

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Non-Agenda Item
January 24, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
Assistant City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Deputy City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

Public Speaker(s)

Non-Agenda Item [1:49:40 p.m.]

Mayor Cason: Commissioner Lago.

Commissioner Lago: I know this is not on the Commission today, but I just wanted to give you a quick update. The City Attorney, the Assistant City Attorney and ACM Frank Fernandez went with me yesterday to meet with Commissioner Suarez from the City of Miami, we wanted to present our motel hourly rate ordinance, which we unanimously passed as a Commission and has taken effect, and has been instrumental in shutting down the hourly rates in reference to the one motel that we have on 8th Street, and I think it's essential, because there is some nefarious activity that was going on there on our side and now we've eliminated that, but we still have a little bit of an issue in reference to the City of Miami and we are only, as you've mentioned before, only as strong as our weakest link and we want to make sure that we support our neighbor in regards to this issue. I wanted to give you a little quick update and then just have Craig speak about it. What we requested was for a joint enforcement zone and I was happy to

hear that the Commissioner is not only excited about it, but he is also going to bring it forth at the next Commission meeting in February. He is also considering adopting similar ordinance, which will be presented, as I mentioned to you at the next February 2017 Commission. So, it's a big step forward. I think it's going to bring both cities together and really address an issue that's been plaguing that area for a long time, and as with your support we couldn't turn a blind eye. But, I want the City Attorney to give a little bit of a synopsis on that.

Commissioner Slesnick: Is that Commissioner Suarez' area?

Commissioner Lago: Yes, Commissioner Suarez' from the City of Miami, it's his area.

City Attorney Leen: Yes, it was a great meeting. Commissioner Suarez was very supportive of our efforts. Just for the people at home, the goal is to eliminate hourly rentals on 8th Street, including those on the City of Miami side, also to fight prostitution, crime, drugs, anything that's occurring there. So, what the City Commission has done for Coral Gables is, unanimously the City passed an ordinance that prohibits hourly rentals, hourly motels on the Coral Gables side and it also puts a \$15,000 fine for any entity that facilitates prostitution in any way. In addition, it allows for, if there are hourly rentals or if there happens to be any facilitation or prostitution, the certificate of use can be pulled from any hourly motel that's doing that. In addition, the ordinance authorizes the City Attorney's office to file nuisance suits, creates a cause of action and the ability to file a nuisance suit applies not only to the Coral Gables side, it also applies to the City of Miami side. So, in order to get support and also as a matter of respect for the City of Miami before we took any action, we met with them and Commissioner Suarez indicated, one, that he loved the idea of a joint task force, joint enforcement zone, so my office is working with Director Fernandez to put together an Interlocal Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding, which will be coming to this Commission at the next meeting, and will be going to the City of Miami Commission at their meeting. In addition, what this would do was, it would set up, it would allow Coral Gables to enforce the law on the Miami side of 8th Street and will allow Miami to enforce the law on the Coral Gables side of 8th Street. So, I think this is very important. Director Fernandez has experience for when he was the Deputy Chief of Miami on these matters, and so he knows a lot about 8th Street and about how to fight crime on 8th Street, so he's going to be working with our Police Department to do that, so that's going to be part of this enforcement zone; and in addition, Commissioner Suarez is looking at the potential of adopting a similar ordinance to what Coral Gables has that would give us additional tools on the Miami side. In addition to that, the City Attorney's office in Miami and the City Attorney's office of Coral Gables are looking to cooperate, and so they may be bringing the cause of action with us, or at the very least they may agree that we can bring the cause of action and we would do it with their consent and support. I would ask the City Prosecutor if she has anything additional she'd like to add.

Deputy City Attorney Ramos: Good afternoon everyone. I just wanted to add that I was on the phone on this issue right now. We do have a Mutual Aide Agreement with Miami currently in place; it doesn't cover all of this, so outside counsel is right this second typing up an addendum, so that we can get it on, because their deadline is tomorrow. So, we are going to quickly turn it around and I'd like the Director to look at it, because we talked about yesterday going a few blocks in from 8th Street. The intelligence we have is that they use those residential neighborhoods to stay away from sight, so we don't want it to stop on 8th Street, we want to go a few blocks in, so I'd like him to let me know if he thinks four blocks is enough or we push it to Flagler or how far with the parameters are.

City Attorney Leen: So to conclude, this is an extremely important initiative, it shows what can happen when the Commission unanimously supports fighting crime in this way, along with the City Manager's office and the City Attorney's office all working together, which is what we are doing, and we are bringing in both the Police Department and Code Enforcement, so both Assistant City Managers are involved. I think it's a wonderful initiative, I think it's going to help a lot of people. So with that, I would turn it back to the Commission.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: And if I could say that the removal of the CU (Certificate of Use) when they apply for CU again, that requires a fire inspection, which we can also have Code Enforcement, Building and everybody along with that inspection to reinstate the building. So, the pulling of the CU is an important issue.

Commissioner Lago: I just wanted to say thank you to Director Fernandez and the entire staff at the City Attorney's office for doing an incredible job. This is going to be a game-changer, not only for the City of Coral Gables, but for our neighbor the City of Miami, and I'm very excited and I'm very grateful for your support on this matter and I look forward to hopefully implementing this and cleaning up an area that for such a long time has been a blight, to not only the City of Miami, but also to the City of Coral Gables, because I've been on the ground in the middle of the night with City of Miami police officers and operators and the presence of prostitution, human trading, drug dealing, is not only in plain sight, but in my opinion it's a huge issue that for some reason there's been a blind eye turned to it for a long, long time, and the reason why I moved on this issue was because I got several of the residents in North Gables telling me that, I step out of my house and I look to the left and I see individuals walking the street and dealing drugs. Again, it's not in the City of Coral Gables, but its within 75 feet, that is unacceptable in the City of Coral Gables and there is no way that can be accepted a stone's throw away from us, so we have to do everything in our power to urge our neighbors to also comply and get rid of these nefarious activities. So, I commend the City of Miami and Commissioner Suarez for his efforts and I look forward to getting this enforcement zone implemented.

Commissioner Keon: Great job.

Mayor Cason: Super. Thank you. Great job.

Commissioner Keon: Great job.

[End: 1:56:48 p.m.]