

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
July 26, 2016
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

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-2 [4:46:53 p.m.]

Discussion regarding Single-Family Residences Standards in Coral Gables
(Sponsored by Commissioner Keon)

Mayor Cason: F-2.

Commissioner Keon: OK. I had put this on the agenda because I think I have been talking to Ramon. I know that there is \$250,000 in the upcoming 16-17 year Budget to look at the Code, particularly in the residential areas. My concern is it has been at least 15 years since the Code was, they did the Code rewrite, and in the process somethings, the nuances were left out, somethings were combined and compressed; and what's happened is there are issues coming up and they are particularly, where we are seeing them is with regard to spec houses. I'm going to just pass this down. These are some pictures you can look at. Alicia Fernandez is here because she is the one who is really affected by this particular one. This house, there is another house being built, I think there are a couple of others that have been built and they are primarily spec houses. One of the things that have been pointed out to me was that a lot of these homes are on

irregularly shaped lots – they are kind of triangular lots, they are very irregularly shaped lots and so for people to build on them they have to squeeze and it's like trying to shoe-horn these properties. So what I would like to ask as a very first step before you have to do anything else, it was suggested that any house when you receive an application for permitting for any single-family residents that is on an irregularly shaped lot that you will somehow note that or code it or put a star on the page, whatever you want to do for it to have it be more closely reviewed by the Zoning tech and by the Board of Architects and that it is also reviewed for compatibility because those seem to be the houses in the areas that are more problematic where they are really on top of other houses and we are getting mostly two-story houses built because they can just get more square feet. It can just be bigger and greater and whatever else. So that was one of the issues. But I also in talking to them, and I know that Ramone was looking at hiring someone to work with you on reviewing this code, and in talking to the different architects that do residential work, not the commercial work, not the multi-family work, but the residential homes, we have a group of architects that live in the City or do a lot of the work in the City that are regarded as very good architects, not the ones that are currently on the Board of Architects, but I'd like to give, see what you think about giving the City Manager the authority to put together a group of six or seven, five-six architects, you can determine the number probably around five architects that do a great deal of work in this City and know what is involved in trying to manage the issues in the Code, that they could meet just like our Charter Review Committee met and went through the Charter and looked at it and made some recommendations, but I'm just saying have the City Manager do it and do it in conjunction with Building because I don't really want architects that are in the process of doing or proposing having things ongoing in the City or whatever, maybe to do that, and I know that she could have the discussion to put together that group of about five people to sit down and go through and they could identify the issues in the Code, so we really have a place to begin to work from, because we've talked about some of these things really need to be dealt with not in a year from now, but now, because of the problems that they are creating in our residential neighborhoods and I think for all of us we know that those single-family residential neighborhoods are really the fabric of our City, and those are the areas and that Code we have to get it right and we can't make errors and omissions and whatever in the review process because once a home is built, you know, you can ask Alicia, you may say you are wrong, but there is maybe you can have them do something to help her, but it's done.

Mayor Cason: Done deal.

Commissioner Keon: It's a done deal and somebody ends up suffering with it because of some oversight and I don't want to see that, I wouldn't like to see it continued, maybe you can start by having a group of people together, lend them the staff support they need to begin to look at it and begin to identify those things, along with our Planning and Zoning Director. Now I know you know specifically some of those issues and carports not being counted, but it gives them a

platform to build on so you can build higher. We really want to encourage Mediterranean building, but because now of the regulations placed on courtyards, it makes it very difficult in the remodeling or the renovation of those homes or to build a home with a courtyard. So you know, maybe the way the Code was it ended up we count courtyards twice, even though they are an open space and whatever else, but there has to be a better way to be able to allow that kind of building without it being abused so you don't have...

Mayor Cason: So the idea would be they come up maybe with ten top recommendations for changes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes, so we can begin that process – and then Ramon certainly can build more into the detail of it and he will go along. But to allow people that work with that Code and know the Code and understand the problems related to the Code and some of them that have called into try and resolve some of the issues when this is happening in a neighborhood that maybe they could put that together and work with them and go forward with it.

Commissioner Lago: It's a great idea.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Thank you. Alicia did you want to speak? No.

[End: 4:53:43 p.m.]