

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-9
June 2, 2026
Public Safety Building, CMR
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Planning and Zoning Director, Jennifer Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Sylvia King, Attorney, University Green Neighbors Assoc.
Lino Fernandez
Ivan Elizade
Gina Davis
Lynn Guarch-Pardo
William Rivenbark
Jose Val Cohen
Rose Bauer
Mary Powell
Barry Golden
Jackson Holmes

Agenda Item E-9 [Start: 2:20 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending Ordinance No. 1952, as amended,
which changed the zoning on Lots 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 Block 120 and

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*Agenda Item E-9 – Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 1952, as amended, which changed the zoning on
Lots 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 Block 120 and Lots 1 thru 5, Block 131 – 520 University Drive*

Lots 1 thru 5, Block 131, Country Club Section 6, (430, 440, 450, and 520 University Drive), Coral Gables, Florida, to remove certain conditions of approval for Lots 1 thru 5, Block 131 (520 University Drive): (1) that limit the use of the property to overflow parking, and (2), that revert the zoning of the property under certain circumstances to single-family zoning; all other conditions of approval contained in Ordinance No. 1952 shall remain in effect. (05 20 26 PZB recommended approval with recommendations, Vote: 5-2)

Mayor Lago: Item E-9, time to certain.

City Attorney Suarez: E-9 is an Ordinance of the City Commission amending Ordinance No. 1952, as amended, which changed the zoning on Lots 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 Block 120 and Lots 1 thru 5, Block 131, Country Club Section 6, (430, 440, 450, and 520 University Drive), Coral Gables, Florida, to remove certain conditions of approval for Lots 1 thru 5, Block 131 (520 University Drive): (1) that limit the use of the property to overflow parking, and (2), that revert the zoning of the property under certain circumstances to single -family zoning; all other conditions of approval contained in Ordinance No. 1952 shall remain in effect. This is a quasi-judicial matter. So, everyone who will be speaking today needs to be sworn in by the City Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Those who will be appearing on this item, please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you'll provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth? Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, does staff have a presentation?

Planning and Zoning Director Jennifer Garcia: I do, yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, would you like to proceed?

Planning and Zoning Director Jennifer Garcia: Okay, thanks. Jennifer Garcia, Planning and Zoning Director. So, there are two parcels back in 1972, the larger one to the north off of University Drive between Sarto and Camilo, and the second one being more shallow between Riviera and Cadima. These were zoned to be single-family. The Commission at the time then passed or adopted Ordinance number 1952, and that had four conditions. They reasoned the property to be from Single-Family to Special Use zoning with these four conditions of approval. The first one dealing with the condition of the property to be remained unpaved, but also as well used for off-street parking and to be preserved in a park-like manner with preservation of the trees as much as feasible. The second condition dealt with the intent of the Commission to allow these two properties that are formerly Single Family to be zoned to Special Use to be used for off-street overflow parking for the Youth Center and the Library. The third condition has two parts. The third condition dealt with the ingress and egress off of University Drive, that it would only be at the University Drive for these parking lots. And then when it was not being used for parking, it would be closed off for any public access as a fence or some kind of barrier. And the fourth

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condition deals with the reverter clause, that if there was some time that the Commission or the city deemed that the overflow parking was not necessary, that the property would be reverted back to Single Family zoning. So, we are looking just at the property that is known as 520 University Drive in between Riviera and Cadima. Let's see the property right there. So, the current future land use is public grounds and buildings, and the zoning is still Special Use zoning as it remains back from 1972. The proposed amendments are dealing with those four conditions of approvals that were part of that original ordinance to specify for only the property, again, dealing with 520 University Drive, that would still remain to be in a park-like manner with those trees and preservation of that landscape that's there. The second one would be amended to clarify that the intent of the Commission is to also have it as overflow parking or also function in a public park. And the third condition is amended, again, when it's used for temporary overload parking, that ingress or egress would still remain to be off of University Drive and striking through the requirements of having a means of closing of those properties when not in use for parking. And then number four would be removed completely, which is that reverter clause, reverting back to Single-Family zoning. So, the Planning and Zoning Board reviewed this last month on the 20th and recommend approval, a vote of 5-2. And here we are for first reading. The property letters into the property within 1,000 feet of the 520 University Drive property. Those letters were sent twice for Planning and Zoning Board and Commission for first reading. Property was posted once for a PZB meeting, both sites posted twice, and the advertisement was done once. Staff have determined this is consistent with the Comp Plan and it's encouraging more parks in our single-family and residential areas to be more accessible, and that we recommend approval. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Hi, Mayor. You're back.

Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am. Madam City Attorney, next steps?

City Attorney Suarez: I think you can hear public comment, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. First speaker, Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, 305-323-2154. I've gotten several people who have approached me, people that live where I live, and their comments are very interesting because most of them said that there's too many dog parks in that area where it's being proposed. Some people ask me, what about South Gables? We haven't, are there any dog parks in South Gables? Well, I know that some people are going to tell you that this is needed because, you know, dogs have to be able to socialize because maybe the dogs cannot be taken by car because they may get car sick, maybe because they don't have a backyard big enough for their dogs. But the bottom line is, you have a dog park at Salvadore Park, you have the world-famous Chewy Park under the Underline, at the Underline. There are other issues that concern me. I have a cat, and I don't have a cat park, but I don't need one because I do have a backyard. And besides, my cat lives inside my

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house. And he doesn't need to socialize with cats that are roaming around, possibly carrying diseases. And that's why my vet said, when I asked, would you take your dogs to a dog park? He said, absolutely not, because what guarantee do I have that they've been vaccinated or properly taken care of? That's from a vet. And then my last comment, I think, is that once again, here we opened the door. We removed the restriction from one property, but guess what? Once you do that, all the people can come back and say, wait a second, there are other purposes there that we can do something else. And eventually what the intent of that plan was not to do anything unless parking, because parking is only several times a year, okay? And the people can use those properties for, it's a park, but it's not encumbered with benches and other things that we put on parks, okay. So, to me, this is a waste of everybody's time. It's a waste of city's money. And once again, if you are trying to tell the most to do what they need to do.

City Clerk Urquia: Sylvia King.

Sylvia King: Sylvia King, 3617 Harlana Street. I am an attorney assisting in the University Green case against the city. Two things. First, we filed an amended complaint yesterday. We maintain the proposed amendments are illegal spot zoning. We're being treated differently than the 400 Block University residents. Additionally, there was another Sunshine Law violation at the May 20 board hearing. Another speaker will address this. We incorporate without waiver all of our lack of notice and improper procedure arguments from the zoning hearing and our new complaint. Separately, we serve discovery on the city. The Commission shouldn't decide anything until we get answers to the discovery and until the lawsuit is resolved. Second, with all due respect, the Vice Mayor should abstain from voting on this issue. She is a central figure in our lawsuit, and she is too personally invested in a dog park at this location to be impartial. Members of our association who live directly on the triangle say that in 2024, Vice Mayor Anderson personally contacted them about the dog park. She heard their opposition and promised the city wouldn't go forward without their support. A year later at the November 2025 Commission meeting, the Vice Mayor didn't disclose those contacts. She said her project quote is for the neighbors, not mentioning that the immediate neighbors were opposed. She said she found 520 University and made a rough dog park sketch. This was in her words, her handiwork. She said, there's been a lot of discussion between me and individuals that are willing to contribute towards this. But at the January 13th Commission meeting, confronted with public opposition, her story changed. We went from this is my handiwork to in her words, this was not led by me. And she chastised the association saying quote, none of you came to provide input. In fact, our members were some of the first to provide input to her and it was a firm no. The Vice Mayor continued to make promises. At the Zoning Board meeting, I met a resident who signed our petition against this dog park. He was there to make sure the reverter clause was not removed from the 400 University Block by his hundred-year-old home. Jennifer Garcia from Zoning came over to assure him that the reverter would not be removed for him. He explained that the Vice Mayor personally assured him the Bark Park would not be placed next to him. This is what we're talking about when we say the amendments are illegal spot zoning. This is

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a quasi-judicial action. We are entitled to an impartial decision maker. Respectfully, the record shows the Vice Mayor is biased on this matter and we move to recuse her. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Lino Fernandez.

