

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item G-6**  
**May 11, 2021**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Michael Mena**

**Commissioner Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria**

**City Attorney, Miriam Ramos**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Deputy Development Services Director, Devin Cejas**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Maria Cruz**

**Monica Avellaneda**

**Jackson "Rip" Holmes**

**Gordon Sokoloff**

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Agenda Item G-6 [1:04 p.m.]

A discussion item on development transparency and zoning code amendments.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)

Mayor Lago: Item G-6, sponsored by Commissioner Anderson.

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City Commission Meeting

May 11, 2021

Agenda Item G-6 - Discussion item on development transparency and zoning code amendments.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, Mayor, I think this will work splendidly with your listening tour and priorities tour. I wanted to get this kick started. I listened to this Commission for many, many months, and years, and I know that one of the challenges we had were to, you know, revise the Mediterranean ordinance. I've listened to a lot of residents. They do have a lot of desires on making it a better ordinance to achieve the goals that they would like to see in buildings coming forward. That's, you know, about the third or fourth item down on this list here. The as-of-right projects I think need to be clearly notified to people in order to have development transparency. We can get a better product with more input from people. I know that they're as of right, but we definitely can get a better product down the line. So -- and I know the City Manager has been working very hard to have what I call the dashboard, but it is actually a map of where projects are coming online. And I've talked to him about this particular issue, and we do have a map available and we're going to add a link to it under the Planning and Zoning Board area is -- it's buried in the economic development area right now. So, residential groups and residents can continue to watch where projects are coming online and have better notice before the shovel hits the ground, and you see something being torn down or something being built. We can be involved in the process early on. I hope that, you know, we can have this discussion in the coming -- what, how many days do we have left, Mayor? Ninety days or a hundred days to kickstart this discussion. And I've asked you all to -- in the interim -- to consider suspending the level one bonus while we get this conversation going, whether it's at the end of the hundred days or not, it's going to be a heavy lift for us to do the revisions necessary to the Mediterranean ordinance that are needed to avoid the concerns as the residents have been expressing here. So, I'd like to hear your comments on all these items, including the amendment to the provisions that provide for the City Attorney and the City Manager to make major site plan changes. I think the intent of that ordinance is for minor changes and not major changes where residents don't have full notice. Any comments from any of you?

Vice Mayor Mena: I can start. The -- look, let me tell you -- I know you know, I've mentioned in the past that I do think we should be assessing our Med bonus structure and that I thought it should be really a priority of this new Commission. And so, I think it was at our last meeting or maybe

the one before that I mentioned that, and what I'd like to do is have staff maybe at the next meeting, start that discussion, so you know, start with having -- First, let's talk about how it works right now. Let's talk about what thoughts staff may have, and then that should -- I agree -- lead into some sort of community input stage before we make any final decision. So, I'm on board with you on that in terms of having that discussion. The main thing here that I would say is of concern to me is this concept with the as-of-right projects. It's somewhat -- it's difficult to envision a scenario where every single as-of-right commercial or mixed-use project has to go through this much scrutiny. And I hear you saying that it leads to better projects in theory, except it really isn't -- that property owner, if they're building something as of right, it really isn't subject to that type of scrutiny or objection because they're doing it based on our existing code. Now, if we have an issue with something in the existing code, we should address the issue in the existing code so that as-of-right, you know, projects are pursuant to that code. And so, I have a little bit of an issue with number one, as far as as-of-right projects because, again, I don't think it's proper to, again, subject people who are doing things based on the code that we, you know, sanction to have to then be scrutinized for doing things pursuant to the code that we sanctioned. And so...

Commissioner Anderson: I can explain that one to you very simply.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. While someone might have a right to do something, we have a Board of Architects that influences, you know, how it's designed.

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed.

Commissioner Anderson: They don't always catch everything. And we have plenty of examples -- and I can lay those out for you -- that they don't catch everything. We're really not delaying things that long. We'll have public notice. The public gets to add some comments to it. We end up with a better design. It should at least go to Planning and Zoning. You know, we have a zoning

code that requires certain setbacks on things. Things are missed, and as much as I know that people don't like to use the Aloft as an example, it's close by, and it is another example. I can provide you additional examples too how we can better design things. But the ADA requirements -- the federal ADA requirements, which, you know, by law we must follow, we cannot create, you know, an area of inaccessibility or miss there. Was it purposeful? No. Was it an accident? Most likely. But again, we could have done a better design on that particular building. With an open discussion, we could have asked ourselves should we give them some footage in the City parking lot behind it and set that building back even a little more. So, you know, that's where that discussion helps get a better product in the end, and we get a nicer product in the end, so that's why we need that community engage -- even if it is as of right, it's not right if it violates the Zoning Code. It's not right...

Vice Mayor Mena: Well, that's -- but that's obvious, right? If..

Commissioner Anderson: It's obvious, but it was missed.

Vice Mayor Mena: Well, of course, but error -- you know...

Commissioner Anderson: And...

Vice Mayor Mena: As a city, you set the rules of the game and then people have to play by those rules. We all agree if there's a mistake that nobody wants to see mistakes happen, right, and the implementation of those things, but mistakes do happen obviously in certain circumstances. But the idea that it's more red tape and more bureaucracy -- as you noted, we already have Board of architects, which is something very few cities have. So, we have things already in place. That is already a layer that is more than what most cities have to help improve the final product. You know, we also can't be a City that's that difficult for private property owners to be able to act and do things pursuant to the Code, again, that we approved. If you want to change something in the Code, let's talk about it and let's engage in that process, and we should do that.

Commissioner Anderson: This is what the residents want. They want notice so that they can get a better product. And I think the building -- the property owner benefits as well.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's interesting that you say that because, you know, first of all, I don't think any of us necessarily has their finger on exactly what all the residents want, but a lot of what I heard the residents want is do things based on the current Code. Don't upzone, no variances, build to the Code. When we were talking about Miracle Mile, "No, leave it as it is. Let people do it as it is." So, it's interesting that now even doing it as of right, you're indicating it's something that people have a problem with. You know, at some point, we have to stand by the Code that we adopt and approve in the City. And again, I agree with you, it has to be applied correctly. Nobody wants to see mistakes happen. But we already have a lot of layers built into this process that are meant to address that, and adding more layers to it and more scrutiny to people doing things -- I mean, we would never consider doing this to residential properties, right? You know, we would never open a resident who's doing things in their home as of right to this kind of scrutiny, and frankly, I don't see why we would treat any other private property owner any differently.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, we have a hundred days of listening, and I think the residents can speak. I certainly have spoken to thousands upon thousands and knocking on their doors during this campaign. And during this campaign, they made it ultimately clear that another -- you know, if a property owner can't stall for 30 days to be able to have it go through Planning and Zoning, so it has the notice procedure and an opportunity for people to participate -- because the Board of Architects doesn't work that way. It's not an opportunity to have true engagement -- that we need to do that for our residents because, yes, we'll end up with a better product.

