

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item C – Mayor’s Comments**  
**February 28, 2023**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Michael Mena**

**Commissioner Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner James Cason**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Development Services Director, Suramy Cabrera**

**Police Chief, Ed Hudak**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Items C- [9:45 a.m.]

Mayor’s Comments

Mayor Lago: So, I have three points that I’d like to make today in regard to Mayor’s Comments. I’d like to congratulate the Mayor’s Council for their hard work. They brought something to my attention which is something that I have been talking about for some time with staff, and that is the opportunity of installing defibrillators in our parks. A lot of other institutions are doing this, a lot of other cities are doing it. I know its costly, there may be some fears about vandalism or about theft, but one of the things that I’ve been talking about, and I want to make my colleagues aware of it is, I’d like to see a camera at every single one of our parks. I mentioned that to the ACM yesterday. I mentioned it to the City Manager yesterday. We are already talking about that for North Gables in regard to problem areas where we see a lot of illegal dumping. It will pay itself off when we stop the illegal dumping. We’ll also send a very strong message that, just because the police are not there, because they’re on patrol, there is a set of eyes and ears there, which again will be more redundancy for the police in their efforts, to keep the crime the lowest it’s been in

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potentially over a decade. So, I think this could be, there could be two tools at every park; number one, a defibrillator; and number two, a camera. This is something that I want to bring before the Commission, I want to have it in this year's budget cycle, and I'm asking you to please consider as one of your priorities, because I think it will pay significant dividends, not only as a potential life safety assistance in someone maybe having some sort of injury or having a stroke or a heart attack, but also, I think it will deter crime, it will address issues of cleanliness, vandalism, not that we see it a lot, but we make sure it sends a strong message. So that's one thing that was brought by the Mayor's Council. They gave me a lot of information about other municipalities and other cities that are doing this, and I think it's a good opportunity. So, I ask you to please, consider this, and I ask that the Manager, please, bring us a budget item for our parks and that includes a defibrillator, along with the camera. We can put the defibrillator on the pole, or we can do something to that effect.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Again, it's not going to be cheap, but I think it's worth it, worth doing it.

Vice Mayor Mena: Mayor, really quick before you move on.

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Vice Mayor Mena: On the AEDs, I saw a news feature story on Real Sports on HBO, actually where they talk about kids sports in particular in high schools throughout the country and how the availability of AEDs when there is a cardiac event in those places, I forget what the exact statistics were, but the difference in a few minutes and having an AED applied to somebody in that situation is monumental. So, I think it's a great idea. It would be great to hear how some of these other cities are implementing it.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. I ask that the Manager prepare something over the next month to bring to the Commission that addresses both the defibrillators and also addresses the cameras in all parks. Second point. I want to commend the Manager and I want to commend Raquel and her team. The city, in my opinion, should start educating residents about flood insurance and how the city's flood category went from a 7 to a 5, resulting in approximately a 25 percent credit of NFIP rates. We are fighting as a Commission through the Manager's office through the leadership of the Police and Fire, to Raquel's team and this is a testament to our efforts to try to save residents money. So, I ask you to please use Belkys, using Martha, using every resource that we have, start educating the residents. Send something out to the residents so they understand that we've gone from a 7 to a 5 rating. This was another item that was covered in the Mayor's Council yesterday at 8:30, and I want to thank the Mayor's Council again, J.C. Padron and everyone on the board for their efforts. Thank you for that, that's important, saving people money as prices are going up, as inflation continues. Number three; a little bit more fun. Wings for Wishes. First off, thank you to staff for all your efforts to make this a reality. March 4<sup>th</sup>, this Saturday is Wings for Wishes, an event that we've been doing. I sponsor it myself, my company through Make a Wish. Sports Grill is the main sponsor of the event, along with a lot of other great companies. This is an opportunity, I'm seeing

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if the firefighters and the police are going to engage and see if this year, they have a respectable showing in regard to the wing-eating contest, because they seem to always lose to the Commission, and we can have a timeline in regard to pictures on how the Commission somehow, somehow beats the firefighters and the police officers. So hopefully, maybe we'll give you a leg up. We'll have breakfast that day so we can give you a leg up. Does any of my colleagues on the Commission want to join me on a team this Saturday to see who can eat the most wings? Don't raise your hands up so fast.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I open it up to directors who want to join me on the team. I'm paying for it myself personally, it's not coming from city funds.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'll be there.

