

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-1 and H-2 are related
February 12, 2008
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Slesnick Donald D. Slesnick, II
Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Maria Anderson
Commissioner Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne "Chip" Withers

City Staff

City Manager, David Brown
City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
City Clerk Staff, Billy Urquia
Assistant City Manager Maria Jimenez

Public Speaker(s)

Roger Serola, Coral Gables Resident, President of Cocoplum Homeowners Assoc.
Steve Helfman, Coral Gables Resident, Cocoplum

D-1 [Start: 9:57:29 a.m.]

Roger M. Serola, President of Cocoplum Homeowners Association, to discuss a local improvement district to provide for the remodeling of the entrance guardhouse.

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Serola welcome.

Mr. Serola: Good morning, my name is Roger Serola; I live at 7166 Lago Drive East, and I am the President of the Cocoplum Homeowners Association probably [inaudible]....I come before you this morning to ask for the beginning of the establishment of an improvement district for the renovation and improvement for the guardhouse and entrance area of Cocoplum area.

Mayor Slesnick: Do I have a motion?

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So moved.

Mayor Slesnick: Moved by Mr. Kerdyk, is there a second on this one? Chip? OK, Chip seconds it.

Commissioner Withers: I was just looking at your tie. Who do you have on it? Why doesn't the camera look at that thing, who is that on there?

Mr. Serola: That's....I don't know.

City Attorney Hernandez: It's a mighty fine looking tie.

Mayor Slesnick: That's Commissioner Cabrera bicycling.

Commissioner Withers: Here we go; here we go, let's see what it looks like...

Mayor Slesnick: Ralph, he wore this tie especially for you.

Mr. Serola: I wore this especially for Ralph because I never had a chance to speak to him.

Mayor Slesnick: For those of you who don't know, Commissioner Cabrera is a cyclist by avocation. Please go ahead.

Mr. Serola: Anyway, why are we doing this? Since the formation and installation of the gates, my association has funded the cost to maintain, renovate, and secure the personnel with voluntary contributions from the neighbors that are not part of a mandatory association. Unfortunately this cannot be looked upon to continue as a voluntary contribution, so we are asking the City to establish a taxing district for this improvement area to tax all property owners within this -- that use the gates, and reside within there. This will equitably distribute the cost amongst all people that benefit from this entrance feature. That's it.

Commissioner Withers: There are four organizations or five in there now?- the marina?

Mr. Serola: We have....

Commissioner Withers: You are including the marina folks as part of this also?

Mr. Serola: Yes. The Cocoplum Homeowners Association Phase I, which is a voluntary association, consisting of approximately one hundred and fifty-five homes; there is Phase II, which I'm the president of, consisting of three hundred and three lots; there is a marina which is approximately seventy-five, and there are a number of homes on Cocoplum Road that may or may not be a part of Phase I. I have with me today the esteemed John Blake, who is president of the Voluntary Association in Phase I, who is also in favor of this. I have with me Mr. Steve Helfman who lives in Cocoplum on Cocoplum Road, is one of those series of homes that may or may not belong to the Phase I Association, and is also in favor. We do have an overwhelming majority of fifty-one percent (51%) plus, just with my association.

Commissioner Withers: So you are going....has the marina been assessed in the past?

Mr. Serola: The marina has never been assessed. According to the County, since they benefit from this they will also be assessed. I'm not sure how they will pro-rata.

Commissioner Withers: That was my next question. If you own a home and a slip, you pay for both?

Mr. Serola: Evidently you would. But I don't think according to our initial talks that the marina slips will be assessed quite the same as a lot, however the County has a formula for doing this, which I have not gotten yet.

Commissioner Withers: Alright.

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Helfman did you stand to be recognized.

Mr. Helfman: We come here jointly, the Phase I and Phase II homeowners; and the reason we are here is because our guardhouse is in need of improvement; and we are asking you to begin the process of assessing us, all of us, for the cost of improving the right-of-way, the signage and the guardhouse, that's why we are here. You have a special assessment mechanism; and we are asking you to please begin that process...

Mayor Slesnick: What's the process?

Mr. Helfman: Your staff outlined it fairly...

Mayor Slesnick: I would like it on the record because people are watching us make this decision. If you could just quickly – I don't mean every detail, but where does it go from here? When we vote today, where does it go from here?

Mr. Helfman: Your staff will prepare a detailed analysis of the cost of the improvements. They will notice everybody in the community for a hearing as to the cost; there ultimately will be a vote of those people who will be assessed and the community will decide whether or not they want to pay for the cost of the....

Mayor Slesnick: That's what I wanted on the record. Our vote leads the way to meetings and a vote.

Mr. Helfman: You simply allow us to impose....

Mayor Slesnick: We are not imposing a....

Mr. Helfman: Exactly. You are not imposing any assessment.

City Manager Brown: Mr. Mayor, this vote does not order the district, it only begins the process.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you.

Mr. Helfman: And by the way, we continue to fund at our own cost the operation, this is simply for upgrading to the improvement district.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you.

Mr. Halfman: Thank you.

Mayor Slesnick: Any other discussion?

Commissioner Withers: I'm just concerned about notification of the marina.

Mayor Slesnick: They will be notified for the meetings, for the vote, for the....right?

Mr. Halfman:[Inaudible – off mike]....who is the third association within the community.

Mayor Slesnick: Ms. Jimenez.

Assistant City Manager Jimenez: Mr. Mayor, just for the record, I'd like to just state that what we are following is....

Mayor Slesnick: For those of you watching, this is Maria Jimenez or Assistant City Manager.

Assistant City Manager Jimenez: Thank you Mr. Mayor. We are following the City Code Article 2, which is entitled "The Local Improvement Act", which authorizes the City to make the local improvements and provide the cost to be paid by the benefiting property owners. I wanted to state that for the record. As far as the notice is – as far as part of establishing the ordering of the district which will take place at the next Commission meeting, we will be describing the improvements those that would be assessed, and the cost of the estimates, and to answer the Commissioner's question, we will be notifying all those that would be assessed as part of the process.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you, Ms. Jimenez. Chip, you OK.

Commissioner Withers: Yes.

Mayor Slesnick: We have a motion and a second; any further discussion. Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Cabrera: Yes

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes

Commissioner Withers: Yes

Mayor Slesnick: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mr. Halfman: Thank you very much.

Mayor Slesnick: Thank you all.

[End: 10:04:43 a.m.]