Sylvia King: Can I submit this to the Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you, ma'am.

Mayor Lago: Excuse me, if I may, just out of respect for everyone who's here. Let's make sure that we keep all the comments towards the Commission and that we don't speak out of turn and speak from the gallery, okay? Thank you very much from the gallery, I apologize. Thank you. Yes sir.

Lino Fernandez: Good afternoon commissioners. My name is Lino Fernandez. I'm a member of the University Green Neighbors Association. I live at 415 Cadima Avenue, and I would like to discuss the January 13th City Commission meeting minutes in relation to today's item. Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Fernandez, when I raise these points, I'm not directing them to you. The minutes show that you advocated for a fair and transparent process. You listened to our concerns and encouraged your colleagues to listen to the residents and start over. At that meeting, our attorney told you, and you can see on page four of the transcripts that the city could not build a dog park at 520 University Drive for several reasons, including the zoning on the property, which is S use with conditions would not allow it. Those conditions per ordinance 1952 require the property be used only for overflow parking. That property be maintained in a park-like condition that ingress and egress occur only from University Drive and that if overflow parking was not needed in the future, the property would revert back to single family zoning. Today's item proves ordinance 1952 remains in effect and that you cannot build a dog park on the property without changing that ordinance. When our members told you we received no notice of the November 18th regarding a proposed dog park at 520 University, immediately abutting three single family homes in our neighborhood, we were told we should have read the agenda and that no notice was required. Suarez on page 20, Lara on 21. You also told us we were not excluded from the process. And that was Mr. Lara on 21, Mr. Lago on page 22. Today's item with property postings, mailings within a thousand feet and legal announcements proved that a November 18th item and accompany resolution were not correct. Mr. Mayor, you asked staff to look at Salvadore Dog Park and Blue Road Open Space as existing pieces of land that were changed on page 23. I'm not sure if you were briefed, but Blue Road was a very different process for two reasons. It had a neighborhood engagement process, unlike ours and the two properties were park and open space, unlike ours, page 23. We were also told that this property was already a park, and no notice was needed to transition the park to another park use. That was Mr. Iglesias 20, Lara 20 and 21 and 24. Today's draft amendments prove 520 University Drive is not already a park and your process was incorrect. When we said a bark park would negatively affect our quality of life and disrupt the

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fragile ecosystems, we were told the decision has been made, but we can help design it. Mr. Lara on 19 and on 27. We don't want a dog park if we were going to design a dog park. It would be in the neighborhood that wanted it. It would be consistent with Miami-Dade and City of Coral Gables codes. And it wouldn't include plants and trees that are unsafe for dogs if ingested. When one of our members raised serious and specific issues with the November petition submitted in support of off-leash dog parks, you allowed the three-year-old Catalonia Dog Park signatures to be added to increase the amount of residents in support of the proposed dog park. That was Powell on page 10 and 16, Anderson 15 and 17, Lago on 16, and on page 30. Commissioner Castro asked the City Attorney to develop a standardized park notification and petition process, page 25 and 26. It's been five months. We look forward to seeing the results or at least a working draft. Please also distinguish between a passive park and active recreation use in your approach. There are several sections in the January 13 minutes where Mayor Lago, Commissioner Lara, and Vice Mayor Anderson said you do not want to pit residents against each other, but this failed process has ignited that conflict. In addition, one of you reached out to some of the people that signed our petition to get them to reconsider. Commissioner Lara, you said this November 18 vote was a lawful vote, page 27, but today's vote item proves otherwise. Whether you were given inaccurate information from staff, not advised of the behind-the-scenes dealings, or it just didn't matter, I don't know. But what I do want to know is how are you going to correct this? And it's not by racing this item through because the litigation, as the board attorney advised, the Planning and Zoning Board. Thank you for your time.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Ivan Elizade. Hello.

Ivan Elizade: My name is Ivan Elizade. I'm a member of the University Green Neighborhoods Association. I live at 535 Bird Road. I would like to speak about the Coral Gables Public Library and give you statistics that make clear why Ordinance 1952 should not be amended. To best understand why Coral Gables Public Library needs to be able to have access to overflow parking in the lot, you need only look at their current door counts, special events, and countywide early voting attendance. You may recall that Coral Gables Public Library underwent an extensive renovation program at a county cost of \$6.8 million. The building received a new roof, new hurricane impact windows, bathrooms, air conditioning equipment, and other improvements. You can now plug into your chair for data and technical hookup rather than scouring for an outlet. New computers and other technical equipment enhancements are also in place, including outdoor Wi-Fi for the public. In February of this year, one of our members emailed the Miami-Dade Public Library system with a series of questions regarding attendance at the Coral Gables branch. They received a timely and throughout response from the public records custodian for the Miami-Dade Public Library system. Here's what we learned. The Coral Gables Branch Library averages 30 to 40 programs per month, which programming related attendance estimated between 1,000 and

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1,250 per month. That's 12,000 to 15,000 per year. Currently for fiscal years 25 and 26, the door count averages are approximately 26,000 visits per month. That's 312,000 visitors per year, the third highest among all the 50 branches. Last year, fiscal year 24 and 25, the Coral Gables Branch averaged approximately 31,000 visits per month or 372,000 for the year. The second most visited branch in terms of door count surpassed only by the main library in downtown Miami. From 2018 to 2024, countywide early voting at the Coral Gables Branch Library ranged from 16,000 to 25,000 participants. That's a large number of voters in a concentrated two-week period for the Primary and General Election. With Governor, U.S. Senator, U.S. House of Representatives and many other state positions, in addition now to Coral Gables, the number will again be high for the two-week periods, Primary and General. Throughout all years, the Coral Gables branch has constantly ranked among the top five early voting locations in Miami-Dade County, where everybody is coming through in or near Coral Gables to cast their ballots. A door count of 372,000 annually, 15,000 special event attendees yearly and 25,000 voters during early voting period, it's easy to see why the ability to have overflow parking in the lot must remain. Taking away the overflow parking at 520 University makes no sense. Simply, the numbers do not add up.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Gina Davis.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Gina Davis: Good afternoon. I am Gina Davis, and I speak in opposition to the proposed zoning change. I am a member of the University Green Neighbors Association. I live at 3710 Harlano Street, which I have owned since 2004. I bought my first home in Coral Gables in 1973. And over the years, I have also owned homes on Columbus, Mariana, Andalusia and Anderson. I tell you this to let you know that I have experienced neighborhood notification on numerous past occasions. Never did I think that this city would undertake to build a dog park half a block from my home without notification. I was further surprised that the Commission decided not to remedy this original error. I do not see the need for another dog park with artificial turf and fences. My dog, Grace and I are happy to walk through nature as it has existed on the lots in question for many years. Grace and I are documented doing just that use of the area in the Gables Gazette. They run that photo every time they have something to say about the activity on this issue. I see this as an issue wherein our city government has steamrolled over the residents of this neighborhood. If you think that this is not your issue because you do not live close by, then I share with you the following from Pastor Martin Neal Meier. First, they came for the communists, and I did not speak out because I was not a communist. Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. But then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