Vice Mayor Mena: I -- adding the layer of Planning and Zoning for every project, including as-of-right, I think we are taxing a process that's already very taxed with other non-as-of-right projects. It's asking a lot. And listen, things get by Planning and Zoning too. You know, I re -- if

you recall, in one of our prior meetings, I asked you, there were projects like the Miracle Mile zoning update that Planning and Zoning approved.

Commissioner Anderson: Without an appraisal and...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right, but my point is...

Commissioner Anderson: You know, no one...

Vice Mayor Mena: But my point is...

Commissioner Anderson: Wants to create liability here. And with all due respect, the notice I got on the Aloft Hotel was a hole being dug in the ground. I couldn't move the building back.

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. Alright, and...

Vice Mayor Mena: We agree on that.

Commissioner Anderson: It created a very dangerous, very, very dangerous situation there for pedestrians, and the end result was something that I think none of us want to see repeated again.

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed.

Commissioner Anderson: And the only way to do that is to get better participation.

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed. But again, those entities are not -- I go back to the Planning and Zoning. You know, Planning and Zoning will approve something, and then I think even you said

you don't necessarily -- things change after that. If we want property owners to have to do things a certain way as of right, then we should take action to address what rights they have equally across the board for every person with that zoning designation. You're asking them to hold up and be subject to scrutiny when push comes to shove, they can say, "No, thanks. We have a right to do this." And it's something that's very taxing, I think, for the process. It makes it difficult to do business in this city. It makes it difficult to do things, again, as of right. So, it's just -- that's the main thing in here. And I'll -- look, with respect to number two and the things that the City Attorney and Manager are allowed to alter and amend, I'll defer to them to address that and how they do that on a day-to-day. But it seems kind of -- it doesn't make a lot of sense to me that you're basically, what you're doing is you're sort of eliminating as of right because you're saying you're subject to the same process as projects that are not as of right. So, then what rights do you really have at that point?

Mayor Lago: So, that's one of the things -- if I may -- I wanted to touch upon, that was the last point. I agree with every single comment you've made, but my main focus and my real emphasis is on the issue of why would anybody do as of right. The purpose of as of right is the Code dictates that you can build the following. You have these following property rights. You can move in this direction, and you will have to be seen by the BOA, and you have to be seen by Historic, correct? Those are the two boards. Want to make sure.

City Attorney Ramos: Historic only if it's a historic property; otherwise, no.

Mayor Lago: Yes. But again, but then you also have properties that are on the cusp, and we need to get a historic designation letter to make sure, again, whether it is historic or not.

Vice Mayor Mena: Or if they're demolishing something.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, or they can demolish or whatever that may be. If we're going to push in this direction -- and I'm for more scrutiny and more oversight. We can never have enough oversight.

We can never (INAUDIBLE) have discussion. But if we're going to move in this direction to limit the ability of property owners who are going to build something as of right because -- again, my voting record here has been before in the past, I have voted against projects that are significantly out of scale with the City. And to me, I think we need to be very careful when we address these projects, these as-of-right projects, where we make them through this -- go through the same process as a project that's asking for a variance or for an increase in density or intensity, or for a height increase. What we'll see then is all these properties coming before us and saying, "Listen, if I have to go through the process, I might as well ask for more."

Vice Mayor Mena: Right, I agree.

Mayor Lago: I might as well ask for a height increase or I may ask for more intensity or more density or more FAR. That's my only concern. That's number one. In reference to number two, I'm always open to have a discussion here in regards to the issues of -- like you mentioned, with the City Manager, City Clerk, and the City Attorney. I don't have any issues with that. I'm more than willing to talk about it and see what your concerns are and see how we can find some common ground and find a solution. I don't have any issues with that. In regards to a city-wide project dashboard, one already exists. Where we fell short -- because I implemented the dashboard -- where we had fallen short -- and you know me, I don't pull any punches with anybody. Staff has not kept that dashboard up to date, and I've asked five times, six times on the public record on this Commission floor saying I want that dashboard updated, it's not updated. Because I've had residents call me. "Hey, listen, Vince, the dashboard hasn't been updated in two months." That's what we need to focus on in that dashboard. Make it as user-friendly as possible. We're revamping our website, but that dashboard needs to be updated every single time that a project comes before Planning and Zoning or enters the City for review. That needs to be a priority, so I agree with you. In regards to the Mediterranean ordinance, we've talked about it already. I'm 100 percent in favor of listening to see what we can do to see how we can find -- we can make the process better, get better designed buildings, get more beautiful buildings. Maybe we don't use the Mediterranean



ordinance. Maybe we offer those alternative benefits to have a building that's more green or that offers more green space, like...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: Buys an adjacent lot and says, "Hey, Vince, look, I'm not going to design the building Mediterranean, but I'm going to buy the adjacent lot and build a beautiful park to the tune of X dollars." I don't have a problem with that, and I don't think the residents will have a problem with that because there's a lot of residents in this community that tell me, "Listen, some of the Mediterranean bonus approvals that we've given, the projects look terrible."

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: And I don't want to out anybody, but they do look terrible. I mean, just because you stick some foam up there and some barrel tile doesn't make it Mediterranean. But that's in the past. I don't want to blame anybody here because I know that our team works hard to bring some of the most beautiful buildings to the City, but I'm willing to listen to that. I think it's a good idea, and I think we should have the discussion. So, more important than anything, I just want you to know that I appreciate your memo. I appreciate the time that you've spent on this memo because I've written a lot of memos that I sometimes mention here. You know, some people read, or they didn't read. And I think that this is important that you continue to do these memos, that we continue to have these discussions because that's the way the City's going to get better across the board. So, I welcome all these conversations. I think they're great. When you talk about notice 1,500 feet, I think we're the city that provides the most notice of -- in regards to length -- of any other city in Miami-Dade County. That's my understanding, and it's by far. So, we do provide significant notice. The issue of the hotel adjacent to us, that's a catastrophe, in my opinion, but that was a land use change that happened before anybody that's sitting here or is in this room was involved in the City of Coral Gables. And that should have never happened, and now we have to deal with

it. Do I think that this would have -- if this would have gone before P and Z, do I think that P and Z would have caught it? Maybe if Commissioner Rhonda Anderson was sitting on that board, but I don't think that it would have been caught, and I sat on that board for almost two years.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, that's why I'm trying to...

Mayor Lago: No, but I'm just giving you credit.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Giving you credit.

Commissioner Anderson: Have more of that transparency to the residents so that we can have their ideas, whether it's in front of P and Z, in front of this Commission, so that we have...

Mayor Lago: Can you do a favor? Can you do me a favor on that point? And I'm sorry to interrupt you.

Commissioner Anderson: No, no, that's okay.

Mayor Lago: I just don't want to lose my train of thought. Figure -- tell me how we would entice developers to go as of right versus going the route of if they're going to make me go through the entire review process, spend all these additional attorneys' fees, spend all these additional carrying costs, tell me how we would entice them to not come to us and say, "If you're going to make me go through this entire process, then I'm going to ask for more height, more density, and more intensity."

