

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-3
March 26, 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
Police Chief, Ed Hudak
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-3 [4:52:11 p.m.]

A discussion regarding a potential memorial plaque on the traffic circle located near St. Augustine Church in memory of Monsignor Tomas Marin. (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago).

Commissioner Lago: The next item is G-3. Simple item I brought up before for your consideration. I was going to write a memo, but I never got to it this week or the last few days. What we'd like to do is see if we can put a very simple plaque, not rename the street. I already talked to UM, that was a concern of theirs. It would be continued to be called Miller Drive. Just a simple plaque in dedication to Monsignor Tomas Marin.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Where do you want to put it?

Commissioner Lago: Just on the circle, very small, something maybe less than a foot.

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Vice Mayor Quesada: You say you want to put it around St. Augustine.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Where the tree is.

Commissioner Lago: He was a lawyer and a doctor, and he gave it all up to serve the Catholic Church. So, if you have any concerns, I just wanted to hear what your opinions were.

Commissioner Mena: My only concern is that we have some sort of process for this, just cause I'm, frankly I don't know this gentleman, I'm sure he was wonderful, but I have no idea how to evaluate this, unless somebody's gone through some sort of process.

Commissioner Keon: That was Commissioner Keon's concern. If you'd like to learn a little bit more about it, you are more than willing to read about it, it's a little simple plaque. I'm not building a monument on behalf of the gentleman, but if you have concerns you don't have to take it forward.

Commissioner Mena: We don't have to set a precedent if...

City Attorney Ramos: I think establishing a policy would be good to make it that we are neutral and inclusive of everybody who fits a certain set of objective criteria, which we just don't happen to have right now.

Vice Mayor Quesada: We do have a process, while we dealt with it with Cepero Park and also Betsy Adams, Garden Club Park, I dealt with that.

Commissioner Mena: What was the process there?

Vice Mayor Quesada: It goes to a committee; I forget exactly if its, I don't know if it's the Property Advisory or Landscape Board.

Commissioner Keon: Goes to Dona Spain to...

Vice Mayor Quesada: So, it goes through that Board. Is the person deceased or...?

Commissioner Lago: He died. He died last year.

Vice Mayor Quesada: So, it's a quicker process that way.

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City Attorney Ramos: So that process is for parks specifically, not for streets or circles.

Preservation Officer Spain: And it goes to the different departments and certainly the boards.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Except we are dealing with parks, is putting a plaque.

Commissioner Lago: A simple plaque.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I already have seen and think about when we dedicate like a bench.

Preservation Officer Spain: I don't think there is, but we certainly could come back with one, it's pretty simple.

Commissioner Lago: For example, on the bridge Alfonso Avenue, there is a plaque right next to the sidewalk for an individual that I forgot his or her name, they served, and I think it was the Iraq war, and they have a plaque there with a few little American flags.

Preservation Officer Spain: A plaque on the ground.

Commissioner Lago: The ground.

Preservation Officer Spain: I think that was removed by the City, I believe.

Commissioner Lago: I saw it like a few weeks ago.

Preservation Officer Spain: Did you?

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Preservation Officer Spain: I'm not sure.

Commissioner Lago: It was a small plaque.

City Attorney Ramos: The concern is without a set of objective criteria, we can't pick and chose among different religions, among different groups. So, I think it can be done, we just need a set of objective criteria, that I would recommend legally.

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Commissioner Mena: My concern is that tomorrow it would be somebody else on another traffic circle and we should have a process so that we can handle that properly.

City Attorney Ramos: Similar maybe to the parks process for streets.

Commissioner Lago: I don't want to get too much in the weeds here. Something really, really simple for a person who really did a good job serving.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Just go through the process that's it. I say absolutely yes, that's it.

City Attorney Ramos: But would you like us to bring a policy back?

Commissioner Keon: I don't want streets renamed, I don't want parks renamed, I don't want circles named. I think if you would like to put something that honors someone that has served that community very well and it's a simple plaque somewhere, I don't have any problem with that. I don't want all the renaming of streets for people and parks for people and whatever.

Commissioner Lago: I think the only time we rename a street or a park since I've been here in five years was when we renamed the park for Bill Kerdyk.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Commissioner Lago: That I'm aware of. Its not like we are doing this on a weekly occurrence.

Commissioner Keon: No.

Commissioner Lago: So again, I don't want to make a big deal about it. I just want to bring it up.

Preservation Officer Spain: We've never renamed a street in Coral Gables. The policy specifically prohibits that.

Commissioner Lago: Yes. So, I just want to be careful when we say things like that, because then people start calling us and say, hey listen, are you renaming streets. I didn't even know we hadn't renamed one. So, the point is, we named a park in five years, in six years we named one park that I know, and it was Bill Kerdyk Park, Family Park, excuse me.