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Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Lynn Guarch-Pardo.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Lynn Guarch-Pardo: Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Guarch-Pardo. I live at 421 Cadima Avenue where I've lived for the past 36 years. Other residents are joining in our fight. A new citywide petition is circulating, and we hope you will sign it. We've been contacted by Coral Gables residents that live outside our neighborhood who want to sign our petition in opposition to the proposed dog park at 520 University Drive. So, we drafted an expanded petition which is being circulated. It is only for Gables residents 18 and over who did not sign our neighborhood petition. You can email universitygreencg@gmail.com for a copy if you would like to read it, to sign it. Please allow me to read it. Opposition to proposed dog park at 520 University Drive next to single family homes. Honorable Mayor and members of the Coral Gables City Commission. We stand with our friends and neighbors in the University Green Neighbors Association in opposition to the proposed off-leash bark park at 520 University Drive in front of the Coral Gables Library and directly adjacent to single family homes. Our objections include the following. The neighborhood was never consulted in using the passive green space in this quiet single-family neighborhood for a large bark park exclusively for dogs and their owners. Yet three Commissioners voted for it anyway. The neighborhood has repeatedly asked the City Commission and city staff to stop the process. A 40,000 square foot dog park would bring significant noise, persistent barking, early mornings and late nights, increased traffic and parking congestion, sanitation and odor issues, safety concerns for children, elderly and pets would disrupt the fragile ecosystem and potentially decrease property values, especially for those homes closest to the site. The proposed project is not in compliance with Coral Gables or Miami-Dade County codes. No traffic study or parking study has been done to measure the impacts of this large dog park on the Coral Gables Library, the Coral Gables Youth Center and the single-family neighborhood, nor has any comprehensive dog park master plan been developed. University Drive is a busy east-west corridor for commuters and buses, excuse me, and a major access point for fire rescue transporting patients to Doctor's hospital emergency room. The Library and the Youth Center are already short on parking, and a dog park would make it worse. The Coral Gables Library is the second or third busiest in the 50-branch system with an annual door count of 372,000 patrons, 15,000 special event attendees and 25,000 voters during early voting periods. The Youth Center with year-round playing fields, tournaments, theater performances, classes and rentals also brings cars, school buses, traffic and energy daily. The passive green space serves as a needed buffer while also providing the library with occasional overflow parking during the hyper peak times. The city has no operational plan, no enforcement procedures, no capital program and no maintenance dollars identified for the project. If another dog park is needed, please conduct the appropriate studies and community engagement to identify a neighborhood that would welcome a dog park while ensuring it would

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be consistent with all city and county codes and regulations. Mr. City Clerk, we would like to turn in 36 additional signatures in opposition to the proposed 520 University Drive dog park. More are on their way, including 60 new ones that we will submit after verification. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: William Rivenbark.

William Rivenbark: Good afternoon. My name is Bill Rivenbark. I live at 3616 Harlano Street. I am a member of the University Green Neighbors Association. Our house is 125 feet away from the proposed dog park. I walked the neighborhood at least three times a day with an amazing rescue dog. I know our neighbors, I know our dogs, I know the library and I know that we do not want a dog park at 520 University. I cannot tell you how many times we were told that the property was already zoned as a park and that the city could transition it to another park without use of consulting the neighborhood. Commissioner Lara said it, the City Manager said it, Commissioner Anderson said it, the Assistant Manager said it, and the Parks Director said it to us twice in person while walking the property. We told you that it was not zoned as a park, and you dismissed us. You also told us that this was not a park, if it was not a park, that we would have neighborhood meetings to discuss what type of a park the neighbors would like. Today's item shows that it is not a park at present. The draft ordinance attempts to make it one. So, I'd like to ask, when do the neighborhood meetings begin? Again, a prior gentleman already gave very valuable statistics regarding the library, so I will not repeat those. However, did you look at your staff's parking and traffic study memo? Only one sentence on elections was included in that, as well as with other high-volume events. The report falsely and recklessly concluded that no overflow parking is needed. Your staff did not reach out to the library or to the Supervisor of Elections to get details on ballots cast, especially during the early elections. If you did, you would know that 25,000 Miami-Dade and Coral Gables voters used the Coral Gables Branch Library in 2024 for the Primaries and General Election. That's a lot of cars in a two-week period. If you would have taken time to ask, you would have learned that special events parking in the grass area of 520 University is absolutely essential. Where, pray tell, does your staff tell you that the cars would be parked otherwise? It would probably be in our neighborhood. When we came to you on January 13th and said we didn't know about this until after you had voted on it, that no one from the city came to our street, no mailers were sent, we learned after the fact that there was an item buried in the agenda two or three days before the Commission. We were and remain angry and disappointed in our city government. At the meeting, Mayor Lago said, but if you told me there was a glitch in the matrix in regard to the process that we didn't follow the rules and someone was disenfranchised, I would say to myself, okay, we've got to fix this. We've got to back this out. Mayor Lago, this item proves that there was a glitch in the process that the city did not follow the rules and someone, our neighborhood, was disenfranchised. We're holding you to your word, sir. You've got to fix this. You've got to back this out. Thank you for your time.

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City Clerk Urquia: Jose Val Cohen.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Jose Val Cohen: Afternoon. My name is Jose Val. I'm a member of the University Green Neighbors Association and I live at 520 Cadima Avenue. I ask the City Commission to remand this item back to the Planning and Zoning Board due to improper advertising and due influence by the board attorney and incomplete staff report and the failure of staff to honor the conditions associated with the board recommendations. The city must have been very confident the item will move forward since the notices for today's meeting were mailed even before the Planning and Zoning Board started. Item E-2 of the Planning and Zoning Board originally related to 430, 440, 450 and 520 University Drive, which share the same zoning, the same governing ordinance, Ordinance 1952, and identical conditions. Without explanation, the proposed ordinance title was administratively revised to relate only to 520 University Drive. Yet the board attorney read the unchanged title listing all four properties into the record and CGTV did the same through the televised presentation. And due influence by the board attorney, certain members of the Planning and Zoning Board wanted to defer a recommendation until the litigation had been concluded, and a parking study and traffic study were provided to the board. The board attorney told the board with regard to the litigation, I think the city is looking to resolve this issue prior to the litigation, number one. He continued, number two, I understand there's a certain urgency of the item getting to the Commission. If you all feel that there should be a parking study and a traffic study, I think that could be included in any motion to approve or motion to deny. Acting as a concern about possible ex-parte communication, acting as a quasi-judicial board on matters related to zoning. Similar when the zoning commission hears a zoning item. Board members are required to disclose ex-parte communication. Only one board member disclosed they had visited the site. He lives in the neighborhood but had not spoken to his neighbors on item E-2 and he affirmed he could consider the item with full objectivity. Based on comments from some of the board members, it appears one or more may have failed in disclosed ex-parte communication. Incomplete and inaccurate staff report. No information was provided on parking. The board was not advised the future land use will need to be changed. And it was unclear how the property could be a fence 40,000 square foot dog park while continuing to provide overflow parking as suggested in the staff report. The report stated that amendments will allow the property to function as public park space. Thereby increasing the availability of recreational and open space amenities within the residential neighborhood. However, the park-like manner of 520 University Drive already provides passive green space, which is a direct preferred benefit of the neighborhood B5. The report stated the proposed amendment will not have an impact on development. The University Green Neighbors Association believes the impact of these amendments as envisioned will directly and negatively affect the quality of life for the residents of the neighborhood B5. The report stated the proposed amendments and the city stated intentions to build a dog park will not cause a substantial diminution in the property value or neighborhood character. University Green Association

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categorically disagrees. Homes that are close to the dog park, especially the three on the same residential block abutting across from it will be negatively impacted and mine. Staff comments stated the proposed amendments will be more compatible than surface parking lots, P6. This is neither a fair nor accurate deception. Currently the property operates as a passive public green space with occasional space event parking on the grass, much like Fairchild Tropical Gardens overflow lot during the festivals. The ability for cars to park for a short time on the grass keeps them from parking through the small neighborhood while supporting the library, cultural programming and early voting. Lastly, the condition to include a legitimate parking study and traffic study prior to the item being presented to the City Commission was not honored. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Rose Bauer.