Commissioner Fors: Or they might not even show up because, at the end of the day, what can we do? They might send, you know, the receptionist to attend the as of right meeting because, at the

end of the day, they're doing it as of right, or they're not doing it as of right. And that's really my problem with it is that it really boils down to resource. I mean, I agree with avoiding red tape, et cetera, that general way of thinking. But I feel like if we have notice and meetings with everybody within 1,500 feet for every as of right commercial product and mixed-use product -- I agree, if you do that all the time, you may have the situation where somebody catches somebody inadvertently doing something illegal that may not have been caught by Planning and Zoning, may not have been caught by the Building Department, may have not been caught by the Board of Architects. But the majority of time, it's going to be, you know, subjective opinions. And if it's as of right, the developer or the builder or the property owner just doesn't have to listen to us. So, now we have a situation where our staff is, I think, getting bogged down by participating in these meetings relating to as of right, when nothing really can come out of them. And we can say, "Why don't you do this this way?" And they can do it, or they cannot do it. And then we have a situation where, you know, we -- okay, we can't have the traffic calming meeting about actual traffic measures coming into a certain location because we have a as of right meeting to just generally voice our opinion to somebody who's doing something as of right who doesn't have to listen to us. So, I don't see -- I don't think the juice is worth the squeeze of deploying staff on every single as-of-right project in addition to the bureaucratic red tape that it would add. But really, from a perspective of just resources, I don't think it's a good investment of resources to talk to people about things that they don't have to listen to you because (INAUDIBLE) as of right. It's another thing for sure to say, you know, the Board of Architects misses an ADA issue and something like the Loft. And my reaction to that is discipline whoever missed it, right? Or add more folks and more resources to the department that's in charge of catching that stuff. I do agree with the Mayor that I'm relatively confident -- I'm very confident I should say -- that with the new administration, starting with you, and with Peter Iglesias, our City Manager, Ramon Trias, Ed Santamaria, Devin Cejas, Suramy, all these folks that we have now, I'm pretty confident that what happened at the Loft would not happen nowadays here in the City of Coral Gables. But with that being said, that's really, you know, the only thing that I'm worried about -- weary about in this memo. I appreciate it, just like Mayor Lago does, that you took the time to write this. The dashboard -- the dashboard we currently have is actually, in my view, it's actually fantastic, except for the fact that it's not

updated, so what good really is it, right? And I'm with you 100 percent on getting that online. I also defer to the City Manager and City Attorney on what the Code says about their discretion and these points in point two in terms of changes to types of uses of business, increasing density, and et cetera. Finally, without a doubt, I know that Ramon Trias did put in a lot of work in improving the way the Mediterranean bonus is applied and the guidance on it. It's a much better bonus scheme than it was for some time. But with that being said, there's no doubt about it there's an appetite on this Commission to really look at it and see what we do with it going forward, because I agree with the fact that residents are really not entirely satisfied with how it's being -- to say the least, with how it's being applied, so I'm 100 percent with you there. Other than that, I have nothing to add.

Mayor Lago: No, but if I may...

City Manager Iglesias: If I may...

Mayor Lago: Could I just add one more thing, just one more point? And I'm willing to have this discussion, especially in regards to point number one, if you want to have it. I'll have it -- sunshine meeting, I think is the appropriate way of doing it. We can have a discussion on how we can have more eyes on projects. But I want to leave you with one question, and I want you to educate me and think about this because I want to -- I'm being as sincere as I possibly can to you. If we go down this route, then as of right ceases to exist. There is no as of right. So, I find that interesting because there is no as of right. There is a process like -- just for example, people have told me, "Vince, this project's coming before the Commission, but it complies with all the basics of the zoning. It's not outside the Zoning Code." I go, "Yes, but the Zoning Code requires it since it's mixed-use to come before the Commission for approval. That's the only reason why." It's not additional height. It's not addition intensity or density, it's not additional FAR, but it's required by the Code because it's a mixed-use project, even though it complies with everything. So, if you want to have this conversation, I would love to have the conversation. I'd love to see how we can get more eyes on each project to make these projects better. But how do we get away from the

fact that then all projects -- that we'll never have the path of as of right in the City? That's something (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah. You know, I know. I hear what you're saying, but most good developers would want to hear the residents' ideas because they may benefit from them. And I know that they would have benefited from them on several projects that we have from pedestrian safety, attracting more clientele, you know, a better way to put your restaurant on the front of the building as opposed to where the vehicles are idling. All these ideas would have ultimately ended up in a better project for the developer, okay, and increased pedestrian safety. So, how do we do that with maintaining the as-of-right structure is the only way we can do it is involve the residents somewhere along the line. We are blessed with some highly educated residents in our city that have wonderful ideas that help improve projects. So, getting the stakeholders in the room, including the developers that would benefit from this, I think is one way of doing it. You have an opportunity now for residents to share their ideas on how they feel that residential input can still be allowed and still maintain that balance with these projects being as of right. Yes, we understand that the particular plot of land, they can build to a certain intensity and density and height, but how it's designed -- you know, just like the Board of Architects, all of us have additional ideas that we can offer to make it even better. So, I appreciate your time, and let's get this kickstarted and invite the residents to give us their ideas.

Commissioner Fors: By the way...

Unidentified Speaker: If I may.

Commissioner Fors: Commissioner Anderson, one -- to plant a seed, one thing that could go down this road, which I've always asked myself, as the Mayor was saying, mixed-use projects over 20,000 square feet are always going to come for a vote by the Commission, and that's always been the case. It'll always be the case. Those are the projects that really get people's attention that really have a meaningful impact. Now, projects between 10,000 and 20,000 don't come to the

Commission, right? I don't want to discuss it at length here, but I remember I asked myself that question and questioned the wisdom of whether or not to have mixed-use projects in that range come to the Commission. I think 10,000 square feet probably is not something that needs to, but maybe the range somewhere in that 10 and 20 should come to the Commission, and that does expand the public input on a lot of projects that aren't being put through that process now. That's not an easy decision though. There's pros and cons to that, because I remember discussing it at first, but that's something I think you should look into too, that gap of mixed-use projects that we don't -- that do not come to the Commission as conditional use.

City Manager Iglesias: And Commissioner, those were done specifically for infill, so that we wouldn't have sites that would accumulate sites and it'll all -- that'll all be over 200 feet and 20,000. So, the idea of that was to make those slightly easier to...

Commissioner Fors: Right.

City Manager Iglesias: Create infill and lower the overall height, so that's why those were there.

Commissioner Fors: Exactly. And that was -- that's why...

City Manager Iglesias: So, that issue was...

Commissioner Fors: There's pros and cons...

City Manager Iglesias: Thought of and so -- to expedite those (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Fors: Because believe it or not, our -- you know, what we kept on repeating here in all these meetings I had with Ramon and Devin and the City Manager is, believe it or not, we were trying to incentivize those smaller developments over the larger ones, and one way to do that is to make it easier to do it within that window than to have it be the same amount of work as

developing your 15,000 square foot parcel or going and doing a 30,000 square foot one. So, yeah, there's pros and cons to think about, but...