Mayor Lago: We'll enjoy it. We'll put something together. Support Wings for Wishes is a great cause. They raise hundreds of thousands of dollars and 100 percent of everything that is raised, 100 percent goes to make dreams come true, wishes come true. The two individuals that started this charity I work out with, they pay all the cost out of their pocket. Every dollar that's raised, every single dollar that's raised goes into the organization. That is incredible. I don't think there are many organizations, charities that actually do that. The final issue is, I think is the most important issue of the day. I want to read a quick statement. I wanted to make sure I got this correct and took the time to write this statement, because I want it to be factually as proper and I don't miss a point. So, I wanted to take this opportunity during the Mayor's Comments today, to provide important information regarding the great job our Development Services Department is doing to serve the residents and businesses of Coral Gables. Recently, I've heard some noise and lots of misinformation regarding permitting, and I wanted to bring to light that these are simply unsupported opinions or should I say bias, because there is no evidence or facts to back them up. Listen, if anybody can talk about permits, construction, engineering, design, it's me. Just like somebody telling me that across UM everything is happening. That's not the case. I live in front of UM, no one can tell me. I live the closest to UM. I know exactly what's going on. When you talk about permitting, I know exactly what's going on. I sit down with the permitting staff. I talk to contractors. I talk to architects. Is the system perfect? – no, but trust me, we are making strives unlike any other city. Let us use data and numbers to help us learn the truth. Whether speaking as your Mayor or as a businessman, in the construction and engineering field, I rely on data to make quality decisions and to guide me to a better outcome. Analyzing data allows me to understand a situation. Our new Development Services Center is offering everyone wanting to work in the city the opportunity to visit a one-stop-shop for all their building and permitting needs. This is greatly improved the customer experience, especially, as they transition to an all-electronic review and submittal process. Not only can people obtain their permits, but they can receive updates seamlessly, transparently. No more plans are being lost, now you can review multiple disciplines at the same time. Residents no longer must wait for their documents to travel from department to department for review. The review process, except for the Board of Architects, which will soon also be implemented in the digital submittals is now fully digitized. This means all reviews can take place simultaneously, lifting one or more time-consuming aspects of the permitting process.

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The data or the numbers tell the story. This is the key. This is the key. The data or the numbers tell the story. The permitting process has improved, and the permits are being expedited. In 2022, the department reviewed 30,128 permits. Just in January 2023, 25,183 permit reviews were handled by the team. Let me repeat that for people in the back who may not be listening. In 2022, the department reviewed 30,128 permits. Just in January of 2023, the department reviewed 25,183 permit reviews were handled by the team. If we compare January 2022 to 2023, 9,035 were reviewed compared to 25,183 reviews, that were completed this year using our new system or an increase of more than 178 percent. Those are incredible numbers. Additionally, the team has reviewed more than 9,000 expired or pending permits from our previous system and just a small fraction remains to be reviewed to determine the next course of action. I will have Suramy Cabrera come and speak about that, because I want you to understand the exact numbers and how much this team has done to really finalize these open permits. Suramy, I want to salute you and the Development Services team, because I know this happened in spite of the fact that staff was being trained in the new system and working from temporary spaces. I know that people even worked from their cars at one point, because we transitioned everyone from this building down to the new building which took over a year and change to remodel, and we spent millions of dollars to make sure that it was a pleasant experience for the community to come in. So do me a favor, if you can, let's stop the noise and the misinformation and let's listen to the facts. The numbers speak for themselves. There's a way to get to elected office in the city and its very simple. You've got to work hard. You've got to put a plan. You've got to address the needs of the residents, the employees, and the business community. You've got to listen to people. You've got to meet with people. Attacking people and using blogs is not going to get you elected. It's not going to. Not going to work. It's never worked. When you dehumanize someone and you disrespect them, it shows a lot about your character and the lack of respect and civility and the type of person that you are. When I talk to staff and they explain to me, and I'm not talking about the directors, I'm talking about the entry-level individuals who one day will be the directors, one day will have your job, one day will be the Mayor, who knows, or Commissioner. The sense of pride in the work that they do is incredible. But when they read that they are being attacked and they explain to me the facts and they talk to me, this is what we're doing, this is what we're addressing, we are moving to a worldclass digital permitting process. We are renovating a brand-new building; we're dealing with all brand-new software. We're spending millions of dollars of upgrading our permitting process and then people go out there and attack the process, without the process having run its course. Its disingenuous. You're standing on the shoulders of employees and you're standing on the shoulders of the city for your own benefit. Suramy, I apologize on behalf of people who take easy potshots in an effort to substantiate themselves because of their insecurities. You have taken on upon yourself in the last two years, just to give people an idea, how many open permits were here when you started?