Rose Bauer: Hello, my name is Rose Bauer. I live at 3716 Segovia Street, and I would like to speak about the dog parks and the property values. I grew up here and love the historic charm of the City Beautiful. I have a senior Australian Shepherd and a cat. I'm a member of the Gables Cat Network and I often feed our community cats to who have lived in the triangle for many years along with possums, raccoons and even a fox. It is a beautiful habitat for animals and people to equally enjoy. But today I want to speak about my profession. I am a successful real estate broker for 30 years with my firm, Rivera Real Estate, and I'm concerned for the impact a dog park would have on nearby homes and my neighborhood. Buying a home is a large investment. The green space is most certainly a grand amenity to any buyer when they purchased it. Today, it provides for overflow parking for the library. If the board approves a change, there is a big difference between this green space and a large dog park immediately abutting homes. Most Coral Gables homes have a yard because there are very limited zero lot lines. Buyers purchasing Coral Gables for the security. Dog parks create a security concern. The maintenance is very expensive or problems surface with trash and odor from the fake grass. These factors affect the value of the homes and reduces the ability to command top dollar for the seller. I question who are we providing this dog park for? The renters? They do not pay any of the high taxes that we do. Most of the new buildings sadly are not allowing pets. Yet approving a dog park takes the value away from the children and the adults that enjoy the walk in their neighborhood and play in the open green space. If this was really about the wellbeing of the dogs, the Miami-Dade Animal Shelter would not have 600 healthy dogs waiting to be adopted and horribly being euthanized daily for space. We live in Coral Gables in part because of the intrinsic value of the location and quality of life. Our taxes and properties have increased every year, but the property values for homes close to the proposed 40,000 square foot dog park will be negatively impacted. Please hear our voice. It is not wanted by the community. Thank you for your consideration.

City Clerk Urquia: Mary Powell.

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Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Mary Powell: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager, City Attorney. My name is Mary Powell, and I live at 3267 Riviera Drive. I was here last November when the Commission voted to move forward with the dog park at 520 University. I am back today to reaffirm that this community support has not wavered. Support for this dog park is broad, documented and citywide. I presented petition signatures to the Commission last November and that support has only grown. This is a city with a dog's issue of the Coral Gables Magazine where Commissioners lead group dog walks and encourage adoptions, where we hold doggy Halloween costume competitions and where we just welcomed the first doggy ATM. Coral Gables has made it clear that its residents and their pets are woven into the fabric of this community. This park is the infrastructure that matches that commitment. Since November, the city has done its homework. Public Works, Parking, Community Recreation and the City Clerk's office all reviewed the parking question and reached the same conclusion. 520 University is not needed for overflow parking. The PZB reviewed and proposed amendments to ordinance 1952 and recommended approval. Every protection for adjacent neighbors remains fully intact. Both the park-like character and the preservation of trees and foliage. I acknowledge that some neighbors disagree and they deserve respect, but I ask this Commission to consider what 520 University is today. City-owned land, zoned for public use, sitting largely unused. The city's own Comprehensive Plan calls for parks within a 10-minute walk of every resident. This site fulfills that commitment. An off-leash dog park is not simply a convenience. It is a place where neighbors meet, where families gather and where the social fabric of a community is sewn together. This effort has followed the proper process. Residents engaged. Petitions were submitted on both sides. Public comments were given. The item was properly noticed, debated and approved by both the PZB and this Commission. By continuing your support today, you provide what this community depends on. Consistency, predictability and trust. Residents engaged in good faith and now reasonably expect the city to follow through. This dog park is a quality-of-life investment. It fulfills a clear planning commitment, and it reflects the will of a broad cross section of Coral Gables residents. What has grown since November is not just community support. It is the body of evidence behind this decision. Residents input, staff report and the PZB's recommendation. I respectfully ask this Commission to pass this ordinance on first reading and keep this project moving forward. I thank you for your time and your commitment to this community.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Barry Golden.

Barry Golden: Good afternoon. My name is Barry Golden. I am a member of the University Green Members Association or Neighborhood Association. I live at 3628 Harlano Street. I live five houses away from this proposed dog park. Before the city considers revising the ordinance, removing certain protections and conditions and considering additional uses, a comprehensive

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parking study and review should be undertaken. I think you need all the facts. If you're going to make an intelligent decision on parking and overflow in the area where I live and all these people right here live, I think you need all the facts. I'm not referring to the three-paragraph memo submitted by the staff that concluded no overflow parking was needed. I'm not sure where they intend to park the 25,000 Miami-Dade voters that choose our Coral Gables Public Library to cast their ballot in early voting for the Primaries in the November General Election. No formal current or future demand studies have been conducted. A member of the University Green Neighbors Association conducted an informal parking count between 5.30 and 6 p.m. and around the library during the first two weeks of February 2026. This included daily surveying the 48 space library lot, the 11 including two handicap parallel parking spaces in the circular drive in front of the University Drive entrance, the 20 angle parking spaces on the west side of Riviera and the five angle parking on the east side of Riviera and the 22 spaces in the swale of Segovia in front of the west entrance of the library. The Youth Center parking lot parallel to the University Drive and the Segovia North parking lot by the playing fields were also surveyed. On most days all parking spaces were exceeding capacity including those under or areas under the banyan trees marked "No Parking on University Drive." Depending on the programming of the library or the Youth Center, parking regularly exceeds capacity as drivers drove frantically around looking for a safe place to park. This makes the Coral Gables Library a prime candidate for special event style parking during certain large events. I have pictures that our association has taken and put into a, all the Commission can see, and I'll pass this out to the Clerk so everybody can see but these are some of the pictures of some of the overflow of parking during regular days. I was-- I drove down around that Cadima, down University by Riviera at 340 last Wednesday and took pictures and there were cars everywhere. Cars were parked right there in front of a sign that says, "No Parking." Why a traffic study is needed? The Planning and Zoning Board condition their May 20th recommendation on city staff conducting a legitimate traffic study before the recommendation is presented to the City Commission. Many of the board members would have preferred to defer a recommendation until they could review and consider findings. A short three paragraph staff memo stated that a traffic study is not required for any project with fewer than 50 vehicle trips. Carelessly or deliberately staff failed to mention that the city's Development Review Process Handbook under Definitions and our application requirements specifically states a development generating less than 50 new trips may require a limited traffic study to address special considerations. I think I'm almost out of time, but I have a dog, I walk that dog every day. I walk around the area on Cadima, the green space at 520 University. One of our members, Sarah Cortez, brought up at the zoning board meeting that walking that area with that green space has a very incredible mental effect on you that when you just walk around that area peacefully, I take for granted sometimes when I walk my dog and I don't have to walk by a dog park with a bunch of barking dogs and people yelling and screaming and this, that and the other. I don't have to worry about that because it's a nice peaceful walk. And so, I'm the ninth speaker against this dog park. I've heard one person, the previous

