

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-3
June 12, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-3 [6:22:37 p.m.]

Discussion on concurrency requirements for traffic calming
(Sponsored by Commissioner Mena)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Commissioner Mena – discussion on concurrency requirements for traffic calming.

Commissioner Mena: Remind me what number that is.

Vice Mayor Quesada: It's H-3.

Commissioner Mena: H-3 – alright. So, I referenced this earlier, but long story short, this is Commissioner Lago and I and I think everybody in the past few meetings have talked about getting our ducks in a row on concurrency issues, so that once the agreement with the County is finalized, we can actually move forward with the traffic calming. So, I had asked Peter Iglesias and Ed to prepare a proposal for us, which they'll present to us now.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Actually, Commissioner Mena so you know, earlier today when you were out, we had a conversation as to traffic calming with the Mayor and Commissioner Lago had brought up that they were going to quickly and swiftly give us how we can have more traffic calming throughout the City, which is ancillary related to this, just so you are aware of that.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So, the goal here is obviously to facilitate the implementation of traffic calming interests and increase public safety and mobility in the neighborhood streets throughout the City. So concurrency is something that is a complicating factor, because presently the City follows traffic flow modification street closure procedures, which are dictated by Miami-Dade County; and there are concurrency requirements that are attached to these procedures. Right now the concurrency requirements include a 100 percent approval from adjacent property owners for all traffic calming devices and two-thirds residents' approval for all traffic flow modifications other than traffic circles. Obviously that means that it complicates our ability to reach accomplishments in terms of traffic calming in certain areas.

Vice Mayor Quesada: You said County requirement, right?

Public Works Director Santamaria: That's right now what is written in the guidelines for us.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think that this is a smoke screen frankly. I live on North Greenway and every single neighbor in North Greenway would concur to having a traffic calming even in front of his or her house or between two houses. We have never tested this. This keeps coming up and I don't hear any effort to implement anything and we use concurrency as an excuse not to do anything and I think that's wrong.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So Mr. Mayor....

Commissioner Mena: We've had some situation and there is one on Alhambra Circle and is it Dorado, Vince, right.

Commissioner Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: There was a proposed circle...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'll get you concurrency on North Greenway, let's put them up. That shouldn't be an excuse.

Commissioner Lago: Well we have it in one of our neighborhoods and it's a major issue, because we have Blue Road and you have, obviously the Alhambra issue there.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So, what we are trying to do actually is to lower the bar on concurrency so we can actually...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Even if the bar is as high as it is in concurrency that the adjacent property owners have to concur. Let's get it done when the adjacent property owners concur.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So Mr. Mayor, I think what I'm hearing from you is that North Greenway is an issue and we'll have a thorough investigation, complete with traffic studies and...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'll get you the neighbors' consent. You want it tomorrow?

Public Works Director Santamaria: That would be great Mr. Mayor. The thing is that we have to go through the process as it stands right now.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Don't use concurrency any more as an excuse.

Public Works Director Santamaria: I'm sorry.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's not use concurrency any more as an excuse.

Commissioner Mena: That's the goal of this item is to lower the requirements.

Public Works Director Santamaria: We are squarely behind you sir. Squarely behind addressing the concurrency issue to allow us to do more things.

Commissioner Lago: Right now it's moving in the direction that's going to be handled by the City Attorney and County Attorney, that's the last hurdle, correct Director?

Public Works Director Santamaria: Yes sir.

Commissioner Lago: I want to see you smile. I know you've been through a lot on this issue. Fake it, at least fake it, alright. I know you've been through a lot, so trust me. We get it from the residents too.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I do get it from the residents.

Commissioner Lago: I said we. We are still here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But not North Greenway.

Commissioner Lago: I'll go over there.

Public Works Director Santamaria: We do have guiding policies and regulations that actually are in support of lowering concurrency standards. One is the Comprehensive Plan, which calls for...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Wait, wait, wait. But, if we do get over the concurrency issue by the neighbors agreeing, can we put them up?

Public Works Director Santamaria: It is subject to any warrants that may develop.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Public Works Director Santamaria: Subject to any warrants that may develop. In other words we have to do a study and if it meets the traffic calming criteria that is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If I get you concurrency from ten neighbors...

Commissioner Mena: It's not just concurrency is what he's saying.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But, I keep hearing concurrency and concurrency shouldn't be an issue.

Commissioner Mena: But that's this item.

Public Works Director Santamaria: What we are trying to do here sir is just to clarify is that there are many times where we have situations that warranted traffic calming and because of one neighbor or two neighbors, the traffic calming was not possible to implement, because of the concurrency requirements. So, this is the situation that we are trying to address. And so, our proposed changes are to adopt concurrency requirements for all traffic calming devices. We are talking about everything from your flattop speed hump, to traffic circles, to any kind of horizontal alterations to the roadway, and vertical, either creating chicanes or pinch points or narrowing the pavement. So, our traffic calming concurrency requirements would drop to no concurrency whatsoever for situations where we have a history of crashes, whether the crashes be vehicle or pedestrian or cycling, where there is a history of crashes in the interest of life safety and public safety there would be no concurrency requirements; and in fact typically, what happens where there is a history and it meets a certain threshold of a certain number of accidents,

I believe the accident number is five, then that gives you an automatic warrant to implement traffic calming. So, in that case there will be no concurrency requirements. And so, we also recommend that 50 percent of concurrency unless it's the will of the Commission to consider something that's even lower, what we require that the street meets traffic calming warrants without a history of crashes. That's our recommendation.

Commissioner Mena: Because that would be the product of either a high volume or high speed of traffic in a given location?