Development Services Director Cabrera: So, we had a system that, let me see, from 1997 to 2006; 1991 to 2007 that was WinterGrade and in there we had 6,000 expired permits, meaning that we don't know if the work was ever completed, they just were abandoned.

Mayor Lago: You had to meet with every single resident, business owner, sit down, hash out the permit, find out where they were.

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Development Services Director Cabrera: We tried to not get anybody involved, the residents, because it's not pleasant for you to get a phone call telling you that, hey, 1993 you had a permit that was never closed out. So, my staff and myself and George Pino and a lot of us worked on this, went through every single permit to see what the permit was for, and if I had the authority as the Building Official to close it out, which in certain cases I do have that authority, and I did that for as many as I can; and then we went through and we looked for what are easy for us to close out without having to see the residents. So, if you changed your windows or something we could see from the outdoors then you are just missing a final building or a final zoning. We actually went out and did those inspections without the residents ever even finding out what happened.

Mayor Lago: Well, let me tell you just so you know, being in the business, I had actual residents call me and I had residents call me, along with my colleagues on the Commission tell me, hey, I had a window permit that was 20 years old, my contractor made the mistake or it was an oversight, it happens, we all make mistakes every day, they didn't close my permit out, they thought they had, or it was left in a TCO, was left in a CO. So, we had my window permit was still open or my front door permit or my kitchen permit, and that the inspectors came and knocked and said, hey, you have a permit that's open that's 20 years old, 15 years old, we just need to kind of close it off for you. We actually have a refund for you. We actually have monies that came back to some of the residents, they told me, I didn't expect to get money back and actually got because of bonds.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Because they were bonds...

Mayor Lago: They were bonds that were pending.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Correct. We did a lot of clean up and I don't think – we did it very quietly, so I don't think the residents or even, my boss probably knows because I've complained a lot, because we did this with the staff that we have and we're not allowed to shut down the building department and stop servicing other residents and construction has been the best it's been in many, many years, so it's not like we've been slow on work. We have had a lot of work. So, staff has had to be very, very creative. I've had to dig deep into, what do I have authority to do and what I do not, and really, really weigh – I mean I just can't close out a permit and put somebody in danger, right, so that would be the easy solution, but I can't do that. So, it's taken my full five years here, honestly, to clean up.

Mayor Lago: How many do we have, Suramy, right now, Ms. Cabrera.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Well, from the 6,000, we are down to maybe like 5 or 10, which are just, you really never did finish the work. There are life-safety concerns that we need to take care of. So, we're working with those. We've sent them to Code Enforcement Board. We send a lot of expired permits now to Code Enforcement Board; they probably see more than they ever have in the past.

Mayor Lago: Can I ask you a quick question also since you brought up Code Enforcement. I want to put all this on the record. By the way, when this article came out, and they just blasted all of

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staff, to use it as a platform item, did anybody come and ask your questions to substantiate the claims that were made?

Development Services Director Cabrera: No. I have not been contacted.

Mayor Lago: Nobody every contacted you, nobody asked you for documents, they just went and wrote all this and they said, you know, let's write and tarnish someone's reputation and disrespect them and take potshots, because somehow, someday I'm going to be the savior and I'm going to come in and fix a permitting process that has taken you five years just to address thousands of expired permits. But you mentioned Code Enforcement which is very interesting. So, every single day, please speak freely, as you always do, so every single day, what do I do? It's okay, you can put it on the record.

Development Services Director Cabrera: You are another code officer.

Mayor Lago: So, I drive through the city on the way to work, I drive through the city to work, and I take pictures of Code Enforcement violations and I send them to Gabby and then Gabby sends them in an e-mail, its public record, to Code Enforcement, correct.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Correct.

Mayor Lago: If we looked at today with additional officers that we've hired, we've hired additional officers [sound of sirens] wait for our firefighters who thank God are doing a great job, probably saving somebody. If you look at the numbers in regard to Code Enforcement today, and with the additional employees that we have, the people that we have now on weekends and all the stuff that we're doing, do you feel that today we have more Code Enforcement existing citations than we've ever had?

