

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Non-Agenda Item
April 12, 2016
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
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Non-Agenda Item [Start: 3:47:08 p.m.]

Commissioner Lago: OK. My resolution is very, very quick. I was going to save it for discussion time. It basically deals with Carnival Cruise and the planned visit, they are going to be having lines of travel in regards to their cruise lines to Cuba, and I don't know if you've read in the Herald and in the Sun Sentinel where they basically mention that if you are Cuban-American and you were born in Cuba and you plan on travelling to Cuba, you cannot get off the cruise ship. So you have an American company which is going to basically apply discriminatory aspects to individuals who are United States citizens based on the fact that they were born in Cuba. And this is a simple resolution urging Carnival Cruise Lines to not head in that direction, especially when you are dealing with a country which has excessive litany of years and of history in reference to treating political prisoners in a very disrespectful manner, having disregard for life as-a-whole, and has over the last year and-a-half since Barak Obama announced normalization of diplomatic relations with Cuba has up the anti in regards to imprisonment of political prisoners by almost three times the amount. So this is basically in an effort to urge a U.S. based corporation that is planning to do business with Cuba and take U.S. citizens to the island, to

ensure that those citizens can get off the boat. Again, this has nothing to do with the embargo, pro or against the embargo, this is just based on urging an American company to do the right thing.

City Attorney Leen: So if I may, Mr. Mayor. What this does, the resolution is focused based on the Commissioner's instructions on the particular cruise to Cuba, which right now does discriminate based on national origin. It doesn't address the broader debate, its focused just on the fact that Carnival is agreeing to do a cruise right now where there are residents of Coral Gables in Dade County and anywhere else who are Cuban born, but they are American citizens or American residents and they won't be able to get on the boat, just because they were born in Cuba and that is the discrimination, it is the focus of this resolution and we are asking – what this would do is it would ask Carnival to basically not do that and to get that issue resolved before it decides to go forward with this route so that anyone Cuban-born could get on the boat just like someone who is American-born or Canadian-born or anywhere else; and then number two, that it urges basically Dade County, the State of Florida, the United States to take a look at this issue to see if it violates federal and state law.

Mayor Cason: I support this and secondly, this is going to apply to any cruise line that goes to Cuba, because the Cuban government does not allow anybody that was born in Cuba to go to or from Cuba on a vessel, doesn't matter whether it's a sail boat, a power boat. Any cruise line that thinks its going to face the same problem of the Cuban-Americans that the Cubans on board will not be – first of all, they won't let them on board, and they wouldn't let them into the country.

Commissioner Lago: And I'll give you an example something similar to where this happened and it happened with American Jews. Two years ago the Tunisian government prohibited Israeli passengers from disembarking from a Norwegian...during a stop at the Tunis cruise port, Le Rulet. Norwegian Cruise Lines NCL, told the Israeli citizens that they were not welcome by the Tunisian government and had to stay aboard the cruise ship. Norwegian Cruise Lines quickly decided to boycott Tunis and issued the following statement: "We want to send a strong statement to Tunisia and ports around the world that we will not tolerate such random acts of discrimination against our guests. We are outraged by this act and the fact that we were not notified in advance of this practice. We apologize sincerely to our guests who are affected and want them to know that we have taken the appropriate actions in response." This is a very similar act and what the issue here, like what Craig said, this is not about politics, this is about the Bill of Rights, this is about individuals who are Americans, who live in this country, who have followed all the necessary procedures to obtain citizenship and now are being discriminated in a foreign country.

Mayor Cason: And just to remind people watching that if you have a sail boat or a power boat and you think you can go to Cuba and have a good time, join the fishing contest or something, you are not going to be allowed in. So this is Cuban discrimination against Cuban citizens.

Commissioner Keon: Can we pass this now?- this resolution?

Mayor Cason: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Mayor Cason: OK. Commissioner Keon moves it and everybody else seconds it. City Clerk.

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes

Mayor Cason: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

[End: 3:52:20 p.m.]