

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-3
September 8, 2009
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II
Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.
Commissioner Maria Anderson
Commissioner Rafael "Ralph" Cabrera, Jr.
Commissioner Wayne "Chip" Withers

City Staff

City Manager, Patrick Salerno
City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

E-3 [Start: 10:17:10 a.m.]

Ordinance amending Chapter 26, entitled "Emergency Services", in particular, Section 26-1 "Fees for Emergency Rescue Services" and Chapter 30, entitled "Fire Prevention and protection", in particular, Section 30-6 "Fees for Emergency Rescue Services", of the Code of the City of Coral Gables, allowing for fees to be assessed to all persons transported via City Fire Department vehicle; repealing all ordinances inconsistent herewith and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Manager.

City Manager Salerno: (Read the above title into the record).

Mayor Slesnick: Now Mr. Manager, is this the final action we are taking on this?

City Manager Salerno: This is a first reading...

Mayor Slesnick: Oh, this is a first reading, I'm sorry, I should have known; this is the first of two readings on this issue.

City Manager Salerno: Yes Mayor.

Mayor Slesnick: Our final action will come in two weeks.

City Manager Salerno: Correct. This is merely taking the word non residents out and putting persons in place, replacing one word in an ordinance.

Commissioner Withers: I'll move it.

Commissioner Anderson: Second it.

Mayor Slesnick: Moved by Mr. Withers seconded by Ms. Anderson. Any discussion at this time on this first reading?

Commissioner Anderson: Quick question or comment. I'd asked for an educational campaign to be had in order to help the population understand this particular situation and the impacts, and I did receive that, as soon as we get it started the better. I know there was a start date, because there is a lot of misinformation out there and people are scared and understandably so, but I think if we can figure out a way to do that, to get that information out, the sooner the better.

Mayor Slesnick: Mr. Withers.

Commissioner Withers: Mr. Manager we had spoken about the possibility of sending out a notice at the time the insurance company is billed to the resident directly advising them that we are billing their insurance company and that it is not their responsibility, I think we talked about that.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, we did. When the representative was here from the billing company, the last Commission meeting, and I think I asked him that could we generate a letter, a rescue that occurs, a transport that occurs, could we send a letter to the resident saying you will probably receive a bill, "bla", "bla", "bla", whatever it is, don't pay it, whatever the circumstances are, and that gentleman said that, that could be done. That's the one you are remembering Chip?

Commissioner Withers: Yes, yes.

Commissioner Cabrera: OK, he's not here and I want to try to help him as well as me out. So let's go through the process. The resident is transported by fire rescue to a hospital; the hospital, at some point in time fire rescue gets the information on the resident's insurance company, is that the mechanism?

City Manager Salerno: Mayor I don't want, I mean Commissioner, we don't have our billing representative here with us today...

Commissioner Cabrera: I know.

City Manager Salerno: Because this item doesn't deal technically with the billing process, it just deals with the authority to charge somebody.

Commissioner Cabrera: I know.

City Manager Salerno: I'll be glad to have Mr. Chavez here to address particulars of the billing process; this does not deal with billing in any fashion. So I'd be glad to have him here for the second reading of the ordinance.

Commissioner Cabrera: I know, I'm just trying to help Commissioner Withers and Commissioner Anderson with the mechanics of how it works. The mechanics as I see it, and maybe I can certainly be corrected at some point in time is....at some point in the exchange with our Fire Rescue Department provides information to us about their insurance company, then we turn around from what I gather, and this is where Commissioner Anderson brings this up and she would like at some point in time for the resident to receive some communication from the City notifying them that they should not pay whatever bill has been sent to them. But what does take place is there is a component of which the, whether it's the City, well its got to be the City, the City bills the insurance company, and you have zero control once that bill goes to insurance company as to what that insurance company is going to do, and that's what I've tried to share with you last year when I did that analysis, that I had nine companies and eight or six responded, and each and everyone of them treated it differently. One company saw it as an ambulance transport co-payment, another one saw it as an out-patient urgent care or emergency. So everybody didn't have a uniform way of treating this problem, and so the insurance company, we don't control them; they will decide what they want to do and they may deny the coverage and send a letter to the subscriber; they may send a letter to the subscriber asking for clarification or more information as to what the issue was and why did they need medical care, and do they buy the way have auto insurance because they don't know what caused the encounter, whether it was an auto accident or somebody was having cardiac arrest at home. So they may send that out, or they may reimburse or they may apply this toward their annual calendar year deductible, I mean, it remains to be seen, and I don't care how many billing people we have, you cannot control the insurance companies in this State; they balance bill each and every day, and we deal with it, at least today we have three or four balance billing issues that we are dealing with clients of ours whose employees encounter these problems. So that's another mechanical reason why this is something I can't support. Back to Commissioner Anderson. Gee, I think it would be great if in fact the staff could follow up on her request and send some sort of notification to the subscriber, to the resident and tell them you may be getting a bill, but please don't pay it.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes, I guess what you hit was uniformity, and I guess we can't control the insurance, but I'd like for us as a City to figure out a way just to inform residents of what the process is. We can be the uniform as much as we can, the uniformity in the process knowing that it is still going to be flawed at times and it will fall through the cracks, but I'd like us to do our attempt, like we talked about last time.

Commissioner Cabrera: You know, unfortunately the billing gentleman is not here, but regardless of what happens once that bill arrives at that insurance company, like Ms.

Anderson just said, we lose complete control over that process, and then its up to the person to decide what they are going to do.

Mayor Slesnick: Any further debate?- questions?- discussions?

Mr. Clerk

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No

Commissioner Withers: Yes

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Cabrera: No

Mayor Slesnick: Yes

(Vote: 3-2)

[End: 10:24:45 a.m.]