Development Services Director Cabrera: Yes – and actually its interesting because the way the old system was used is that it was used more like a timesheet than to track code enforcement citations. So, if you ran a report in the old system, it would show that there were 9,000 citations, but if you went in there and read them, it was dropped off my vehicle for service, answered a phone call, those are not really citations, right. So, when I saw that this was happening when I started here, we started cleaning that up too. It's not just the Building Department that's required cleaning. You know the digital database that we build, if it's not correct, the reports are useless, and that's really what has been the issue here. We've had reporting that has been useless until maybe the last two or three months where we're really electronic and I can really follow through and see how many open permits do we have, what permits are overdue, what is an overdue permit?

Mayor Lago: And if I can add something else, because Raimundo who is a lot smarter than everybody in the room here, has implemented new technology in the city, right, so can you talk, and I'm trying to hit points, so people understand the complexity of what you're dealing with. We now have a new software that basically goes into each property in the commercial district, right, I can tell you the development agreement, who's responsible for that tree, who's responsible for that

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sidewalk, encroachments, issues like that, because that never existed and that had to be built, that was built.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Correct.

Mayor Lago: By you, by staff, by Raimundo's team. Raimundo, can you add a little bit about that, because this all plays into the Building Department, all plays into Code Enforcement, and this has been worked on over the last two to three years.

IT Director Rodulfo: I worked with Director Cabrera and her team to help us build all those technologies and all those solutions; land management, also asset management, and now we are doing for financial, and we are bringing all that together in one platform.

Mayor Lago: So, think about it. Now you can click, before you were never able to do this. You can click on a piece of property that was built 20 years ago; you can analyze your development agreement. The legal team has given their input and has provided their guidance on different fronts there. You can see existing citations; you can see Code Enforcement violations; you can see building permits, what has been done, what has not been done. So instead of having to go to 15 different departments or 10 different departments, correct me if I'm wrong, we are putting this on the record here. You can literally go to one repository right now, which is being built to provide that guidance to the city employees and to anybody who comes in and wants to know further information in regard to a property.

City Manager Iglesias: Including covenants Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Including covenants.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Covenants – which is very important for Code Enforcement, because we need to know if there's a covenant from the business owner something to maintain the right-of-way so we know who we are supposed to be issuing a citation to, and that was a very lengthy process before, but we have been putting them all in GIS so that they can go into the property GIS, click on every covenant, and eventually we're going to take that further, but right now we have all those covenants in GIS.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, I believe a few Commissions ago, Commission meetings ago, the IT Director showed the new dashboard that has a tremendous amount of information. So not only do we have our worldclass website, but we also have this dashboard for the power users, that has all that information. It also includes everything that Code Enforcement needs from a covenant perspective, from a zoning perspective. When we started the project on 427, those people moved over here. We had people on top of each other on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. We had the Mezzanine full.

Mayor Lago: You're forgetting something. The roof in this building hadn't been replaced since, can I say it, 40 years, 50 years.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Yes.  
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City Manager Iglesias: Yes.

Mayor Lago: The roof was leaking. The entire roof of this building, the exterior façade, except the windows which we're hoping for a grant to harden this building from the State of Florida, hope the Governor's listening and our State Representatives and our Senators, thank you for your hard work. The roof was replaced; employees had to endure the roof being replaced through that process. This building was stacked with people, because as a result that we had to take everybody out of that building and move them over here for over a year.

City Manager Iglesias: We had Code Enforcement working out of their cars, because we had to move everybody out and everybody works with each other, so they need to be close to each other. So now we have a one-stop-shop, no other city has a one-stop-shop, we've got a worldclass enterprise program, InterGov, we have electronic plan review, and so, all these things they just don't bring technology, but technology brings the best practice. As we adopt the technology, we are adopting best practices. So, this is really a new way of doing business for our city. It's not just technology, it's the fact that we've looked at all our methods and adopted a best practice for all our methods. So, as all these things are implemented and our staff gets more experience, we'll be more efficient. We just finished TCO, we moved in under a TCO to get there as quick as possible and we finished our TCO last month, our CO, excuse me. So, it's a one-stop-shop, it's something that no other city has and as the department gets more and more versed in this technology, we'll be more and more efficient.

