

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
October 26, 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

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

Assistant City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-1 [10:14 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending the City of Coral Gables Code by creating Chapter 2 "Administration", Article III "Boards and Committees", Division 7 "Landmarks Maintenance Advisory Board" providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)

(Sponsored Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Okay, moving on to Item F-1.

City Attorney Ramos: F-1 is an ordinance An Ordinance of the City Commission amending the City of Coral Gables Code by creating Chapter 2 "Administration", Article III "Boards and Committees", Division 7 "Landmarks Maintenance Advisory Board" providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. This is an ordinance on second reading. It is a public hearing item. Ms. Throckmorton.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Good morning. This is Commissioner Anderson's item. I'm happy to go through the changes between first and second reading, or let you give an overview first, whichever you prefer.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, you can go through the changes. I thought they were all excellent changes.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Great, thank you very much. So, there have been a couple of changes between first and second reading based on the feedback from the sponsor, as well as from the last public meeting on this item. The name has changed if you noticed. It's now no longer the Landmarks Advisory Board. It's the Landmarks Maintenance Advisory Board to better clarify the role of this board. The board's scope has been narrowed a bit. It no longer focuses on statues, and it specifies that the board now just meets quarterly with an annual meeting held with the Historic Preservation Board to discuss issues of joint importance. And the Historical Resources Department is the primary liaison for the board, with Public Works Director or Public Works staff attending as needed.

Mayor Lago: Quick question. As the cosponsor of this event -- excuse me, of this ordinance, I wasn't notified that the name was being changed and that the scope was being reduced, so that's one thing that I want to make sure we put on the record. Number two -- just a courtesy. I'd like to provide that for a lot of people here and just make sure that they do it for me whenever they can. That's number one. Number two, that's not the piece of legislation that I presented. The piece of legislation that I presented was a piece of legislation that would not only maintain existing

landmarks but would also find new areas -- for example, 57th Avenue, for example, Bird Road, for example, Ponce, for example, 37th Avenue, which we're addressing with a piece of land that I'm bringing forward that the Manager is currently getting two appraisals for. That was the -- that was my reasoning for working on this type of ordinance and bringing in another board and committee. So, I don't know if my colleagues have any opinions on that.

Vice Mayor Mena: I do -- it's funny, at my pre-agenda meeting, I literally asked that exact question from the Manager and the City Attorney because I was also under the impression that what you just described was intended to be part of the scope of this, not just maintaining existing, but also new landmarks, different landmarks, you know, anything that falls under the umbrella of landmarks basically. And I referenced actually the property on 37th, because I remember you brought it up at the last meeting, or whenever it was we discussed this. So, that was my only concern with this was it seemed like this was more narrow, and I was in favor of what was sort of originally proposed that was -- and I don't remember what we said, frankly, on first reading off the top of my head, but I don't remember the direction after first reading being to eliminate that part of the proposal. I think it was supportive of it. Sure.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Sure. I don't believe it was part of the initial proposal, and maybe that was a little bit of confusion on our end here, so we can certainly go back to the transcript and look at what the thoughts were. I believe Commissioner Anderson was the initial sponsor of the item, and so it had had one focus, and it was narrowed to remove statues based on some of the discussion between public art and landmarks and sort of the discussion we had had there about historical items and making sure that it was clear what the scope of the board was as it related to items like City Hall. I think we were kind of discussing those sort of (INAUDIBLE) items, so maintenance of those.

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't remember if it was on first reading or on a prior discussion item, frankly. I don't know if there was a prior discussion item, but I do very vividly remember talking about what he just described.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: And we even referenced the South Miami landmark...

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Yes, we did.

Vice Mayor Mena: Over on US-1 as a nice example of a new landmark that another city implemented and...

Mayor Lago: So, I don't know -- if I may, Vice Mayor. I don't know if the Commissioner was -- she sponsored the item and I jumped in at the last Commission meeting, whether it was before or at my pre-agenda, I asked to be a cosponsor. That's neither here nor there. At the end of the day, I know that for sure that on first reading I was designated a cosponsor. I think what we need to do is we need to offer the same courtesies that we offer -- offer them to me. I think that you should offer them to me. I think it's important that you stretch out and you say, "Listen, we're changing this legislation, and I want to make you aware." You know, you cosponsored it on the floor, you cosponsored it at the agenda, you cosponsored it through an email to the City Attorney, through the City Manager, whatever there may be. I think it's important, but let's go beyond that. Let's go to what I've been talking about here for probably five or six years, where I tried and failed on multiple occasions to acquire Bird Road landmarks, properties on Bird Road, we weren't able to acquire. To acquire a piece of property on 57th Avenue -- in all full transparency -- adjacent to my house, which I think would be beautiful. Where we've worked with the University of Miami, which acquired the church and said, "Listen, when that church does get redeveloped, let's make sure" -- putting it on the record again for probably the tenth time. "Let's make sure that UM understands that they have to put some sort of a landmark there on 57th Avenue and Ponce so that people understand you're entering Coral Gables." Why are we acquiring the 37th Avenue piece of property potentially? Why? Because it's a good opportunity in the most north portion of the City on 37th Avenue to put a landmark, to put a small little park and a landmark that you're entering