City Manager Iglesias: And we were talking -- and we've been talking about Aloft. Aloft was an interesting project. It was done some time ago, and it was done through the mixed-use process, where you had to go commercial and then mixed use. And what had happened was that that process was eliminated because of that project, where we went with a site plan process in lieu of designating something commercial and then mixed-use. The project did not happen, so it stayed commercial, and that's how that building happened. We specifically changed that process to a site plan approval so that would not happen. In our current Code, that will not happen because all MF1 -- all MX1, MX2, MX3 projects over 20,000 square feet will go -- are conditional use. So, that was taken care of because I think that was a glitch in the way that we were doing things, and we took care of it at that time with having that provision where the zoning -- where the site plan runs with that project, and if it's not approved -- and so we would not have something zoned to commercial that then doesn't develop into mixed use. The fact that it was -- it had to go to commercial then mixed-use to allow residential within commercial, that's gone with our mixed-use zoning. So, that would not happen now. And that -- and we -- and because of that mistake, we changed the process at that time. As far as the City Attorney and I changing site plans, we don't change site plans. We just worked on Wawa as one unusual project because there was a settlement there, but we do not do that. Site plan changes come as major amendments and minor amendments. For instance, if it's you're changing from asphalt to -- from brick paver to asphalt, that would be a major amendment. But if we're changing a sidewalk from five feet to five feet, four inches, I don't think that needs to come to the City Commission. That would be considered a minor amendment that would be done administratively. So, we weigh major amendments and minor amendments to make sure that we don't come for things that are not substantial, and so I just wanted to clarify. We do not -- the City Attorney and I do not change site plans. We do not do that. We just got involved in this one project because it was a settlement issue and that's it. But we certainly don't want to bring in things that are trivial to the City Commission such as a small

sidewalk change. If you have something where you're allowed zero site plan changes and so -- does that mean that a trivial change to a sidewalk, that's a site plan change.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, yeah. I just -- look, if -- again, if a developer wants input, there's nothing stopping them from getting that input. Many developers on projects have community meetings about it in advance and so on and so forth. But the concept of as of right is that we have a system of laws and a zoning code that apply to your private property, and you make plans years in advance. You maybe even purchase the property based on what you can do. To then subject them to this scrutiny -- this is not a populist form of government. We're elected representatives. We are elected to pursue the will of the residents, and if we don't do that, we'll be out of office. But it's our job to address the Zoning Code and the rules. And if we want to effectuate certain things and certain changes, then we should pass zoning codes that reflect that. But we shouldn't tell people and property owners that even though they may have bought this property 10 years ago and have been paying property taxes on it for 10 years, and have been saving and planning to do the big development project that they wanted to do on their project pursuant to the existing rights of that project, "Well, now you have to hear what this neighborhood wants to tell you about it because, you know, we have very savvy residents." That's not the way this works. If they want resident input, they're welcome to get it; if they don't, they don't. But they should have a reasonable expectation that the rules and the laws and the Zoning Code that is in effect will be applied fairly to them and that they won't -- the process won't be made more difficult for them. And again, I don't see -- I don't know anybody that wants the process to be more difficult when they're doing things as of right. And again, this same exact thing I'm saying applies to single family, you know. We get complaints all the time from people that are trying to get plans through on changing their windows or whatever, putting a new roof or whatever it is, and they already feel the process is difficult to navigate and expensive to navigate. Making it more so to me is not a solution. If we want to effect change, if we want to see desired results, our Zoning Code should reflect that, and people should know what rights they have and don't have. They shouldn't be -- they shouldn't have the rug pulled out from under them when they finally go to do that project based on their existing rights that they've always had. And I think it's important, and frankly, I think it's incumbent on us



as Commissioners to look at residents and talk to residents and be honest with them about the fact that that's the way the process works, and that if we want to see a change, we should change that Code. And if we don't change the Code, then we shouldn't complain after when we get a result that's consistent with that Code. We have to be proactive. So, again, Aloft, great example, but terrible example because nobody here approved it, and nobody agrees with it. I'd love for anybody to point to a project that's been approved in the last few years that was not compliant with the existing Code, an as-of-right project. To my knowledge, there's not too many. And I think for the most part, our as-of-right process is pretty good. If we want to see different things, let's change the Code. That's my philosophy on that as a broader, you know, sort of philosophy on how we should govern and how the laws should be applied to residents, which include property owners in the City of Coral Gables.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. I hear you and let me just clarify so the public's not confused. The request has nothing to do with residential properties. We're talking about commercial developments, our central business district, areas where people have been making most of the comments. The residents now have an opportunity to provide their ideas at the [ideas@coralgables.com](mailto:ideas@coralgables.com). And we can have, you know, a discussion on what type of notice will satisfy the residents to feel that they have that opportunity to provide the input, whether it's this dashboard is sufficient or specific notice, you know, for a project is what they're looking for before the shovel hits the ground, okay.

Vice Mayor Mena: But why isn't it applied to single family?

Commissioner Anderson: Why isn't it applied...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: To single family?

Vice Mayor Mena: Why not?

Commissioner Anderson: Because we don't have the setback issues, and that's not what people are complaining about...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right, but...

Commissioner Anderson: That I've talked to.

Vice Mayor Mena: Then we change the setback, which we did recently, by the way, with the Zoning Code updates. We changed the setbacks along certain corridors. And if we want to change other setbacks, we should change those. But we would never subject a single-family homeowner to that process where they're doing things as of right and now, they have to go ask their neighbor if they agree with the windows they're putting. That's not the way it works.

Commissioner Anderson: We're talking about public sidewalks. We're talking about public space, you know...

Vice Mayor Mena: Let's do it. I'm all for it. Let's get more sidewalks.

Commissioner Anderson: You know...

Vice Mayor Mena: Let's pass laws that encourage that and bring it to fruition. But not, hey, we know you have a right to do this, but we're going to bring the pressure to bear on you from the community to make sure you do something that you're not required to do.

Commissioner Anderson: Alright. That's...

Vice Mayor Mena: It's incumbent on us to effectuate laws. This is basically a legislative body. It's incumbent on us to pass things that implement and bring about the things you want to see, the setbacks, the sidewalks, all those things.

Commissioner Anderson: To pedestrian safety issues.

Vice Mayor Mena: Absolutely.

Commissioner Anderson: None of which get heard on as-of-right projects, other than having public input.

Commissioner Fors: But by the way, I do think -- this is what I was getting at and this will be the last comment -- is I do think it has an effect on the single-family residences because you'll begin to get emails about people asking why has it taken a month...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Commissioner Fors: To get my red awning...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yep.

Commissioner Fors: Approved. And I'll say, "Well, they've been very busy. This month we had eight as-of-right projects, and there was eight meetings, and that's why your awning permit has been sitting there." I mean, it'd be something that wouldn't drain our resources if we were the Roman Empire, but we're very efficient, as efficient as we can be, and because of our rules and how careful we are in our Board of Architects, things already will never move that fast, which is not a bad thing. But you know, having meetings that won't result in anything that forces a builder to do anything differently anyway at the expense of efficiency in the single-family area is a major consideration for me.

