

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item J-1**  
**July 11, 2017**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

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

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark**  
**City Attorney, Craig E. Leen**  
**City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman**  
**Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Richard Heisenbottle, Preservation Architect**

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Agenda Item J-1 [11:25:05 a.m.]

Report and Commission Review Regarding Biltmore Bridges

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Biltmore bridges.

City Attorney Leen: So Mr. Mayor, J-1 is a Reporting Commission Review regarding Biltmore Bridges. The management agreement with the Biltmore relating to the golf course obliges the City to basically restore these bridges and there are two bridges in particular, the gondola bridges and they are being restored to their original glory and also their original design. This was agreed to with the Biltmore as part of a settlement agreement a year or two ago, when we, I have the agreement in the packet. We had been discussing – this agreement is the agreement that came out of the settlement, but there was an original settlement agreement where the Manager and I met with Gene Prescott and Danny Ponce to discuss a number of outstanding issues, including the bridges, a special assessment, some rent that the Biltmore claimed was owed to them, and we were able to work all those issues out; and one of the things we worked out was an

acknowledgement by the City that under the management agreement the City had a duty to restore these bridges. So, then we negotiated this agreement which is before you, which was approved as a settlement consistent with our prior agreement, that there is a term on page 9 that says the parties have agreed that the scope of work, work schedule and budget would be brought to the City Commission for its review and approval in a timely manner once finalized; and this agreement was signed in November 4, 2016. There has been back and forth that has gone on regarding different underlying contractor agreements, which the Biltmore has been handling, but the City has been reviewing, Ms. Spain, Dona Spain, our Historic Preservation Officer has been involved. It's taken several months to get to the position we are today, but now we do have a scope of work, work schedule and budget and we also have Mr. Iglesias who has been very involved from a building official standpoint; and so, we are bringing those before you today. We have the Biltmore present, we have the counsel that's representing them present, we also have Mr. Richard Heisenbottle, who is the preservation architect on the matter. He is going to talk to you today about these three items and what we are asking for is if the Commission, if they are acceptable to the Commission that you conduct your review and approve them. I do want to restate though that we do have an obligation under the management agreement with the Biltmore to maintain these bridges, pardon me, to restore these bridges. The Biltmore will have day-to-day maintenance responsibilities once they are restored, but this is common in these sort of agreements because we are the owner, and so we are responsible for the fixtures and they are responsible for day-to-day maintenance, so that's what's before you today.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Heisenbottle would you like to come up? Good morning.

Mr. Heisenbottle: Good morning. Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager, City Attorney, my name is...

City Attorney Leen: Oh, I should also state one more thing. Mr. Heisenbottle before you continue, I also want to indicate that, because this is a historic conservation project, it's exempt from our Procurement Code. The primary focus of the City here has been obviously, to make sure that we get a good agreement with the Biltmore, but also a major consideration has been restoration of the bridges in a historically appropriate way. The City could have gone forward and done a different type of bridge, but that would not have complied with our historic preservation regulations, which is why there is a substantial expense to this item. So, with that I will turn it over to Mr. Heisenbottle.

Mr. Heisenbottle: Thank you Mr. City Attorney. I would also ask that the tech upstairs go ahead and put our little slide presentation up, so we could all see this, what should be a very fun little presentation of these bridges. What you are looking at right here is the historic photograph of the Biltmore bridges somewhere around 1926, and this is just one of the two bridges that we're

restoring, but I think you'd agree that it is very, very picturesque. Unfortunately, it doesn't look quite that picturesque now. Today what we see is a bridge that has been renovated a bunch of times, the upper section has been completely redone and is not matching its original historic look; the lower section of steel is in fact quality original steel, and of course the concrete are also part of the original steel, but as we get closer and closer to it, we can see that the bridge is in absolute desperate need of repair. So, in fact the steel that we are looking at right here on the underside of the bridge is going to be completely replaced in order to give us a safe new surface and the wood is also going to be replaced. So, what we've done is that we've put together a scope of work document and it's working its way through the Building Department now, I think it's approved already. The scope-of-work entails what we call selective demolition, everything that you see that is dashed up there, including the wood and the asphalt that someone managed to place on top of the wood, I'm not so sure who had the idea of placing asphalt on top of wood, it doesn't seem to work terribly well. All of that will be removed down to the original pillars and then we would be literally rebuilding the drive surface and the approaches and the railings on both sides in a protective way. Now in order to make those historically accurate and what we are drawing is an exact replication of the original, and at the same time make them structurally adequate, we are actually taking tube steel and covering it in a mahogany wood.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It will look like that.

Mr. Heisenbottle: And, it will look exactly like the original and it will look like what you see in front of you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Maybe you can help us with the LeJeune Bridge, I'm kidding.

Mr. Heisenbottle: And, also the bridges are actually somewhat important, because the lawnmowers that go from one side of the golf course to the other in order to cut the lawn everyday have to transverse these bridges, which today are really not totally safe. So, the budget you see in front of you over there, it totals \$1,641,000 in round numbers with an owner's contingency of about \$150,000. We've got Red Door Construction on board as a Construction Manager, they are doing other work for the City right now as well, and we think that they've done a good job of understanding the scope of the work and exactly....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What else is Red Door doing?

Mr. Heisenbottle: I'm sorry?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What else is Red Door doing for the City?

