

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
May 9, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

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)

Agenda Item F-1 [12:02:50 p.m.]

Discussion regarding school and park protection zones
(Sponsored by Commissioner Keon)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: F-1 – Madam City Manager.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: This is a discussion item that Commissioner Keon provided for the agenda. Commissioner, Vice Mayor, my apologies, did you want to frame the item and then we have staff here; we have met, we have talked through the issue. If you want to hear how we might approach it should you wish to move forward, we are prepared to do so.

Vice Mayor Keon: OK. I put it on, so I could have the discussion with my colleagues on creating some sort of a zone around our pocket parks that we have created and also around our schools. We are especially aware of the condition of the swales and the problems with people parking on Sunset, across from Sunset Elementary and we regularly get letters from our residents that live in that area. Previously we passed some legislation allowing for planting in the swales when the canopy is such that someone can't grow grass or whatever else, but it may be an opportunity for us to – I mean the signage that's there certainly doesn't deter anybody from parking, so possibly

that if we would maybe look at actually planting those swales it might deter people from, I mean I would hope people would not just roll over and park on top of all of that very nicely planted area. It would discourage people from parking, we would also improve the aesthetics of those major corridors, that's one part of it I'd like, and I know that before we would do it, we certainly would talk to the residents that live along Sunset to make sure...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And Corsica Street.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes, Corsica, a number of those streets, you know around the corners on those streets, so that we can help the residents in those areas deal with the traffic and the parking related to the school, particularly with the schools that are magnet schools, because they draw from all over the County, they are not children walking to school or biking to school or whatever else their parents. It seems that younger parents have a need to park and walk their children into school instead of dropping them off. The other thing was the parks, the neighborhood parks that we have purchased, those parks are really designed to be a 10 to 15 minute walk from the neighborhood, so they are also designed to not have any parking available on the swale for those parks; and I think maybe we should look at also planting that swale area, so that we don't have people coming from distances to park there. I know there needs to be some provision for the maintenance people to be able to park or to be there; and also because of those neighborhood parks, I know particularly the one on Lisbon, the residents along there that use that park have complained about the speed of traffic along Lisbon, because it's a very long area between Eighth Street and the first traffic sign, so the speed does tend to build up as it goes by the park, and with them crossing children, with their children crossing into the park. If we could maybe do things like just change the texture of the road in front of those parks to be maybe a cobble stone or some sort of, it's not necessarily doing speed bumps, or whatever else, but a change in the texture of the street in front of the park or places where we know children will gather to play that we can look at those type of items. I just placed it on as a discussion item and ask for your input and your thoughts on the whole issue.

Commissioner Mena: I would just add, I live on a corner of a park and see a lot of these issues sort of with the front row seat, if you will. One of the things that the park near my house, which is Kerdyk Park, has done about the parking on the swales, I don't know when this was done, but at some point in time they curbed the swale, so you can't physically park on the swale anymore and that was very effective. With respect to the speed issue, I agree with you, I think we need to look into that very carefully, because the park by my house and I'm sure the park near your house is, people go there and let their kids run loose and they want to feel safe there and they should, and so we should pay special attention to that, there is no question. On the school point you made about sort of the parking and issues like that, that's also an issue I have a front row seat to. My street sign at...at the end a lot of people park there to go to Sunset Elementary and

take their kids, it's pretty much a parking lot in the morning and this is in front of people's homes. To me that's as much as anything an enforcement issue, and we talk about that a lot and I don't mean to "beat a dead horse on this", we only have a certain amount of schools in the City, we know which ones the big ones are, we know when drop-off is, and we know when pick-up is. We should be able to address that with enforcement, I would think pretty swiftly and the minute you start addressing it in that way, I think you'll see behavior change, and so, I think that's something that we really need to look into for these areas, because it really does impact the neighborhood nearby.

Vice Mayor Keon: Yes – and Sunset I think probably is maybe for right now is the most egregious of all of the schools with regard to the parking and the problems that they create in the neighborhood and on the swales.

Commissioner Mena: And to that point, we talk a lot about this dialogue we have with the County and some of the restrictions it places on us. They are operating a school there and they should have enough parking and facilities necessary to accommodate the people who are attending that school, and if they don't well then we need to have that discussion.