Commissioner Menendez: I'd like to chime in. One thing the public can say, we've had a healthy discussion here, and I think that's important for the public to see that we're open for discussion to find solutions. And I commend Commissioner Anderson for bringing up this memorandum because there are a lot of important issues and topics there. I think at the end of the day, we can get to where the residents want greater transparency, greater accountability, just like Commissioner Lago has in his strategic priorities plan. But we need to follow a balanced approach, balancing the needs of the community to know what's happening and be able to have a voice, but at the same time, balancing that with the legal rights, the law, as it applies, as Commissioner Mena said, the Code. And then at the same time -- as I think we discussed -- our government -- we cannot tie the hands of our government. They need to be efficient and effective to be able to move forward in all levels. So, I encourage you, Commissioner Anderson, and perhaps working with the Administration, to see how we can get to that point that the residents want in a way that provides that balance. I think if we were able to find that common ground, I think we can get there. And I offer my whatever assistance or help you need to find that solution, but there is a solution. I agree with the Mediterranean bonus, we need to reassess that completely. The dashboard, I think one thing that's important that we fail to do sometimes as a city, as a city government, is getting the information into the hands of the community. It might be on our website, certain things, but perhaps we can email links so that the residents actually get it and open it. So, I think we're going to get there, what the community wants, accountability, transparency, but I think finding a balanced approach will be the right way to attack it.

City Manager Iglesias: And Commissioner, we will be providing a technology update at next Commission meeting that will deal with all these issues and where we will be by the end of '22, where it'll be not just a dashboard. It will be a complete dashboard with GIS. We are putting -- we are finishing all our enterprise program, and right now, what we did is we added that dashboard also to Planning while we're in the process of redoing our website, which is -- which we want to make it much more user-friendly. So, all these initiatives are coming in, and we will have a formal

presentation next Commission meeting on it so that you all know what's -- what we're planning to do by the end of next year.

Commissioner Menendez: And I'd like to go back to the point I made a little while ago -- and thank you for providing us with that information on the upgrades. I really want to find a way that we -- sometimes we communicate amongst ourselves here in the Commission meeting, elected officials, Administration, Law, Clerk, but sometimes we can do a better job of communicating with the public at large, with the ones that are watching on their computer, or on their TV, or here in public. So, you know, going forward, whatever it is that we are presented with, I want to find a way that we can get it in front of the residents, perhaps the ones that aren't watching. But there's so many exciting things going on in our City, things to look forward to that benefit the entire community, but I want to make sure that our residents actually know what's happening. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner. Commissioner Anderson, you have anything else you'd like to put on this item?

Commissioner Anderson: Not at this time, no.

Mayor Lago: Because I have one last item. I have one issue on this. I'd like for you -- since it is your item -- if you'd like to call for a sunshine meeting, I wouldn't gladly join you in that sunshine meeting because there are three points in your memo that I do want to talk in further detail, and I want to push forward. Number one is obviously number one. I'd like to find out a way that we can find some sort of compromise. Number two, I am -- I have -- I do have some concerns in regards to amending site plans. And the third and final one is the issue of the Mediterranean bonus. We can figure that out, and I think we can have a more thorough discussion in the sunshine in a sunshine meeting where we can maybe sit down for an hour or two hours and talk about it. I think it's much better and more appropriate than having it here in the Commission right now. If you

want to continue having it -- because I think we can talk a little more freely. The public is welcome to attend...

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Mayor Lago: But it's not in a Commission setting.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. Well, I would move then for a Sunshine meeting on these issues.

Mayor Lago: So, you coordinate with the Clerk and everyone's schedule and count me in at your convenience.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you.

Commissioner Fors: Likewise.

Mayor Lago: G-7.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before you continue, we did have several speakers who signed up for this past item.

Mayor Lago: Okay, then let them speak.

City Clerk Urquia: Before you -- Ms. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: I have several comments. Talking to people -- and you all know that I talk to a lot of people. I don't even know who they are, and they come to me -- it's been made very clear from the people that have approached me that upzoning needs to be addressed by the people that are going to be affected, not by people that have nothing to win or lose. And somebody suggested, maybe we need to look into something like, I guess it was Bal Harbour or Bay Harbor, one of those places, where when something is that important, it needs to go to a referendum and let the people say what they want. Okay, that's one idea. The amending of site plans, I hear that we don't do it, but listen, that's not the perception that people have. The perception that people have is that the City Attorney and the City Manager can grant certain things that they do not understand why. I'm giving you -- okay. The of right, there is a right -- when I -- let's say I'm a developer and I buy a certain property. And I agree with you, I buy it knowing what I can build there. But then I come to you all and I said, but you know, if I do what I can do, I'm not going to make -- it's not going to be profitable X. When you buy a property, you better look and see what you can do. That applies to people that buy homes, that applies -- I'm sorry. Don't come to me and say, "I bought this little house, but now I want to make a three-story house, and you know, you need to help me." No. People need to be aware, and this is part of the -- what government needs to tell them. When you're going to buy a property, make sure that what you want to do with it, you can do it, because there will be no exceptions. Because otherwise, we'll be back here every time because, you know, people are very savvy. They go buy a little place, and then they decide, "Oh, you know, I only have one kid then, but now I have four, so I need five rooms." Hello? When you bought it, that's what you got, okay. And we expect the elected officials to hold the line. And listen, some of us are tired of people coming for exceptions. There should be no exceptions; you get what you got. You know, don't tell me you bought a little Cruze like I have, but you expected it to be a Tesla, so you take it back and say, "Wait, that's not what I wanted." Too bad. You have to follow the rules. And this is the big issue that people have, that they see people taking advantage, okay. You know, they manipulate. They know how to play the system, okay. I, for one -- and I made a promise that I'm going to be watching Planning and Zoning. And you know what, when people go to Planning and Zoning, they should not be in -- it hurts people to hear, "Well, but you know, you cannot do it this way, but you could do it this way." That's not our job. They come and tell you this is what I

want to do. Sorry, you can't do that. Why should we be in the business of telling them how they can manipulate? That should not be our problem. And this is what you hear from the everyday person. We are very concerned about sometimes -- not all the time -- sometimes the developers not being able to make money. Frankly, that's not my problem. If they bought the wrong lot, sell it, and buy someplace else. They cannot -- you know, this issue of coming here and claiming, "Well, you know, I won't be able to make money." That's not my problem. It shouldn't be our problem, okay. And this is the serious stuff. This is why people are upset because they see sometimes, we bend this way, sometimes we don't bend. You know, it has to be the same for everyone. We do have rules. Let's follow the rules, as simple as that. Don't buy something in Coral Gables and expect it to be changed so you can do what you want to do. I think if you sent out that message when you buy a property, make sure you buy the right thing or you're stuck, sell it. Okay, because the msg has to be clear we're not going to grant waivers. We're not going to -- you know, you get what you got, end of the story. And people -- I'm telling you, most of your residents are fair enough to say, you know, that's right. If they bought it and they could do it, we can't take it away, but don't add to what they can do, okay? That's the issue.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Menendez: Thank you.

Ms. Cruz: You're welcome.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, next we have Monica Avellaneda.

Mayor Lago: How are you? Thank you for your patience. Please give us your name and your address, please. Thank you.

Monica Avellaneda: Can you hear me?



Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Avellaneda: Alright. My name is Monica Avellaneda. I am a resident of the City of Coral Gables at 1111 Andora Avenue. I also own a small apartment building in Coral Gables at 727 Almeria. I thank the lady that came before me with her comments, and I appreciate the time -- the Commission's time to let me speak. The reason I'm here -- and it has to do with the permitting process and with all of this that we're talking about in terms of City officials then working with developers to make things happen for them. As the owner of a small apartment building, which is on a 100 by 5,000 lot in Coral Gables -- so it's just a square box with eight units -- I would like to share the experience of us as owners of that as an example of why the residents of Coral Gables are quite perturbed about the process and how it's working today, because this is an example of how it can impact individuals and small businessowners, like my husband and myself. So, the City gave our next-door neighbor developer a permit to build a townhouse project with a zero-lot line to the side of our property. As such, there is now a 40-foot wall, which is on their -- right at the very edge of their property. Every inch to our side is our property, and our wall -- the wall of our building -- is now five feet away from that 40-foot wall. They are now expecting to enter our five feet to enter that space in order to be able to finish their wall, to stucco and paint their wall. Also, in the process of building their 40-foot wall, they have damaged our building, our property, leaving stucco splatters on our walls, or windows, or roof, our exterior floors, our landscaping. So, ultimately, we are, as owners of that property, perplexed, and we don't understand how it is that the City can approve a construction project such as this that would force the owner of the adjacent property to have to grant access and sustain damages to our private property so that others can build and develop. So, we're wondering why before approving such building plans or these particular building plans, the City did not ensure that, one, us, the next-door neighbor, had either consented to providing access to these developers to then enter our property and damage our property to be able to build and finish; or two, that the owner of the construction development would then provide the necessary setbacks on their property so that they can then finish their property without impacting or damaging mine, or having to trespass onto my property to be able to finish their project. In the meantime, part of the reason that you see me here today in a white

T-shirt and white pants as opposed to better dressed for the occasion is because, as I drove by my property today, I happened to see that there was a crane that was being put through the five feet, okay. My building is a two-story apartment building. I have tenants who have windows looking out five feet onto that wall, and they now find themselves with a crane and somebody sitting inside the crane one -- two feet away from their window who can look into their private living space, okay, while they also potentially perform the work of finishing that wall. And so, I have -- while I was dealing with that, ultimately came to the Commission meeting. We have been willing to negotiate with this developer. There -- they -- and we've done so on several occasions in the past, but they have not demonstrated any good will, good faith cooperation thus far, and have instead chosen to continue to trespass on our property. So, today was not the first time. It's about the third or fourth time. They tried to put that crane through our property before. In the meantime, I have been informed that the City Attorney or the Deputy Attorney have given them permission and have told them that as long as their foot is not touching down on our property -- which would presumably mean that as long as that crane is just an inch above our property -- that they are being permitted to continue to do this work, to trespass onto our property, to violate the private space, right, the privacy rights of our tenants, and to continue to damage our property in the meantime. So, I share this experience with you, okay, because it seems to me that there should be that part of the building process -- and this is not huge red tape, I don't think. But I think that before giving permits to builders and developers, that the private property rights of the adjacent property owners should be taken into consideration. And also, in the short term, I would really love to hear from any of you about what I can also do about our predicament in the meantime. I was told by the police today who I called -- previously, I wrote to the City, Suramy Cabrera and that development team. They told me that the City had no right to give permission or to allow people to trespass onto our property, and that I should therefore call the police whenever that happened. As I said, I heard today that they have now been given permission by the attorneys to put this crane into our five feet, and so, you know...

Mayor Lago: May I ask you a...

Ms. Avellaneda: I put myself in your hands.

Mayor Lago: May I ask you a quick question?

Ms. Avellaneda: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I'm in this line of work, so I understand where you're going through and what this gentleman is trying to achieve. Ms. Cabrera, do you know -- or maybe this is a question for Mr. Cejas. Was this an as-of-right project? Was this project within the confines of the Code? Because I went to visit this site yesterday, and I saw the setback between both properties. Was the setback within the Code?

Deputy Development Services Director Cejas: Yes, it was, Mayor. It was in the (INAUDIBLE) project townhouse and it was as of right.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Because, you know, the last thing that you want to see is having two neighbors in an adversarial situation. You told me that you negotiated with the neighbor next door.

Ms. Avellaneda: Well, we've had conversations.

Mayor Lago: I had a conversation. By the way, the gentleman called me yesterday, and he told me, you know, "I want to finish this project. I want to make it look beautiful. I want to make my neighbor happy. I want to stucco the wall in between my project and yourself's property." So, I want to go see it, you know, looking to see how we could find some common ground to make this happen. If I was yourself, I would want that wall to be stuccoed because I think it's a lot more appealing, especially with having a 40-foot building next to you, which our Zoning Director just told us was an as of right, never came to the Commission for approval that I'm aware of because it's not mixed-use that I'm aware of. I can't remember. So, if you have a 40-foot wall where it's a two- or three-story townhouse, I think that stucco would be the most appropriate instead of leaving

it just raw block and concrete, which I don't think is very aesthetically pleasing, and I know your setback is very tight. I don't know the full details of the negotiations, but my understanding was that the owner of the townhomes made you some offers to try to help compensate you for the construction and being -- having access to your property. And I don't know what the exact numbers were, I don't know if it was sufficient, but from what he told me, it was painting your entire building and changing all the windows in your property.

Ms. Avellaneda: That's not the case.

Mayor Lago: I'm just putting it on the record from what he told me. What he told me was he would paint your building and change all the windows for impact, or he would provide you all the money -- he would give you the invoices and you could do it yourself and he'd just pay for it so it could get done. That's what he told me. The reason why I bring that up is because a solution has to be found. I think it's...

Ms. Avellaneda: We're not in disagreement with that.

Mayor Lago: No, no. I think -- and if you're not going to allow for a swing stage or you're not going to allow for scaffolding to be used on -- to do the stucco work, there has to be some sort of resolution. I think it's in the best interest of yourself that you allow them to stucco that wall so that it's something a little bit more beautiful instead of just having what it currently looks like, which I think is very unappealing. Just my opinion. I think you feel the same way. So, I went to see it yesterday because he asked me to get involved. And I said, "Listen, this is an issue that you need to deal with your neighbor and the City Attorney and find the resolution." I find it interesting that you're here today. And I think this goes in line with Commissioner Anderson's memo today.

Ms. Avellaneda: I believe it does.

Mayor Lago: But these are the type of situations where the disputes between residents are left up to our City Attorney.

City Attorney Ramos: Mr. Mayor, if I may address the allegation.

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Attorney Ramos: So, yes, this is in fact a private dispute, and that's what we've been saying from the beginning. Every time the property owner has called the police out, the police, you know, feel like they're not sure what they're supposed to do in the situation because, in fact, it's a private dispute, and that's what we've maintained. The problem is that the developer reached out to us because they were concerned that if they brought in a crane...

Mayor Lago: Yep.