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Agenda Item E-9 – Ordinance amending Ordinance No. 1952, as amended, which changed the zoning on Lots 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 Block 120 and Lots 1 thru 5, Block 131 – 520 University Drive

speaker, one of the previous speakers speak for it, but I hope as a Commission that you're going to listen to all these people that are sitting right here that have been fighting this for six months. All those people that signed a petition back in November 2025, I don't see any of those people here. I saw one and that's all I saw. One person that's here. You know why? Because it doesn't affect them. You're not putting a dog park right in front of their house. You're not putting a dog park where Jose Val, when he walks out his door every day, he walks out not looking at a beautiful green space, he's looking at a dog park. These are the people that this dog park is going to affect, not those other 199 people that signed that petition. So, I ask you, please, as a Commissioner, listen to the people that voted you into office. Listen to the people that pay your salary. Listen to the people that it affects most, us. I live five houses away. I don't want a dog park. I love dogs. I've lived here for 20 years, but I'm not going to a dog park every day. Can I please hand this to the Clerk?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Barry Golden: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Jackson Holmes: So, I'm in on dog parks. And I have so much to say. So, I'm going to start on the upside. I was a taxi driver on the famous South Beach for the first 20 years after I got back to Miami. And I don't know if this is funny. I don't know how much time y'all have spent on South Beach, but what you see there, you go to the dog park on Washington Avenue and Second Street, and you see some of the most beautiful women in the world walking some of the most beautiful dogs in the world. And so how many of us know what a Blue Merle Collie is? Ask yourself, you know. That is the most beautiful dog in the world. And we got them in Coral Gables. And I made friends with a Blue Merle Collie. All right, now here's another rare dog. It's not that beautiful, but I love it anyways. How many know what a Kendo is? That's a Korean dog. How about a Rhodesian Ridgeback? And then somebody said they had an Australian Shepherd. That's the second most beautiful dog in the world. So, I did a brochure and I said, South Beach is an everyday international beauty contest. Laugh along with me here. For both women, it's a Miss Universe contest for women, and the dogs of the world contest for dogs. So, you get these beautiful women walking their beautiful dogs. It's unbelievable, right. Why would we not want a dog park? People say it's going to lower the property by, I don't know, maybe I love dogs too much. I plead guilty, all right. I don't see why anyone would ask Commissioner Anderson to disqualify or recuse herself. Oh, I'm a dog lover, therefore I can't vote on this. Okay, I'm guilty, I'm a dog lover. And I find it, to be honest with you, very depressing to think that so many people would turn out against dogs. Some people said, well, they're with the Green Initiative from the University of Miami, okay. So Coral Gables is a tree city, and Coral Gables should also be a dog city. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

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

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Mayor Lago: Okay. Before we move on to a little conversation amongst the Commission, I want to memorialize it because I know this will be heavily discussed in tomorrow's blogs via the Gables Gazette. First Amendment will be discussed. So, I want to put this on the record. There are two individuals that spoke in favor of the dog park. One stayed on time; the other one ran over by 54 seconds. Okay, it's fine. On the other side, we had over 13 and a half minutes of additional time that was granted. I wrote it down; Commissioner was watching as I wrote down every single time. It's perfectly fine. I know everybody's passionate. I want to give you as much time. I don't want this to be about neighbors versus neighbors or First Amendments that's repeated over and over and over on these blogs. Thank God I don't read the blogs. I just get people to send them to me, and I keep telling them, don't send it to me. Stop reading it. My point is this, we're voting on issues as elected officials based on what we believe is in the best interest of the city. The City of Coral Gables is a very special place. We're not Miami-Dade County. Not that Miami-Dade County is not a special place, but if you're familiar with politics in Miami-Dade County, and I won't take over 13 minutes don't worry, I'll be very brief. You have 13 elected officials and Miami-Dade County is carved up into districts. So, they only take care of their districts. We as elected officials here in the City Beautiful is responsible for the entire city, all the way from North Gables to South Gables, whether you own a dog or you don't own a dog, whether you live in an apartment or you live in a house, we have a responsibility for the entire city. Sometimes we vote on issues that maybe don't affect us. For example, my area is the University of Miami, where I live, and that area around St. Augustine, University of Miami, Riviera Country Club, Lenar Center, Doctors Hospital, that's my area, my neck of the woods. But I have to make decisions based on Fairchild Tropical Gardens or North Gables, Little Gables, right outside Little Gables and North Gables. But my point is that when we talk about these issues and I saw certain people mentioned, listen to your constituents, listen to your constituents. We have to vote based on what we believe is in the best interest of the city. Not personal issues, not whether, I don't even own a dog, okay, right. So, my point is that I don't want to be adversarial. I don't want to see people being adversarial. I know we're passionate about issues, but these are decisions that have to be made by this Commission moving forward, not a personal matter. I wanted to put that on the record. Even though I doubt that it will be covered in the blogs. I'll be attacked for being anti-First Amendment. So, would anybody like to kick this off with their personal comments? Madam Vice Mayor?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, I'll start by asking the city attorney. You received a request for my recusal. Have you evaluated that?

City Attorney Suarez: I have not evaluated that, but my understanding from what was explained during that request was they were asking for you to recuse because they claimed that you could not be impartial. And so that, as we've mentioned before, we've discussed here in this Commission before, the question of bias is one that each of you should evaluate whenever there's a quasi-judicial proceeding such as this one. And it's a determination for you to make if you're able to be fair and

impartial in consideration of the application based on the evidence, right, the competent substantial evidence. That's a determination for you to make.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm going to start with the following comments. Residents came to me and asked me to put on the agenda a dog park item. I said, "You gather the petition signatures, and I'll put it on the agenda. That's what happened in November. And that item on the agenda was to proceed with a design. It wasn't an approval for a dog park. It was a design because it's the same thing that happened with Salvadore Dog Park. A design was done first. Then resident input was sought. So, the statement that it was approved as a dog park in November was incorrect. A design needed to be done so public input could be had. So, I looked at the results of the public input. And I have an obligation to listen to those results. And those results indicated that 71% of the people that responded that live in Coral Gables want the dog park. Am I to ignore 71% of the residents that took the time to respond? That's not my habit. I'm listening to what the majority wants. So that's where I sit on this matter. I do think I can be fair and impartial. I will listen to the residents and provide what the residents are looking for. And I'll add one more thing. When I was first elected, this was one of the top priorities of residents that voted. And it continues to be one of the top priorities of residents that voted, second to traffic issues, safety issues, and things of that nature. And Mayor, I'd like to defer the rest of my comments to after hearing from my other colleagues.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. So first I would want to put on the record that I am a dog lover, that I foster dogs. I do the dog walk here in Coral Gables. I love dogs. But the truth here is that this is not a dog park argument. This is a process argument. From the beginning, I've stated that we needed to go ahead and start all over and give a fair chance to everyone. And I would support what the end result would be. This Commission decided not to follow through and not to support my legislation when presented, okay. Now, what do we have before us? What we have before us is very interesting because when I had my pre-agenda meeting, I was, wow, astonished with what I was reading. I don't think the city should be changing the rules of the game while the legality of the original action is actively being challenged right now. The other thing is, if the city believes it acted properly, then it should be willing to defend those actions based on the laws and ordinances that existed when the decision was made. The other thing is, if the city now feels compelled to remove the restrictions that have existed for over 50 years, that naturally raises questions of why those restrictions suddenly need to be removed while the matter is pending litigation. I have a statement here. Regardless of how anyone feels about the dog park itself, this property is currently the subject of active litigation. One of the central issues before the court is the meaning effect of the existing zoning conditions placed on this property decades ago. I do not believe it is appropriate for this Commission to amend or eliminate those conditions while litigation remains unsolved. If the city believes its actions were lawful, then it should not allow the court, then it should allow the court to evaluate those actions under the ordinances and restrictions that existed when the decision

was made. Now, out of respect to the judicial process, to the taxpayers funding this litigation, and to the residents who have brought these concerns forward, I move to decline any changes to the zoning conditions, and they should be deferred until the case has been resolved.