Vice Mayor Keon: We've had that discussion numerous times.

Commissioner Lago: This is your first day and you are going to get real wet on this issue, so let's talk about that. I've been on the ground with ACM Iglesias and I think probably all of staff has been with me probably a dozen times, half a dozen to a dozen times in reference to Sunset. The issue there is, again, they have stacking, but what happens is parents are late, we run late, all of us every day on the way to work, and they don't want to get in the line to stack to drop off their children right on Sunset. So, what they do is they invade the neighborhood and basically they have to park on the swales or they park in people's driveways blocking people. There have been physical altercations that have occurred on Sunset when somebody has tried to leave their home and they can't leave, because they are blocked in by an individual who is dropping off their child. On many occasions when I've been there, you see people destroying swales; you have Riviera, Riviera Health Systems adjacent to it where all the employees park illegally. I think we have addressed certain portions of those concerns. You also have an issue with the fact that a great multitude of the individuals that attend Sunset are not Coral Gables residents. So, it goes back to what I've said before, 700,000 people driving into our City, in and around our City on a daily basis. We've addressed it; we are putting our Neighborhood Safety Aids. At one point, I saw two or three of them in the morning trying to move traffic. The School Board and I have a great respect for the School Board, I do a lot of work for the School Board; the School Board again, they can only in my opinion control what's within the boundaries of the school. They are not going to assign us somebody to be working the parameter of the school. So, what ends up

happening is it falls on us and what we have to do is make sure that people comply; and again, it's very difficult, because they are parking as deep as two or three blocks in on Sunset. So, what you've got to do is, every single person who takes their child and drops them off on the side of the street, you got to tell them no, you have to wait in line. No, but I'm running late. So, it's a big issue. It's a major issue.

Commissioner Mena: I am two blocks in, actually, and every single morning for years there are dozens and dozens of cars, and honestly the biggest concern to me as somebody who drives by them every single morning is, you've got a bunch of kids running, jumping out of cars, getting ready to go to school, they are running late, it's dangerous.

Commissioner Lago: Would you like to know what I told staff and they disagreed with me wholeheartedly. I told staff, I see everybody looking at me really quickly, because you know exactly where I'm going, I said, let's put curbs. The residents all want curbs; let's put curbs in, so that way we immediately eliminate the ability...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Why would staff disagree with you?

Vice Mayor Keon: Drainage purpose.

Commissioner Lago: Drainage purpose, it's an eyesore, but I asked staff, I'm going to end my comment with this, I ask you, the four of you to go and we'll call a Sunshine meeting and we'll go now before school ends, and I would like to the assault on the neighborhood; and I've been out there with everybody.

Vice Mayor Keon: I think everyone has seen it, that's why we are looking for how do we begin to proactively deal with that issue; and part of the problem with curbing it is that on the side streets is it doesn't give the resident the opportunity to use their swale for their purposes, but maybe we can create a planted area all along Sunset from the school all the way down, all the way down to Amare, all the way in front of the Coco Plum Women's Club, all the way down that will not allow people to park on the swales.

Commissioner Lago: That's not the main issue.

Vice Mayor Keon: They are going to have to go someplace – the employees and whatever else from Riviera Health Center or whatever it is there are going to have to go, they are going to have to deal with their own issue of parking, because they can't continue to destroy the swales.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: How do you feel about the swale idea, I mean curbing idea?

Vice Mayor Keon: The only problem with the curbing idea is that it then prevents, not Sunset, on the side streets, it then doesn't allow the resident to be able to use the swale for guest parking. That's a real problem, I think. That would be a problem for the residential population.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Same thing on Sunset though.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So Mr. Mayor, if you would like if it's the prerogative of the dais, we did meet, we did meet with staff to identify certain solutions that we would be able to implement, including the residential parking zones, which today we charge, but if you within that neighborhood protection zone we would do it fee free. They have spoken about several different issues specifically about Sunset, but also applicable to Coral Gables Prep and to some of the other schools where we have received concern, if you'd like us to talk about it now, or at a future meeting?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We can talk about it at the May 30th meeting.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Of course.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Please put it on the agenda.

[End: 12:15:15 p.m.]