didn't like that second idea, because he said it was too aggressive a turn.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What about the Freebie from one side of the street to the other.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes – whatever.

Vice Mayor Lago: I think Ramon had a stroke when we brought that up. He said I was against everything that George Merrick envisioned.

Commissioner Quesada: He said the historic nature of the street. All those in favor. She already gave her thumbs up in the back.

Commissioner Quesada: Which I respectfully disagree with that opinion. Everything you try to bring up here gets shot down on that, so.

Commissioner Mena: I think the discussion is basically, if the budget is \$4 million dollars, if that's the budget, what are you getting for that \$4 million dollars?- and is it worth \$4 million dollars?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's put this off for the first meeting in March, so that we have time to meet, we have time to discuss, alright? Thank you.

[End: 12:22:09 p.m.]