Mayor Lago: Are you making a motion?

Commissioner Castro: Yes, I moved.

Mayor Lago: Is there a second?

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Just give me one second. And we have a vote on the matter. We have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Fernandez: Normally we discuss things.

Mayor Lago: I know, but I want to get a vote. It's okay, you can wait a second. May I have a vote?

City Clerk Urquia: Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: While you're voting, you can go ahead and state whatever you need to state since the Mayor is running the agenda. He's not giving us time to discuss the motion. But once again, to clarify this motion, it is just to defer it until litigation is resolved. It's not to make any decisions moving forward. That's what the motion is. And my vote is yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez. So, there is a legal process in place. This Commission has acted in a way that has forced its residents to sue the city in order for things to be done the right way. And that's unfortunate. That residents have to go through the expense and the time. I mean, some of these people have been sitting here for a couple hours, taking time from their day in order to fight for their neighborhood because somebody from the City Commission has decided they're going to impose a dog park in this area. And if we're on the topic of dog parks, I drive past Salvadore Park four times a day. And if I've counted one dog in Salvadore dog run in the last three or four weeks, it's a lot. Because nobody uses it. And why do people not use it? Because it wasn't done right. The first complaint that you get from people to go to the dog run is it's the wrong material. It's sand. So, it's hurting the dogs. It's dirtying their cars when they try to get back in their cars. But some people here think that they're smarter than the process and they want to impose their way of doing things. And that's why we're here today. Because we're now trying to impose on our residents what we want to do with the property that clearly is not zoned for what the majority in this Commission wants done. So, what the Commission has decided to do is move forward with the plan and force

the residents to sue the city. And guess who's on the hook at the end of the day for that lawsuit? The residents of Coral Gables are having to pay for it. So, we love to talk about, we're spending money on this, we're spending money on that. Madam City Attorney, how much have we spent on this lawsuit so far, do you have that number?

City Attorney Suarez: I don't have it handy, sir, but I could look it up.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay, if you could provide that for me.

City Attorney Suarez: I could see if we can get that number.

Commissioner Fernandez: Perfect, I'd appreciate that. Because that's money that we're literally wasting. Because we didn't decide to just pause it, go back, and have the community meetings that were requested. And that would have saved us a lot of time and a lot of money. And I know it upsets you, Mr. Mayor, and that's why you're all jittery in your chair right now. You can't even control yourself. But the fact is, you decided to move forward with a process that was not the process that was laid out. Because this should have gone to the parks committee first. They should have made a recommendation. That didn't happen, it didn't happen until after the fact. Because the Commission decided to take it up. The residents who were against the project, who had been vocal that they did not want this project, were not notified that this was taking place during that Commission meeting. It was scheduled for a 6 p.m. time certain, last minute. The funny thing is the only people who were notified that this was taking place were the people who were going to be there in favor of this project. But let's not mince words here. There was definitely a plan in place, and it excluded the residents who live in that neighborhood. So yes, I believe we should defer, and I believe a process should be followed so it doesn't continue to cost the city in litigation because we've decided to go down this road.

City Clerk Urquia: Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: A question for either the City Attorney or City Manager. At the November hearing, the special set at six o'clock, was 520 University zoned at that time park?

City Attorney Suarez: The zoning is as it exists today, which is special use zoning, which does allow for a park use, but this ordinance number 1952 does have a restriction that limits the use to overflow parking.

Commissioner Lara: So it is, to put it differently, it's accurate that when I repeat it, that it was zoned for a park. That's an accurate statement with some restrictions on how it can be used as a park.

City Attorney Suarez: Right, and even the ordinance that zoned it Special Use said to be maintained in a park-like manner.

Commissioner Lara: Right, because if it was the case that it was not zoned for a park, or if it was that I said incorrectly that it was zoned as a park when it wasn't, I would think differently how to go forward. But it seems to me abundantly clear to me that that meeting was properly noticed back in November. And even though we all attended a memorial that day for a fallen officer who used to be a part of the Coral Gables Police Department, our meetings regularly go beyond six o'clock, seven o'clock, they've gone eight o'clock, I've been here till nine o'clock. I wish they were shorter, but we've done this on a regular basis. So, I don't believe that any- it should be countenanced or supported for a moment that because an item was specifically set for a six o'clock start time would have been outside the norm of when normal items are heard during a given day's agenda at a Commission meeting. So, I believe that we have covered all of the notice requirements. Community outreach has been adequately conducted. Mary Powell provided us then and repeated it again today that we had substantial number of residents as we are here serving the City of Coral Gables in support of a dog park. But we are not deciding, we weren't deciding then and we're not deciding today whether or not there's a dog park or what the design of a dog park is going to look like. We're deciding today whether we're going to amend the ordinance. So, with respect to your request, Commissioner, or deferral based on litigation, I'm quite confident that we did things appropriately, stand behind the city's position. I welcome always the residents' voices, challenges when appropriate. And I would think differently if the facts were different, but they're not, so I'm no.

City Clerk Urquia: Vice Mayor Anderson.

Vice Mayor Anderson: One of the things I learned in law school is with due process, you have to ask what processes do. The initial meeting wasn't a decision as to whether or not there was going to be a dog park. It was to create a design for residents to review. The process that happened thereafter is the process that's due. The lawsuit that was filed was filed prematurely because the process had just begun. And that's what we're doing here today, providing the process. The Planning and Zoning Board spoke in favor, 5-2. So no, I'm not in favor of deferring it. We need to proceed with the process because that's indeed the relief that was requested in court. I haven't looked at your amended complaint, and I'm not making a legal opinion on that, but I don't think delaying this benefits anybody.

City Clerk Urquia: Mayor Lago.

Mayor Lago: So, before I respond, you see me a little bit uneasy on my seat. I don't know why Ariel insists on bringing that up. It's because I did some heavy squats today at five in the morning, which I highly recommend that Ariel join me. So, with that being said, now that we've gotten to the ridiculousness that always results in these meetings, let me explain to you why I wanted to move quickly in regard to the motion that was made by Melissa Castro, Commissioner Chat GBT. So, my point is that, very simple, is that we have now become, we have grown accustomed here to circumventing people's ability here on the Commission with an immediate motion to do

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something. No, let's have everybody have conversation. Let's let everybody talk. Like I allowed all groups to talk. Shouldn't just make a motion to try to just chill all conversation. That's why I wanted to get that out of the way, and then we can have a conversation in an appropriate manner. So, one of the things that I have to correct my colleague Commissioner Lara on the record, which not correct him because he failed to mention it, was Madam City Attorney, what Commissioners were at that meeting, at that public meeting?

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor, I believe you were present. Vice Mayor Anderson was present, and Commissioner Lara was present.

Mayor Lago: Where was the rest of the Commission?

Commissioner Fernandez: You asking me?

Mayor Lago: No, no, I'm not asking you.

Commissioner Fernandez: You're asking.

Mayor Lago: I'm not asking you. So let me speak. I allow everybody to speak, to be respectful. That's all I'm asking. It's the only thing I'm asking. So, at the end of the day, so this is very simple. We are having a conversation, and we have a disagreement. It's perfectly fine. We don't have to always agree at the end of the day, but there's no need to get personal. Madam City Attorney, do you have the litigation costs? Because I'm intrigued to know what it is.