Mayor Lago: More training. Suramy – you want to answer me Raimundo, or you want to say anything else?

IT Director Rodulfo: Just to say that Mr. Manager said, so we are bringing all the platforms together, because we want to horizontally integrate all the systems to have one place to go and to find that information, and data is very powerful. So having that insight from dashboards that are live that connect all the systems at any given moment, gives us the operational efficiencies that we need in real time. That's a big difference that we have been trying to make over the years, working together with all departments, with Public Works too, because we're bringing a lot of GIS and asset management from Public Works and so we are integrating all the platforms together.

Development Services Director Cabrera: I want to thank Raimundo because I drive him crazy. I complain a lot and I see somebody has something that works really well and I want it for us. He always says yes. I don't know if people know, but you could actually go online and see what the wait times are at the Building Department real time. So, you know what time of day – there's times of day where we're empty and there's times of day where you are going to wait a very long time. I don't know why it happens this way, but you could actually – I went to Raimundo, I said, could we put our wait times online? Let me find out. A week later he had wait times online.

Mayor Lago: How fast are we right now in regard to permits, would you say?

Development Services Director Cabrera: What?  
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Mayor Lago: How are we doing now in regard to wait times for a permit? I know there are complex permits, everything from a building to a simple...

Development Services Director Cabrera: We set deadlines depending on like, I have set deadlines depending on the type of class, which is something we could do with WinterGrade. So, if you're coming in for a reroof, we try to turn it around in 24 hours. If you're coming in for a new home, 30 days, and you have to remember the numbers that's I'm giving you are numbers only for the Building Department, but there's Fire, there's Public Works, there's Historic.

Mayor Lago: There's DERM.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Yes. There's outside agencies that we have no control over; and Fire looks at every single commercial project that we do; Historic looks at anything that's a demolition or anything that says its historic, and now they are going to start looking at anything that's pre-1950, because we want to salvage our historic properties even if they are not designated. So, there's a lot of things that we're changing and doing, but there's a lot of departments that are involved that are not the Building Department, but that they also do a lot of reviews and are doing a lot of inspections. It's getting everybody to work together.

Mayor Lago: By the way, if I may just add something too. Again, not making excuses, let's talk about the reality here, right. So, 2022-2023, the market to hire people has been very difficult. Are you short-staffed?

Development Services Director Cabrera: Yes, we are. We have been short-staffed for the structural plan reviewer for a couple of years, and it's very difficult. We have been, the City of Coral Gables, both the City Manager and myself have been and actually Douglas also has been a part of it, we participated with the County Roundtable and the Building Officials of all of Miami-Dade County, to try to address this issue, because there is such a severe shortage of structural plans examiners; and we actually put forward, the county, I think is putting it in the March agenda, the changes to the legislation for the requirements of a structural plans examiner, which do not reduce the standards because we don't want to reduce the standard, right. I don't think there's – I see some of the things that the state does and I just don't understand after Surfside tragedy happened, how you could think that reducing standards is actually better, but we're matching the qualifications to the requirement of the job, and that is going to have a huge, make a huge difference on the job market for us.

Mayor Lago: If I may add something to that. I want to give credit to the Manager. The Manager this week met with Commissioner Regalado from the County; Commissioner Regalado will be sponsoring an item in the Commission in March. I met with her also, to address other issues throughout the city, but these are examples of things that people don't find out, that staff and the Manager are working on every single day to try to streamline the process, because again, we're dealing with shortages of employees, we're dealing with issues in regards to a brand new technology that's just implemented, we moved back into a brand new building that was just built

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and you're seeing the numbers. So, to me, and I don't want to belabor the point too much, unless you'd like to add something else Mr. Manager.

City Manager Iglesias: And may I say Mayor, we've been working very closely with the county to look at the board of rules and appeals and accreditation for different inspectors, so we've been able to set two tiers of inspectors. You can have one inspector that can do residential, things that are not threshold buildings, then above threshold buildings, which would give us a larger pool to actually work with and at the same time does not reduce safety.