City Attorney Ramos: They would then fall into the same situation and would be arrested or have some sort of situation. We did the research. There is a case directly on point that says that an aerial crane going over a property is not a trespass. Legally, it's not a trespass.

Ms. Avellaneda: And it's not...

City Attorney Ramos: It's not me. It's a court of law that has said that.

Ms. Avellaneda: Yeah, it's...

City Attorney Ramos: Relying on that decision, we told the developers, please let us know when you will be there so that everyone is alerted so that police do not, you know, perform an arrest thinking there's a trespass where there is not, and that's what occurred this morning. It's a civil matter between the two of them. The City is trying to not get involved.

City Manager Iglesias: Let me say, Mayor...

Ms. Avellaneda: May I speak?

City Manager Iglesias: If I could say something, Mayor.

Ms. Avellaneda: May I just address the comment?

Mayor Lago: Go ahead, ma'am.

City Manager Iglesias: I just want to say that we've addressed this in the new Zoning Code. It's five feet now when you have an adjacent property. In addition to that, we've had this problem many times when the crane weathervanes and you cannot lock a crane or it will fall down, so we've had this issue on many occasions here in many cities, where there is equipment sometimes that has to weathervane or you can't build. And there's been a number of court decisions that allow weathervaning and things like this over private property.

Mayor Lago: So, yes, ma'am, go ahead.

Ms. Avellaneda: So, sorry, and I would like to understand more about...

Mayor Lago: But I think...

Ms. Avellaneda: What Mr. Iglesias had to say but...

Mayor Lago: But I think what we can do, ma'am...

Ms. Avellaneda: It's not over my property.

Mayor Lago: Ma'am, what I think we can do...

Ms. Avellaneda: I should say it's between, alright.

Mayor Lago: Ma'am...

Ms. Avellaneda: So, it's right, you know, where...

Mayor Lago: It is over your property.

Ms. Avellaneda: Yeah, but I mean, an inch over my property...

Mayor Lago: But let me...

Ms. Avellaneda: Does that count?

Mayor Lago: Why don't we do this...

Ms. Avellaneda: So...

Mayor Lago: Why don't we...

Ms. Avellaneda: And also -- sorry -- while the developer has come and talked to you, all of you, I have also...

Mayor Lago: I don't know if he's talked to everybody. I know he talked to me.

Ms. Avellaneda: Okay, he talked to you.

Mayor Lago: He called me yesterday.

Ms. Avellaneda: Alright. And you know, I would love to be able to be on telephone, ability to speak with you, Mr. Lago. I wrote you an email about this about two weeks ago, shortly after you became Mayor. I have written to other Commissioners. I have also written to the City Attorney, Suramy Cabrera, the City Manager. I have not received any emails or replies from them...

Mayor Lago: What is your full name?

Ms. Avellaneda: The way they have given replies to the developer. In the same way that the developer received an email from Christina Suarez, the Deputy City Attorney, letting them know that this permission had been granted to them, that email was never sent to me. I was never invited to have a conversation despite the fact that I requested meetings with the City Attorney to discuss the topic. And while I understand that the developer would like to cry very much in all of you all's ears about the dragon lady who is unreasonable despite all of the many -- I'm sure -- super generous offers that he has made to us, at no time has anybody really been willing to listen to me or to give us, you know, the appointment or to reply to our emails. But the people who do get the access and whose requests are replied to and are listened to and -- are the developers.

Mayor Lago: Ma'am, what is...

Ms. Avellaneda: Right, so...

Mayor Lago: What is your full name? What is your full name, so I can look up your email so I can see if you -- when you wrote me an email.

Ms. Avellaneda: Yeah, M-A-V-E...



Mayor Lago: M-A.

Ms. Avellaneda: V-E-L-L-A-N-E-D-A. And I wrote you that email on April 26.

Vice Mayor Mena: Mavella?

Ms. Avellaneda: Mavellaneda, yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't have an email either, ma'am.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, I don't, ma'am.

Ms. Avellaneda: No. Yeah, I sent it to Mr. Lago...

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Ms. Avellaneda: And to one other Commissioner.

Vice Mayor Mena: I've also never spoken to the developer, nor do I...

Ms. Avellaneda: Yeah, no.

Vice Mayor Mena: Nor do I even know who...

Ms. Avellaneda: Not to you.

Vice Mayor Mena: The developer is.

Ms. Avellaneda: I haven't written to you.

Vice Mayor Mena: This is the first I hear of this.

Mayor Lago: I have an email from you from today at 11:25 AM.

Ms. Avellaneda: And that one also from today.

City Attorney Ramos: And I again want to make clear...

Mayor Lago: I have an email from you today.

City Attorney Ramos: We gave no permission. There was no permission...

Mayor Lago: Yeah.

City Attorney Ramos: To give.

Ms. Avellaneda: Well, we were told that they apparently were showing the police today while I was there an email, and they mentioned Christina Suarez....

City Attorney Ramos: All that the email said was...

Ms. Avellaneda: As being the person...

City Attorney Ramos: Before conducting an arrest, they should reach out to our office, that's all.

Ms. Avellaneda: Okay, well, the police seemed to have taken that to mean today that they stopped them from the work today simply because I stood under the crane, and I guess that kind of threw them. I think the gentleman might know something about it here. But ultimately, they stopped

them from working today, but I have been informed by the police that starting tomorrow, those guys are allowed to do that work and that they will be finishing the project...

Mayor Lago: Let me clarify...

Ms. Avellaneda: As per the instructions they have received from the...

Mayor Lago: Excuse me.

Ms. Avellaneda: Attorney.

Mayor Lago: Excuse me. Let me clarify something because you made a comment before...

Ms. Avellaneda: Okay.

Mayor Lago: That I take to heart, and I want to be very clear. And everyone in this room can tell you, you have not written me an email, okay. You wrote me an email...

Ms. Avellaneda: Vlago@coralgables.com.

Mayor Lago: You wrote me an email today at 11:25, okay.

Ms. Avellaneda: Okay, well...

Mayor Lago: So -- but no, no, no, no, no.

Ms. Avellaneda: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Let's stop for a second because you said that I didn't respond to you. And let me be clear, I respond to every single resident. In eight years, I haven't missed one email. I take a lot of pride -- and if I did miss an email, I don't have a problem admitting it. Okay, if you read (sic) me an email, I will respond to, you just like I respond to every single person in this community. But you did not write me an email. You wrote me today an email where you copied Rhonda Anderson, who is my colleague to the right here, at 11:25, asking -- saying, "Dear Ms. Anderson and Mr. Lago, today the Althea Townhouse project introduced a crane into my property again. I was told that they received permission from Christina Suarez, the City Attorney, to finish their work as long as they do not touch the ground on my property, effectively allowing them to trespass on my property, violate the privacy of my tenants and damage my property in the process. I would appreciate meeting to discuss. Please let me know." Number one, you've been in this Commission. You've been speaking here for maybe 10 or 15 minutes. I don't have a problem with you being here, none of my colleagues do. This is your right. We represent you. But please, please don't mislead anyone and say that I did not respond to you because if anybody in this community here knows, they know that I'm far from perfect, but one thing I do is I am transparent. I am upfront and I listen to the residents. So, when the developer called me, he says the only purpose he called me was very simple, was I need to find a solution with my neighbor. I want it to be an amicable solution. Help me find a solution. I said, "I'll help you. I'll help you find a solution." I asked, "Do you have the lady's number? Do you have her contact information?" He says, "I'm trying to figure out what I can do to finish the project." That was the only intent of the meeting. So, if you are in the mood and you are willing to sit down, I will facilitate a meeting between you and the gentleman to see how you can find some common ground and move forward and finish this project. But from my understanding -- and I will put it on the record again -- again, he told me he was willing to paint your entire building, and he was willing to change your windows to impact windows in your entire building. I'm in the business. No one can tell me, as we say in Cuban, *un cuento*, a story, okay. I know what that costs. That's a lot of money.