Public Works Director Santamaria: It would be meeting the traffic calming criteria that is in effect at the time. Right now we are still working with the old criteria, we just got the new criteria approved, as I mentioned earlier today. So, it would be anything meeting the warrants of those new criteria.

Commissioner Mena: So long story short. If it's a legitimate life safety issue with a history of accidents and things, forget concurrency, zero percent; and then if just like a volume or speed thing but it hasn't been a history of accidents, it would be 50 percent. Now we can discuss whether it should be 50 or it should be lower. I thought that was a reasonable proposal and a big improvement from where we are now, but I wanted to hear your thoughts.

Commissioner Lago: Oh, 100 percent. It's a much bigger improvement. Like I had mentioned before, I don't know if you had stepped out obviously to deal with the issue you were dealing with before, but I had put on the record that I had spoken with Alice Bravo that we were going to have something a little more favorable than what the City of Miami had, that right now is in the process of with the attorneys. So I agree with you. We are doing what we are supposed to be doing. We are pushing this forward; this is priority number one, not only on a policy, but also financially. Again, is something needs to be installed and I know that we have certain residents that may be opposed to it, because it may be right in front of their house, we are going to have to make that tough decision; and if that decision, if staff for some reason has a problem making that decision, I don't have a problem that you can bring those items to the Commission and put them here and say listen, these are the issues we are having, so and so does not want to put a speed table, a traffic circle in front of their home, we will deal with the issue ourselves; and you can literally blame the Commission, because it's gotten to the point, my last comment in regards to this issue. We just built a beautiful, beautiful park on Alhambra that gets frequented by 30-40 families on weekends, it's packed. You are telling me that on Blue Road that there should not be a traffic circle and the only reason why it isn't a traffic circle is because one individual did not approve it. He's got an entire neighborhood hostage. To me that's unacceptable, that's unacceptable. That's not being part of this community. And then, what ends up happening is there is going to be a tragic accident there one day, God willing nobody loses their life, this is

why we are pushing this issue forward. I don't have a problem, bring it to the Commission. We'll take that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I will bring you by Friday approval by four contiguous neighbors to put a traffic calming device in front or between some of those four streets.

Commissioner Mena: You still need the warrant.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Mena: You still need the warrant.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Then the excuse is not currency, then that should initiate some process. What is that process?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor are you addressing speed or volume?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm addressing both.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: OK. Because they...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Especially speed.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Especially speed.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And so, temporarily we can put a shield 12 there and it has been very helpful in alerting people.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Temporary – but I'm going to bring you the other form that you need, the other form that you can give me.

Public Works Director Santamaria: For concurrency?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes. I a resident at 1700 Hialeah Drive, hereby agree that a speed calming device could be put in front of my house.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So the way that the process works is that, that issue initiates a traffic study to see if it warrants given the traffic calming criteria that exist. Now given the fact that we are relaxing the criteria, it's beneficial at this point to wait until the new traffic criteria is fully vetted and approved and signed and sealed by the County. As I mentioned earlier, the traffic calming criteria was approved by the County, with minor comments. We have responded to the comments, we have no issue with the comments. Now it's a matter of getting this through this legislative body.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: And, you have asked for a Sunshine Meeting and we have it set on everyone's calendar.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: July ____.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: No. You have two meetings; one, Sunshine with County; the other is with your colleagues and that is June 29th a Friday at 3:00 o'clock, and we have it on everyone's calendar.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The approvals of five or six neighbors.

Public Works Director Santamaria: And that would be perfect.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: As long as you start whatever it is...that table would be very helpful.

Public Works Director Santamaria: We are going to start doing that right now. However, I do recommend that we wait till the fall, because right now it's summer, because in the summer traffic patterns are different. In the fall what you have the commuting public, going to school, doing their pick-ups, it is different. That's my recommendation. We can do a preliminary....

Vice Mayor Quesada: We can put the request in again then.

Public Works Director Santamaria: We can do a preliminary study now, I'd be happy to share the results and then we'll do another study once the fall term begins. I would wager that the data would be completely and totally different. Now that said, once the data is evaluated and it meets the criteria for traffic calming and that's when the concurrency standards come into play.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'll get you the concurrency, stop mentioning concurrency to me. I'll get you that.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: So Mayor, we'll put a shield 12 in front that will measure for a week what the speed is and what the volume is, that's a quick way of getting a good handle on it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll see what the speed will be.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We'll put it in front of your house.

Commissioner Mena: Miriam just to bring this to conclusion. Obviously everybody seems to be in agreement with what the proposal sounds like.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I'm not.

Commissioner Mena: Do you need a resolution? What do you need from us as far as – make a motion or not?

City Attorney Ramos: You can direct staff to bring it back once it's drafted. It's going to be a policy that's drafted, correct?

Public Works Director Santamaria: That's correct.

City Attorney Ramos: What I'm hearing from Commissioner Lago is some sort of waiver where if the 50 percent don't agree and it's not a life safety issue, then it comes to the Commission for an overriding, basically of the concurrency that can be implemented. You can direct them to bring it back by a date certain, however you'd like to handle.

Commissioner Mena: Yes. I'm fine with that.

Commissioner Lago: We are talking about life safety, I mean...

Public Works Director Santamaria: We can do it by next meeting.

Commissioner Mena: But if its life safety it's going to be zero.

Commissioner Lago: I agree.

City Attorney Ramos: Zero – life safety; 50 percent otherwise, with a waiver to the Commission or an appeal to the Commission.

Commissioner Mena: OK. Do you need a motion from us or just...?

City Attorney Ramos: Mr. Santamaria said he'll bring it back in July.

Public Works Director Santamaria: I can.

Commissioner Mena: OK. Bring back a draft resolution at that point.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Alright. Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

[End: 6:35:37 p.m.]