Development Services Director Cabrera: The...doesn't work; you can't be staffed with a structural PE that could do a high-rise and spends 80 percent of their day reviewing interior remodels, additions, single-family homes, which is really what the bulk of our work is; 80 percent of our permits by volume is that, not by revenue, but by volume, so it's changing it so that you have two classifications which just makes sense from a business perspective that you have a civil structural who could absolutely do 80 percent of that work without compromising safety, and then, you have a second tier which is that structural PE that would do your high-rise or your threshold buildings, and it just makes sense. We feel very good about the changes to Chapter 8 of the Miami-Dade County, we were a big part of it. The county was fantastic in bringing us and a lot of other Building Officials in. So, we're really happy to see that move forward; and I think it is Commissioner Regalado is putting that in March.

City Manager Iglesias: Basically Mayor, it's a two-tier system; one group of inspectors and reviewers can do up to threshold, and above threshold, which means that a lot of our work is really below at the threshold level which means over three stories, and so forth, this will really help in recruiting people. In addition to that, no impact on life safety, which is very important.

Mayor Lago: So, in closing, unless you have anything else you'd like to add in regard to what we're doing. You can add whatever you'd like, please.

Development Services Director Cabrera: I know. It's just that – I mean the staff, I push them really, really hard and I just want to thank them, because I know that I could be really, really tough, but we have a fantastic group and I'm really very happy with the group we have. We've cleaned house and everybody that we have right now is essential to the performance of the entire department.

Mayor Lago: So, with that being said, for the residents that are listening, the business owners that are listening, remember, when you read a blog and the person who owns a blog is running for public office, they have to make noise in an effort to build a case for why you should pick them. When you deal with facts, as I've put the facts in front of you, in regard to actual numbers for permits that have been addressed. When you see what we've done in regards to Code Enforcement and technology we've brought in, a new building, the facts are the facts; the steel numbers, the steel with what we're actually doing to make the situation better, especially in this economy that we're dealing with right now, where it's very difficult to find qualified people, especially in very specialized areas, for example, structural reviewer where it's almost impossible to find somebody.

Development Services Director Cabrera: And by the way, we have three consultants.  
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Mayor Lago: Three consultants.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Structural plan reviewers.

Mayor Lago: Three consultants keeping, making up for the fact that we don't have somebody, we have one person, but I think we used to have three, right.

Development Services Director Cabrera: We have always been budgeted for three, most of our life we have worked with two.

Mayor Lago: So, my point is that, if you have a question in regards to permitting, the Manager will tell you, Suramy will tell you, Doug will tell you, staff will tell you, you can always come and see me on a Friday at 2 o'clock or you can make an appointment to see me and we can get a coffee at Bachour, you can probably find me there three, four times a week, and we can address your permit issue. Suramy is always available, you can track your permits online, there is constant movement, there's constant accountability. But please, let's not be overcome with the idea that you can just take a heavy hand and slap around staff after all the hard work that they've done. If anybody knows on this Commission and staff knows, I hold everybody accountable and I don't have a problem addressing issues from this podium. Let's also take a moment to say thank you for your hard work and for your efforts, because this has been an incredible heavy lift to address the thousands of permits, expired permits, the efforts by Raimundo and his team to integrate all this technology, to bring in a new website, the Manager's leadership on many different fronts, your staff's leadership. So, I wanted to take this time to say thank you, thank you to everyone who's been involved in this, and as you can see by the facts, not by misdirection, by the actual facts, the permitting process is getting faster and we're accountable more every single day.

Commissioner Anderson: I congratulate you all. Many years ago, in the legal industry we did the transition from paper to electronic, and everybody heavy, heavy, heavy lift to move and digitize everything, and when a Judge told you that you were not going to be able to enter paper exhibits in evidence on a large case, it was an extreme lift. So, I know the hard work you all have done, and I just applaud you all for doing it in such an expeditious timeframe. Thank you.

Development Services Director Cabrera: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you very much.

[Note for the Record: The Mayor went to item F-1 and then resumed the Mayor's Comments]

Mayor Lago: So, moving on. I'm going to try to go very brief, because we've been here for a while, Mayor's Comments, discussion regarding street signs in downtown. This is very simple.

Commissioner Cason: We have an 11 o'clock.

Mayor Lago: Oh, we do have an 11-time certain. I'm going to run through this really quickly, okay, very simple. Just give me one second, I promise, I'll be done with this really quick. You know the blade signs that you see, for example, Miracle Mile, Ponce.

Commissioner Anderson: The what signs?

Mayor Lago: The blade signs. The little blade signs that are on the poles.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: They are on certain streets. I have some pictures here. Here you go, see the blade signs. Look at the current condition of the blade signs.