Coral Gables, to beautify the City. So, my point is that I support this ordinance even after the rewrite, but I would like to add, it doesn't hurt the fact that we can say, have this great board identify. Let me give you another example. I got a phone call from Karelia Carbonell, who called me and says, "Hey, Vince, are you aware that there used to be two beautiful light posts in front of Liberty Café?" I said, I had no clue. I brought that before the Commission a few years ago. It was a thousand dollars. We got it sponsored, and we installed those two beautiful light posts and brought that back to its historic significance, the way it was 70 years ago, 60 years ago. That's an example of something that would fall outside of the new scope of this ordinance because it would be maintaining only existing while, for example, Karelia brought me the fact that we should acquire these two light posts and install them and bring that area to its original splendor. So, if my colleague would indulge me, I'd like to -- first, I'd ask my cosponsor of this if we can add on to that the ability to -- not say we're going to fund everything, but just review and say, it'd be nice to do something on Bird Road. Let's contact the owners of those homes, and if they ever do decide to sell, give us first right of refusal. Let's contact the two owners on 57th Avenue. If they ever do sell, let's have neighbors in that neighborhood -- maybe they'll go and speak to those homeowners and say, "Listen, they're ready to sell." So, that's the whole point, was to just build an infrastructure that when those properties do come up for sale and they are critically important in regards to our entrance features, that we could potentially engage in that conversation and acquire those properties. That was my intent.

Commissioner Anderson: Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Let me make a suggestion. In Section 2-227, in the second line, it does have the words in there for the purpose of identifying. We can add to the language for the purpose of identifying new and recommending improvement opportunities too. Just put that word new in there, and I think that should embrace what the true intent is, because the word identifying was in there. It carried that intent. Adding "new" will make it crystal clear.

Vice Mayor Mena: Does the City --? I just want to make sure the City Attorney agrees that that change would adequately incorporate what was just described. I also would, frankly, strike the word maintenance from the title because it gives the impression that it's solely about maintenance.

Mayor Lago: I agree.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: I think for ease, we could certainly bring this back November 9th. We could make sure that we look through it very carefully to make sure that not only that adding that word "new" is clear. We can just make sure that the scope is very clear that it's identifying potential new landmarks, landmark locations, and entryways to the City. And we can work on changing the title. The title of the ordinance was published with maintenance in it, so...

City Attorney Ramos: Yeah, I'd like to have more than just the word new.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Yeah.

City Attorney Ramos: I think there's a way to make it clearer to strike a balance between the two sponsors. So, if it's okay, we can just defer it, and we'll bring it back next...

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Can bring it back on the ninth, and we can certainly meet with you, Mayor, or anyone else who's interested in looking at these details in the meantime before the agenda publishes for the ninth.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Can I ask you another quick question since we're on this topic? I've asked for several years now -- and I've never gotten this answer, and I'd like to get it. And I asked the Clerk to please provide this -- please get me this information. I'd like to know how many members of our boards take advantage of the golf and the tennis. I like to know how much -- how many

people -- how many individuals use those services that are rented to them for free, obviously, because of their commitment to the City as board members.

Vice Mayor Mena: We track that?

Mayor Lago: I don't know if we track it. I don't know what happens, but I'd like to see -- I'd like to understand if we're tracking it, what type of tracking. Please, thank you, Ms. Attorney.

City Attorney Ramos: Can we have a motion to defer to a date certain so that the Clerk doesn't have to republish?

Commissioner Anderson: I'll move...

City Clerk Urquia: Really quick, if the title changes, do we have to republish?

City Attorney Ramos: I don't think it's a significant change. Removing the word maintenance is not going to require republication.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can I just also -- this is just -- this is not -- I wouldn't necessarily say this needs to be done now at all, but as a broader part of the discussion as it relates to this, we've talked in the past about some of the boards that we have already. The one that comes to mind in this context is the Pinewood Cemetery Board. It's a very limited scope board, hyper-limited, I mean, compared to all our other boards. It might be the type of board that we should consider eventually folding into this board or historic or wherever it fits correctly.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Vice Mayor...

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't know...

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: The Pinewood Cemetery Board is a unique board. We sort of petitioned the State to take over maintenance of that cemetery decades and decades ago. There're laws of Florida on the books about our maintenance of it. And you know, first glance, it appears that that board may be necessary via state law to maintain our...

Vice Mayor Mena: Do you think the board is necessary to...?

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: We've looking into this in the past. But when...

Vice Mayor Mena: Fair enough.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: The City approached the State about taking over that, there were certain assurances made by the City about...

Vice Mayor Mena: But I -- I don't -- look into it.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Yeah. We'll look into it again, yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: But I suspect that if you have another board who's among its expressed duties is that...

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Of course.

Vice Mayor Mena: Maintenance of the Pinewood Cemetery, then I suspect that would check that box for you.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: We can look into that again, certainly.

Vice Mayor Mena: Alright.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Great. We'll...

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Meet in the meantime and come back.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk. Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fors: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.