City Attorney Suarez: Yes, I do actually. So, what has been billed to the city since starting in March is a total of \$10,763.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, perfect. Thank you for that. Now, the Vice Mayor has worked diligently on this matter. Very clear in regard to what steps we're taking. What I want to see is us have a conversation on the merits, on the facts, so we can meet halfway and figure out a way that makes everybody happy. I'm a no, because I don't want to defer this. I want to address the issue here today in the Commission. That's our job, not to continue to kick the can down the curb. I'm a no. All right, so now getting back to the issue at hand. Okay, we have an item before us that needs to be addressed. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Moving forward on item E-9. Can we talk a little bit about your concerns, what you're hearing in the community? We've heard from some residents on both sides of the issue here. What do you think is important here? Because again, I've also, and I'm not an attorney, and I'd like to have our City Attorney chime in here, because you had Commissioner Castro mentioned, you have to respect the judicial process. You cannot move forward with any resolutions or ordinances. We have to respect the process. You're a City Attorney. Are we breaking some rules? Are we doing

something out of commonplace here? That we have to clarify these things, because these things will all make it into these very misleading blogs.

City Attorney Suarez: Happy to do so.

Mayor Lago: Will you give me a little bit of background on that as an attorney? Because I've never heard that in 13 years. We've moved forward with legislation in one form or another.

City Attorney Suarez: So, Mayor, the lawsuit is challenging, essentially the Commission's action in directing staff to move forward with development of a dog park at this location. As the Vice Mayor has mentioned here, and as we all know, that was a resolution directing staff to proceed with development. That did not definitively start construction of a dog park. There are lots of steps in the process, including one big one, which is funding for the dog park, which that resolution said that there would be private funding for the dog park. So, this is one of those necessary steps is addressing these restrictions in this ordinance. The lawsuit also complains about the fact that this ordinance hasn't been addressed, or this ordinance exists. So, this is a step in the process. This also approval of this ordinance also does not definitively mean that there'll be a dog park developed there. In fact, the ordinance is not about a dog park. It's removing a restriction. And as we understood from staff, staff's position is that there's no longer a need to restrict that use solely to overflow parking. But I do also want to point out that it does say that there may be overflow parking, is how staff is proposing that the ordinance be amended. So, I do not think that-

Mayor Lago: Are we doing anything illegal?

City Attorney Suarez: No.

Mayor Lago: Are we breaking the rules?

City Attorney Suarez: No.

Mayor Lago: Are we doing anything out of the norm?

City Attorney Suarez: To the contrary, sir. This is following the process. We started with the Planning and Zoning Board process, which is what has to happen when there's a change of zoning or an amendment to a zoning ordinance. So, there was notice for that hearing. There was notice, and we're going through the steps. There was notice for this hearing as well. And if I may, Mayor, I'd like to address one comment that was made about the mailers going out for this before P&Z had made their decision. This could move forward even if P&Z had recommended denial. So, I think staff was just moving forward through the process to timely get it on this agenda since we won't have another meeting until July.

Mayor Lago: And we've done that before. We've heard things out of turn. So, at the end of the day-

City Attorney Suarez: But sorry, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I know it's not out of turn.

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City Attorney Suarez: It's not out of turn.

Mayor Lago: I know what I'm saying, but I'm going even further. We've heard things out of turn. We're not even out of turn. So, the word litigation is used a lot of times to throw a big bucket of ice water onto things and say no. So, Madam Vice Mayor, will you kind of give us a little background and continue moving forward in regard to the intentions of this resolution and what we have here before us now that we've gotten away from the circus that usually when we try to derail things. Let's have a conversation. Let's talk about things that are important here and let's see how we can build some consensus.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, there's a few statements made about Salvadore Dog Park. And yes, it does get used. And I have regular conversations with the residents that live directly across the street from it who chose the sand substrate. In fact, they brought me a sample of exactly what they wanted. The first iteration that went in didn't meet their expectations. So, it was upgraded. But each site is different. And the design that staff proposed for a park in this area, which is not what we're voting on at the moment, had a small area that had AstroTurf for small dogs and the rest of it is grass. So, I'm going to share with you the discussions that I've had with the residents over at Salvadore Dog Park who are very happy with it. It's regularly cleaned and our staff takes very good care of it. There was a discussion regarding parking issues that if an issue arises that we could address it with the choice of the residents that were being impacted, whether it was residential parking permit signs or no parking permit, no parking signs. And it was indeed their choice. And they didn't want to do it right away because they wanted to assess how many people were visiting the park, because most of the people actually walk to the park. And that is the premise behind having these regional dog parks to walk to. I noticed that you're all calling it a bark park. That's not what it is. Dogs don't go to the park; they go there to run. And the reason for having regional parks where dogs can run is no different than the exercise that every single one of us needs to get every day. Walking alone is not going to do it. The conditions of approval for the Salvador Dog Park, and this might help give you some guidance, were vaccinated dogs only. You have to have a Miami-Dade County tag. We haven't had any problems at the Salvadore Dog Park. If it really becomes a problem where there's too many people coming, we can do residential access card zoning. But we can only do this a step at a time. Right now, we're at a stage of dealing with a zoning issue. That's all we're here for. So, I don't know if you have any additional comments on this.

Mayor Lago: No, I just wanted you to lay the groundwork.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I wanted to lay the groundwork.

Mayor Lago: And be very granular on that front, because again, there's a lot of things that are thrown out there. You have litigation, judicial process, we're not being fair, a lot of words that are used. And at the end of the day, people who are not attorneys like myself, people they see it as,

okay, well, hold on, we're circumventing a process. We're not following a process. We are following a process. It's gone through all the necessary steps. It's gone through the boards and we're doing things the right way. We may disagree, we may disagree, but at the end of the day, maybe we come together, we find a solution that makes everybody happy. But to say that we're not following a process is not correct. Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: Briefly, Mayor, I just want to address a couple of points that were made during public comments about this Commission not taking into consideration the individuals that have appeared here today. I haven't counted, but I would say the University Green Association, Neighborhood Association, I would say, has probably less than 10 people here. I could be wrong. But I remember a few years back, a packed, historic Coral Gables City Hall packed, packed with residents, in opposition to a resolution to fire Peter Iglesias as City Manager. Packed, resident after resident after resident voicing their strong opinions to not go forward with what Commissioner Fernandez, then Commissioner Menendez, and current Commissioner Castro voted the ouster of Peter Iglesias. One would say hypocritically that they're here to listen to the will of the people. That majority of the Commission then certainly did not. However, this majority of this Commission during the November hearing on this issue took into consideration an overwhelming majority of residents who signed the petition and listened to the residents who came before to give their opinions and their voices heard, which were all duly considered by the only three Commissioners that appeared at that meeting. So, I just want to address that we are fair, we are respectful, and we are collegial for those who have been identified as not being so today. I hear you, I heard you then in November, but I'm an individual who besides being Commissioner, I'm also an attorney, and I believe in the process. The process was followed. I can't please everyone, but we're not mob rule, we're not majority rule, we're representative, and we followed the process.

Mayor Lago: One last question, just for the record, the issue was mentioned and brought up, and Commissioner Lara brought up process again. I want to hear from the City Attorney. This is important. Was the appropriate process followed?

City Attorney Suarez: With respect to the- yeah, I mean I've-

Mayor Lago: Did we break the law?

City Attorney Suarez: I am not aware of any failure in process or any failure to follow process or any required due process, mailings, anything like that, sir, no. Again, I want to reiterate that initial resolution was a direction to staff to proceed with development of a dog park, but that began the design process, et cetera. It did not begin construction of a dog park. And so, there were other steps that have to take place. This is one of them. And we followed all the required process.

Mayor Lago: Just want to make sure because multiple individuals, I'm not a lawyer, multiple individuals have brought up, I have to lean on you, I have to lean on you and make sure that I'm very, very clear when you mentioned process and judicial oversight and the legal system here that

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we're circumventing on the process and that we're trampling over all of that. I want to make sure because that's what will be written later, especially in comments online.