Commissioner Anderson: And the pole.

Mayor Lago: And the pole. So, I've asked the city to see if we can maybe do a partnership with the Community Foundation and the Chamber and we can take these blade signs and we can auction them off for charity. Maybe somebody lives in that neighborhood, somebody has a business in that neighborhood, they want to buy it, they want to hang it up as a memento. These are probably really old, and we can replace them with something a little bit more – maybe in the same vein, if historic says it's appropriate, maybe in the same line kind of look, but we could do something new and refresh. These probably haven't been done in I don't know how many decades.

Vice Mayor Mena: Good idea.

Mayor Lago: Yes. Something simple, non-intrusive. Look at this, this is currently the status of the one on the corner of Miracle Mile and Ponce, that's the current status.

Commissioner Anderson: A little hard to read.

Mayor Lago: Yes. So, please, I would like, through the Manager please, if we can start addressing this with our Public Works team to give me an idea of what the cost is to replace the signs throughout the city, do something a little bit more professional, and we can potentially do something good for charity, if possible.

City Manager Iglesias: Since we are replacing them Mayor, maybe we can go to better looking signs.

Mayor Lago: I want to follow historic protocol, whatever is required, but that's step number one. Thank you. And then we'll go back to the 11 o'clock time certain. Thank you, Mr. Manager. Do we have consensus amongst the Commission? I need to know that.

Commissioner Anderson: For the signs?

Mayor Lago: Yes.  
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Vice Mayor Mena: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Can I get a motion on that?

City Attorney Suarez: Do you want us to bring something back next meeting Mayor?

Mayor Lago: I want a motion on it first.

Vice Mayor Mena: Motion.

Commissioner Anderson: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Attorney Suarez: Do you have the direction you need, Mr. Manager?

Mayor Lago: Yes, very simple. I just want the Manager to come back please and provide me with an example of different examples of how we can replace those signs throughout the downtown to give it more breath of fresh air.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we would have to get some samples, we would have to get some costs, it will take a little more than one – at the end of March.

Mayor Lago: We can do it in March or April, it's perfectly fine.

City Clerk Urquia: All in favor.

All: Aye.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Commissioner Anderson: We're not here in April – May.

Mayor Lago: May or maybe we can do it in March, at the end of March so that we can get the Vice Mayor's engagement.

[Note for the Record: The Mayor went to the 11 o'clock time certain before resuming Mayor's Comments]

Mayor Lago: Moving onto C-2, discussion regarding golf carts, very simple, very brief. You are seeing a proliferation of golf carts. I bought one, I got a Moke, it's great, my girls love it. It's a great time. We need to really find out a way if we are going to continue to see this happen in the city, as other communities are becoming more golf cart communities. What is going to be our

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parameters and what does the state allow, and I'm going to ask the City Attorney to put that on the record.

City Attorney Suarez: So currently Mayor, there is a distinction between golf carts and the low speed vehicles. The low speed vehicles, they can travel, they are defined as vehicles that can go up to a maximum speed of 25 miles per hour. They have to be registered as a vehicle with the state. Golf carts have a maximum speed of 20 miles per hour. They are not registered as you know. Low speed vehicles can travel basically on any road where the maximum speed limit is 35 miles per hour. The golf carts can only travel on designated roads. So what you're seeing is that some municipalities are designating certain roads within their municipalities to allow for the golf carts, subject to certain registrations with the municipality.

Mayor Lago: So, I wanted to bring this to your attention, because its important. I think there is a lot of confusion in regards to golf carts, low speed vehicles. Mine is a low-speed vehicle. It has a license, it has a license plate, which has to be renewed. So, I think you're probably getting e-mails and probably phone calls from residents who are interested and you're seeing a lot more in the neighborhoods, and this is something that I wanted to bring to your attention, so you have the information as to what is a low-speed vehicle and what is a golf cart, and that low-speed vehicles are already allowed in the city. I think that's critical. So, there is no need for legislation. Now, if we're going to allow golf carts without license plate, I think it's a problem, because someone's going to park a license plate in the middle of downtown in a parking space, you still have to pay for a meter. If someone parks on your swale, there has to be some sort of enforcement, so I just wanted to put that on the record.

Commissioner Anderson: So, I'm going to ask for one other area of clarification from the City Attorney. I've been on bike paths and there have been low-speed vehicles or golf carts on there, all of them have been respectful, so I have no complaint about them, but are they allowed on bike paths?