Ms. Avellaneda: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: It's a lot of money. It's over six figures easily for your building.

Ms. Avellaneda: Well, it's not what he said that...

Mayor Lago: Okay, but I'm saying what he told me. So, if you would like for me to facilitate a meeting so we can resolve this issue so everybody can walk away because -- you know, happy to a certain extent, I'm more than willing to do that.

Ms. Avellaneda: Okay, thank you.

Mayor Lago: And we can go -- after this meeting, we can schedule time with my assistant and the City Attorney's Office can join us to make sure that everything is done accordingly, and we can schedule a meeting with you and the developer so we can hopefully get this all resolved. Is that okay?

Ms. Avellaneda: I think that would be great and I would...

Mayor Lago: So, if you give me 15...

Ms. Avellaneda: Appreciate that.

Mayor Lago: Minutes and we can finish this meeting; I'll meet you in my office. Thank you very much.

Ms. Avellaneda: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: I look forward -- my office is here to the left. Ask for Chelsea or for Patty. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we also have Mr. Jackson "Rip" Holmes who'd like to speak.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes, please state your name and address for the record. You have...

Jackson "Rip" Holmes: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: You have three minutes.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you. Jackson "Rip" Holmes, 35 Sidonia Avenue, in Coral Gables. I need to refute what you just said about responding to all emails. There's lots of emails I've sent you that you have not responded to. And you say that you're transparent, but how come in our many meetings you never informed me that there was a Zoning Code rewrite afoot and that you were supporting remote parking? Where's the transparency in that? You led me to believe just the opposite.

Commissioner Fors: Are these comments -- I think we're still on Rhonda's memorandum.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Mayor Lago: We still are, yes.

Mr. Holmes: Okay. So, I'm just following up...

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, okay.

Mr. Holmes: On the last woman. I think that it's very disheartening to me to see the way that her -- that Ms. Ander -- Commissioner Anderson's proposal to get notice on as-of-right development projects is being treated. And in fairness to the people involved, I'm disappointed -- if I'm honest with you -- with the Mayor's response and even with Commissioner Menendez's response. And

rather than beat around the bush, I hope that you all can follow me to my next step. I think there's too much financial influence of developers on our campaigns. Take your average person who's running for office. Can they possibly even be elected without developer donations? What I think we need to do is what the City of Miami Beach has done, and that is prohibit developer donations to City elections. Maybe Commissioner Anderson, Mr. Fors -- Commissioner Fors and Commissioner Menendez will be able to take this up and put it on the agenda. We need to ban developer contributions just as the City of Miami Beach has done.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Vice Mayor Mena: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Dr. Gordon Sokoloff.

Mayor Lago: Dr. Sokoloff, please place your address on the record. The floor is yours.

Gordon Sokoloff: Hi there, me again. Gordon Sokoloff, 225 Alesio Avenue, in Coral Gables. First of all, I know we all want to break for lunch, so I'll try to keep it very short. Mayor, I want to thank you for your first meeting showing a culture of fairness and respect to the residents, something that we haven't seen in a while.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mr. Sokoloff: So, thank you for that. Secondly, I want to just re-emphasize the website is in major need of revamping. As the Chairman of the Transportation Board, my minutes, even the announcement of my meetings, has not been in there. Several members of the community have told me that, and I have mentioned it at my past few TAB meetings, and I hope that gets corrected.

Third, I don't want to re-litigate the Zoning Code rewrite with the Commission, other than to say, I had asked, as the TAB chairman and as resident and one of the members of the Ponce de Leon Homeowner Association, that there's a difference between an abridged edition of that thousand-page document and a layman's term edition. We did get an abridged edition, but it was not that understandable, even Commissioner Fors attested that it was hard for him to understand it and many people had trouble understanding it. So, I think to Commissioner Anderson's point, there needs to be more transparency and attentiveness given to what the residents would like. Fourth, I want to ask -- I don't know if this is a legitimate question to ask to solicit your answers, but I wonder who among you on the Commission and Mayor, who would vote for the Plaza, in favor of the Plaza as you see it today if it came before you. Would you all vote in favor of that mammoth structure or not? I guess -- anyone tell me that? And if you don't want to comment, that's alright, but let's move -- I want to move across the street where Allen Morris -- there is one Planning and Zoning meeting, which I attended. And to Commissioner Mena's point, you know, I would love nothing more than for you to put developers and homeowners in a level playing field. They're far from it. The developers have such an edge over the residents. They are able to play "Let's Make a Deal." And forget under the table. We don't know -- and God forbid anything happens under the table -- but over the table, they say we're going to build you a park and we're going to do this and we're going to make Ponce beautiful. In exchange, we want you to double the size and allow us to go 17 -- 14 stories instead of seven. We want you to give us a street. We want you to give us an alley. Well, thank God that hasn't come back in front of the Planning and Zoning Board, and I shudder to think what would happen if it did come in front of the Commission. But it is not a level playing field between the private citizens and the developers and I wish that it were. I value what Commissioner Anderson is trying to get across. And like you said, Commissioner Mena, certain things get past the Planning and Zoning Board. Terranova was one of them. Terranova was passed by the Planning and Zoning Board to have a building, a seven-story hotel on Miracle Mile and Ponce, utilizing the back alley as their personal driveway. And thank God it went in front of the Mayor and it got voted down, but it took the Transportation Board to bring that up to the Commission's attention because that project had traffic impact studies done and they passed that. They said it's not going to create a problem, and we know it would have wreaked havoc at



Main and Main, in the middle of Coral Gables. So, I think there is no such thing as too much interaction with the residents. I encourage it. I applaud Commissioner Anderson for what she's trying to bring up, and I think that the barge or a conduit by which you can obtain more input into these projects that are put in front of the Commission or the Planning and Zoning Board -- and I hope that in the future the Transportation Advisory Board is brought into more projects than it's been included in in the past. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Doctor. Thank you so much. Mr. Clerk.

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

Mayor Lago: Alright. Is there any further discussion on G-6? I think we left it at I would like for Commissioner Anderson -- at her convenience -- to call for a sunshine meeting, and we can talk about the issues in her memo.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes. We'll do a sunshine meeting. The public is welcome. We'll get the input we need. I also can provide the input through the listening tour at [ideas@coralgables.com](mailto:ideas@coralgables.com).

Mayor Lago: Perfect, okay.