City Attorney Suarez: But mayor, if I could just kind of bring this back, what's before you once again, I know it's been said before you are not approving a dog park. In fact, it is amending an ordinance that had certain restrictions when the zoning was changed back in the seventies. And that is a decision that you all should be making on the competence substantial evidence that you've heard today. And it does not dictate that whether there'll be a dog park. It would, if you all were to vote no today, it could perhaps halt that process. And that is something that, again, it's part of the process.

Mayor Lago: Again, I understand that. The reason why I bring it back and if the Clerk, I'm not going to have him do it now because we don't want to waste more time. But if you look back at multiple comments that were made by the individuals who are speaking from the public, they mentioned a failure to follow the process, a breakdown in the process. They quoted multiple members of the Commission saying it's a failed process, failed process. So, I want to be very clear when somebody says a failed process, I want to have our City Attorney who your job is not to agree with us. Your job is to protect the city and protect the Charter at the end of the day. So, when I asked you, we broke the process. You failed the process. Your answer is no. Clearly.

City Attorney Suarez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. So, with the residents that live close to this park, where this park is impacting the residents, besides putting this on the agenda, were any of you notified that this was going to be heard in this meeting? Raise your hand if you were notified. Okay, raise your hand if you weren't. Okay. So, the only people that were notified that this was going to be on the agenda were the people that wanted to dog park. You wouldn't say that's a failure in process, especially when the people being affected by this dog park, I mean, living right next to it, were not informed. What is the city going to say? The city's going to say, it was on the agenda. It's your responsibility to look at the agenda. I'm sorry, every normal citizen here in Coral Gables does not look every two weeks or three weeks to see what's on the agenda. That's not your job. If something is coming close to you, it should be the city's responsibility to go ahead and at least leave a door-hanger or mail something to the closest residents. Now, I understand that it's not part of the process. I did try to make it part of the process and this Commission declined. Now, the other thing is, I want to put on the record that we are moving to change the zoning of this parcel of this property when it's one of the main complaints of the lawsuit. So, in other words, it's like going into a store, stealing something, getting out, then telling you, you stole something and you say, oh no, let me bring it

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back. Here it is, I didn't steal it. The crime was already done, even if you give it back. So, I think we're handling this very poorly.

Commissioner Lara: You're the Mayor

Commissioner Castro: Give me one moment, Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: Absolutely, I thought you were done.

Commissioner Castro: No, no, and then the last thing that I do want to address is Mayor, this is the first warning. Again, during this Commission meeting, I'm going to ask you to address me with respect. I corrected you; I am your colleague. I'm a Commissioner. I'm not Mrs. Chat GBT or whatever it is that you want to call me. Because if I have names to call you, oh, trust me, there's a list, okay. I'm refraining from that. First warning, I will move to censure you, and I would hope my colleagues, given the circumstances, would support me.

Mayor Lago: I welcome it. Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: Yes, through the Mayor. Commissioner Castro, that was interesting what you were saying about people and declaring that there was no notice given or worse, that there was only selective notice given. But I find that the height of irony, when you yourself were not present at the meeting when this vote was taken.

City Attorney Suarez: Miss, sorry.

Mayor Lago: Yes, go ahead.

City Attorney Suarez: My apologies. I just want to clarify some things because I believe Commissioner Castro was asking whether they received notice for the November Commission meeting, but it was a little bit unclear whether that meant this meeting. So, I want to clarify that, because at the November Commission meeting there was an item, it was a resolution directing staff to proceed with development of a park. Mailed notice is not required for that item. But for today's meeting, there was mailed notice, and I want to put that on the record that there was mailed notice, and I see the Planning Directors up there. Is that what you were going to address?

Planning Director Jennifer Garcia: Yes, so mail notice was sent out on May 20th, the same day as Planning and Zoning meeting as you, I think, heard from multiple residents here. So yes, within a thousand feet of the 520 University Drive property.

Commissioner Castro: Right, Commissioner Lara, let me go ahead and respond to you.

Mayor Lago: If I may. Okay, we have a pretty long agenda. Let's get moving on this issue. I know we want to go back and forth, tit for tat, and it's perfectly fine. Is there anything else for the good of the order that adds a little bit of substance to the discussion? Madam Vice Mayor, you are the sponsor, correct, on this item? Yes.

City Attorney Suarez: No, this was Stephanie.

Mayor Lago: No, staff, I apologize.

Vice Mayor Anderson: This was the staff.

Mayor Lago: Anything else that you'd like to add for the good of the order?

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, I'm just reading the proposed amendments. A), that the property at 520 University shall not be paved for off-street parking. The property shall be kept in a park-like manner and with the trees and foliage of the said property shall be preserved in their present state as much as feasible. Okay, so this is the first step of the process to maintain this property as the green space that is intended to be. And this doesn't dictate right now that we're developing a dog park. It removes the restriction on the property that'll be used for off-street parking. So, I'd like to be able to move this thing forward.

Mayor Lago: Do we have a motion? Can I have a second?

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do we have a motion and a second?

City Clerk Urquia: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: So Coral Gables, January 1972, the Commission under the leadership of Mayor W. Keith Phillips stated specifically that the intention of the Commission is that the said lots should be used only for overflow parking from the Youth Center and the Library. Nowhere does it say it can be used as a park. It is very clear. It is in black and white. And I am a no. This is a matter that's under litigation right now and we should not continue to move forward until the issues are addressed and residents have their say.

City Clerk Urquia: Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: For the reasons stated, yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Vice Mayor Anderson.

Vice Mayor Anderson: This is the process that's required. It's a reason for the lawsuit is to have the process followed. We're following the process, and the vote is yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: I'm going to go ahead and answer Lara's question. What I was referring to was when this item first came about and I believe that it was in November, it wasn't fairly advertised. It was only advertised or only the people that were in favor of this dog park were present here. I watched the meeting online. I wasn't here to clarify that point. And the second thing is for the City Attorney. By approving this ordinance, are we removing one of the complaints from the lawsuit?

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City Attorney Suarez: Putting one of the complaints.

Commissioner Castro: Okay, so we're kind of fixing the zoning code to the privilege of City of Coral Gables and their lawsuit, that complaint would no longer be valid because we're fixing it.

City Attorney Suarez: Well, Commissioner, respectfully, if you're fixing something, then that's probably a good thing. If they're complaining about a deficiency of some sort and we're addressing it, then we're addressing it. I don't think there's been a deficiency to be clear. This was, it's a required step. They have included many arguments in their lawsuit. I don't think this is the appropriate venue to hash them out. But I think that this is a step that when done by the Commission, yeah, if this process concludes, then they would not be able to say the city didn't address this issue.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah, but it's not about the city addressing this issue or not. It's that that is one of the complaints of the lawsuit. And now we're coming here and we're fixing it before the lawsuit's even done.

City Attorney Suarez: Commissioner, it's a step. If, you know, as the city is moving forward with the dog park or not moving forward, we've got to figure that out. And this is one of the things that needs to be addressed as part of that process in, you know, the next steps in development of a dog park.

Commissioner Castro: My answer is, my vote is no.

City Clerk Urquia: Mayor Lago.

Commissioner Lara: Through the mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Lara: Commissioner Castro, if there's relief being sought and along the way, the relief should be withdrawn as moot. That happens every single day and twice on Sunday in litigation. Number two, respectfully, you should address me as Commissioner Lara. I certainly know I've earned that.

Commissioner Castro: I didn't.

Mayor Lago: That's a boo-boo. My vote is a yes. Moving forward. Thank you.