City Attorney Suarez: So on bike paths, I know they are allowed on certain sidewalks if there are certain conditions and there is an ordinance allowing it, which we don't allow them in our city, but on the bike paths, I also don't think that they are allowed. The Chief seems to have more information.

Commissioner Anderson: So they were respectful, they didn't bother me, they pulled off to the side, but they are still not allowed by state law.

Chief Hudak: Correct. They can cross over, and again, the way we decide is if the golf cart is registered and has a license tag, it has to have seat belts, turn signals, then it is considered a moving vehicle. It has to pay to park and can be on a roadway within the city with exceptions that's posted, whether it be 826, I-95, things like that. The slow speed vehicles, the slower ones have to have the triangle on the back where you see children driving those, which we know some of our neighboring jurisdictions have had lots of traumatic accidents with kids on those out on the street. So that's pretty much the rule of thumb that we do.

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Commissioner Menendez: So we can't limit either one to, let's say, golf carts shouldn't be in the Central Business District.

Chief Hudak: Anything that would do that would be a code and we are just enforcing state statute.

City Attorney Suarez: So golf carts are not currently allowed, meaning not the low-speed vehicles; the golf carts are not allowed on any of our city roads.

Commissioner Menendez: I saw a low-speed vehicle not that long ago on Ponce turning onto Miracle Mile, that's allowed?

Mayor Lago: That's perfectly fine. So I just wanted to provide clarity and have our Chief, along with our City Attorney address it and make sure that people have that little bit more information because I know we're getting phone calls about it. Okay. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: I'm going to jump to C-4. We already discussed this in regard to parks. Salvadore Park is having some issues. I'm getting calls from residents saying that there are certain individuals there, there were certain parents that were kind of a little nervous the other day because there was one individual taking pictures of the children. So, I think that the way that we can remediate this issue is putting a camera there and people knowing the facts that, again, you're under surveillance. There were police there, police was notified, police took action, but that's becoming a little bit – its an area on the outskirts of our city, almost next to a school, so people are a little bit nervous in regards to that kind of interaction. Again, that's just part of the plan of adding the defibrillators and obviously adding the camera with potentially a light on it.

Mayor Lago: With C-3, I don't know if you've gotten calls. I've gotten calls from residents and I've seen it with my own eyes about Catalonia and Majorca Park, the dogs are unleashed. So again, we are going to have to deal with this issue. What is the will of the Commission?

Commissioner Anderson: They are on the wrong side, yes, they are on the wrong side of the park unleashed.

Commissioner Menendez: In the kid's section.

Commissioner Anderson: I've seen it too.

Vice Mayor Mena: Fine them.

Commissioner Menendez: Let's increase the fine.

Commissioner Anderson: I think too, it has to say, "no dogs," because unfortunately, there are dog owners who don't pick up, and even if they do pick up on the children side, its going to be messy.

Commissioner Menendez: The reality is that even if we have parks that are "no dogs allowed" because behavior is behavior, they are going to do it. So, there should be consequences and we do

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have consequences, but obviously they're not strong enough to deter behavior. So, I'm all for increasing, maybe the administration comes back, how we can increase and make it more impactful. You can try to by law and legislation, change people's behavior and those that do things the right way will abide, but unfortunately there are a few people that will do whatever they want because they feel empowered that they can do whatever they want, even if it puts children in harm's way.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, I think you have to have that together with the cameras, because we can't have people out there 24/7 for enforcement.

Commissioner Menendez: I agree completely.

Commissioner Anderson: So you have the cameras and I don't know what our fines are right now.

Mayor Lago: I think when we add the cameras and you give the proper signage, that's on top of we add the additional fines, I think that people will come into compliance. But it's happening and I'm getting calls saying, listen, we are accommodating the dog lovers, I think it's a great idea, we are adding more dog parks, there's more in the pipeline. Let's respect the fact that there are kids, especially young toddlers on the grass. The last thing you want is to have the dogs mixing with the kids.

Commissioner Menendez: I took a walk late afternoon as the sun was setting around the Youth Center and around that whole area, and now I guess, I'm more dog aware and the amount of people walking their dogs was amazing how many people today have dogs taking walks. But I still would like the administration to come back to us to talk about what the fines are for unleashed dogs, because maybe we need to tweak it.