Mr. Heisenbottle: The entrances Dona? The plazas and entrances right now.

Commissioner Lago: They are already dealing with historically significant sensitive...

Mr. Heisenbottle: That's one of the reasons that they were chosen, because of their ability to do that. I can just tell you that they've also worked for me before over at Viscaya; they're absolutely great job of being very careful with what they do. There are some complications here, we are working over water, we have to deal with DERM permits and platforms that have to be built over the water, so they can work there. We can't drop things into the water as we go or let any of the paint drops into the water either, so the care will be there. So, with that if you have any questions at all, I'll be delighted to answer, but I think we should have a fun little preservation prodigy we should feel proud of and we are doing everything we can as we put this back together to make sure that what we do is as easy to maintain as possible.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is a motion in order?

City Attorney Leen: Yes.

Commissioner Quesada: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Commissioner Lago: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Commissioner Quesada: Yes

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much. Stay there, stay there, stay there. I went to the Biltmore there was a wonderful celebration on the Fourth of July, wonderful celebration, and I had many friends that attend the gym at the Biltmore and I'm very concerned about the state of the property, and the Fourth of July celebration table 27, which was next to mine and I think next to yours on the other side, had to be moved, because there was not a leak, but a stream of water falling on it and it hadn't rained that day, the table had to be moved. I look at the Biltmore from

the front and the doors on the left and the wooden doors are rotten, they are destroyed. I look at the main entrance of the top, there is a door that's off center and rotten underneath and that's the main entrance of the Biltmore. I hear in rooms, somebody who stayed there on the Fourth of July that they had termite wings; the gym has all sorts of leaks, they even have pans on the floor that they have little towels drying them; the air conditioner didn't work for two weeks and somebody fainted and had to call rescue. I'm very concerned about the state of our premiere signature property in Coral Gables. People think of Coral Gables and people think, first of all of the Biltmore, secondly maybe Venetian Pool or City Hall or something, but the Biltmore is it; and I'm very concerned about the deterioration of the Biltmore and I would like to call for an audit of the condition of the building and what has to be done in order to make it livable, by livable I mean no more termites, maybe the windows have to be replaced and I hear...

Ms. Spain: They are in the process of doing that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, the process of doing that, but when was it approved and how...I don't believe that – frankly...

Ms. Spain: The problem with the windows is they don't have a...they are having to manufacture them and that's in the last case, but they are doing that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I want to see that. OK. I want to have not an environmental audit, but a building historical audit, building audit...

Mr. Heisenbottle: Typically, you would call that sort of thing a historic structures report or a building evaluation report is the regular translation...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would like to call for that Madam City Manager. It is our property and it is lease and they have done a good job, but I don't think anything has been done there since '85 or '86 when they finished the building and I'd like to see – I'm worried about its condition. I'm worried about the leaks, I'm worried about the termites, I'm worried about the windows, I'm worried about the rotten doors on Anastasia, I'm worried about...

Ms. Spain: I can tell you about the doors. I can't tell you about the termites, but I can tell you about the doors.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But Mr. Mayor, we understand what your request is. We will work on it during the Commission recess, because you all don't convene again until August 29<sup>th</sup>, it gives us ample opportunity to go in and work with the Biltmore on doing the assessment that you are asking for.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: By maybe Red Door or under your supervision, I trust you implicitly, but I want a full report, so that place doesn't – I don't know – termites, rotten doors. If a hurricane comes...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We'll come together with a scope; we'll meet with you all individually. We love you too, but we have to go through Procurement, so don't....

Mr. Heisenbottle: You already have me under contract.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Impossible to match his expertise...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I believe he is already on our Historic Preservation CCNA architect list.

Ms. Spain: He's on both.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But, we understand what you are wanting and let us put together a scope and report back.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Would you? I'm very concerned and I think we all should be.

Vice Mayor Keon: Can you also look at when the last time the rooms were redecorated or whatever? I was kind of surprised of the conditions of some of the rooms when we conducted the interviews for the City Manager. I don't know the last time there's been any renovation there with regard to the upgrade of the rooms themselves too.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's exactly what I want to know.

Vice Mayor Keon: So, including not just the physical structure, but also the whole décor.

Ms. Spain: I can tell you the 20 years that I've been with the City, the Biltmore has just recently within the past few months reached out to my office and we meet once a month.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You meet once a month, but you've been here since '97?

Ms. Spain: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. And this building was finished in '86?

Ms. Spain: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I don't think there has been any renovation since then and I'm concerned, for 30 years.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We'll meet with Historic, we'll meet with the City Attorney's office, we'll put together a scope and we'll get active on the....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, I'll meet with Mr. Heisenbottle to get advice.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Of course.

Mr. Heisenbottle: Our pleasure. Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, we appreciate it. Thank you.

City Attorney Leen: Mr. Mayor, my office will be involved, we'll look at the management agreement, we'll look at the lease...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, I would like to look at the agreement, the lease.

City Attorney Leen: We will talk to Mr. Prescott and Mr. Ponce and we'll work out a way forward. Mr. Butler did you want to say anything? - is there anything you want to say today? - no. OK. So, we'll be in contact with them and I'm sure we'll find a way forward that will be acceptable to everyone.

[End: 11:38:22 a.m.]