Chief Hudak: Only as institutional knowledge. The Commission has said no to the naming of streets for the nine officers that were killed in the line of duty in Coral Gables and I know the retirees have approached me about coming up with an insert.

Commissioner Lago: Who said no?

Chief Hudak: The Commission – it wasn't because of the policy...

Commissioner Lago: When did we say no? Did this Commission say no?

Chief Hudak: No, no, no. A Commission body.

Commissioner Lago: I want to ask – I want to ask because I want to be clear, its being recorded. How did you not respond back and graciously name something on behalf of those men and women who have fallen in the line of duty.

Chief Hudak: To what Ms. Spain was saying is, I believe there was a policy, just give us a chance to look at what it is, because we wanted to put up, I see we, the police department wanted to sponsor or put up curb stones where the officers were actually killed, and we were told at the time because of the standing policy, so to a point we can clarify it, because...

Commissioner Lago: If you notice, Chief, and this is something that I wanted to mention to my colleagues, I think we have gone off the tracks here in reference to my point. There are people who have little placards put all throughout the City because they were involved in some sort of dui accident, horrific accidents and their life was taken and these little placards. They put bears and they put...

Chief Hudak: State statute.

City Attorney Ramos: There is a state statute that has a certain requirement.

Commissioner Lago: But if you go up...on Alhambra, excuse me, on San Amaro on the right-hand side, see one right there.

Chief Hudak: Correct.

Commissioner Lago: And again, you see them here and there; I don't want to get into the weeds on this issue. This is a simple issue I wanted to bring up, if you don't want to name it after this

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individual or you want to find a mechanism that's in place, I don't have a problem waiting till them. But if you tell me that you've brought it before the Commission to rename a park or a street in reference to nine fallen heroes who served this community and passed in the line of duty, I'm 100 percent behind it.

Chief Hudak: I actually have all that paperwork from way back, from a long time ago...City Attorney, the signs that you are talking about are by statute on county roads, state roads.

Commissioner Lago: What I would like to do, is I'd like for you to bring it and if anybody would like to cosponsor it, I'll have it on the next Commission agenda, and we'll put it there.

City Attorney Ramos: Would you like to also look at a policy?

Commissioner Lago: And I don't have an issue renaming streets in regard to...

Commissioner Keon: I do.

Commissioner Lago:...I know you do and that's perfectly fine, that's why we are up here.

Commissioner Mena: Its hard for us to do, as opposed to the county, because its not like 16th Street slash Jose Conseco Street.

Commissioner Lago: Those little things...

Commissioner Mena: Its already a name, its already a proper name.

Preservation Officer Spain: That's why Kerdyk Senior was 37th.

Commissioner Lago: That's what I'm saying, it happens.

Commissioner Mena: Aren't we doing some sort of memorial at the new building?

Chief Hudak: We are doing – put some of the artwork...

Commissioner Mena: Not just the artwork, the placket of names.

Preservation Officer Spain: The placket with names that they have in the existing...

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Chief Hudak: That's going to go on the interior of the building. The idea of the artwork was as a memorial. The one to Commissioner Keon's point, what has not gotten to the Manager yet that a bunch of retirees have approached me about is actually creating an insert inside our current curve markings that would memorialize where the officers were actually killed. Personally I like the idea...where you are not naming – and some of the issues that came up in the conversation many years ago was, people didn't want to be reminded of what happened on that corner that still live there, and in deference to some of them to memorialize about that on a regular basis. All of our current officers do have street names out in the county. Sergeant Terrinoni was killed at Dadeland in 1980, I believe it was and his name is up there. Stathers is up there. So the county has recognized through the PBA all of our officers at that time, and this is what Dona was talking about is, we had an issue here where they didn't want to go along with that, and that's the only placket that I'm aware of in the City is at Alhambra and Douglas which memorializes Cyril Guest who was killed in that.

Commissioner Lago: Let me give you another street. I heard from Mr. Reynolds from MPI in reference to the Gables Station project that there is a street that needs naming and we were talking back and forth about an opportunity to an appropriate name for that street. I couldn't come up with one.

Vice Mayor Quesada: A new created street.

Commissioner Lago: A new created street. So maybe we can reach out to him and say, we could have something in the line of one of these fallen heroes who served our community. Just give me an idea.

Preservation Officer Spain: I just want to say one more thing about plaques. We do have plaques for people in the City. We have one for Frank Button, we have one for George Merrick. There are large plaques with information about the person, so that we do have a process for.

City Attorney Ramos: Dona we'll work with you on that to come up with a policy for this kind of thing. We'll bring it back in May.

[End: 5:01:44 p.m.]