

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-5
August 24, 2022
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 Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-5 [5:14 p.m.]

Discussion regarding the process for residents, businesses and property owners to request signage for no parking and handicapped parking signs. (Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)

Mayor Lago: Item G-5.

Commissioner Anderson: G-5. That's an item that resolves potentially two problems. I just wanted to put it on as a discussion item first, so that we can flush it out. We've all seen e-mails regarding too many signs in a residential area, no parking, whatever it is, and on the flip side of the coin there are needs for handicap parking signs, whether it be from a resident that lives in an area where there is only street parking or business that has a legacy building and doesn't have accessible van parking in historically businesses have in other cities, putting letters to their cities and got signage put out for that van accessible parking to be added. So what I want to discuss and discuss with staff is

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Agenda Item G-5 – Discussion regarding the process for residents, businesses and Property owners to request signage for no parking and handicapped parking signs

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establishing a system by which the no parking signs are done by a request and a process through the city, the same thing is done when there is a need for a handicap parking spot, which can be tied to either a business having a need or a resident has a handicap parking placard that needs it whether in a street parking situation in north Gables apartment district and moving forward on that, because I had one resident that came through and went through a few bumps in the road to try to get this done. I don't know if it has been installed yet. Tell me it has, please.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, I think you mean the apartment district, not residential.

Commissioner Anderson: Not residential. We are talking street parking only, areas where its generally free parking to begin with, but even if it was metered parking, at some point in the future there is a need there to get somebody as close as possible. You can't walk that far, or you have a walker, you can't walk three blocks to get to your home. You had a surgery; you might even have a temporary situation. We need to establish a process for this to happen.

Parking Director Kinney: Since probably from the city side, I'm the one that's been dealing with this the longest. Let me just frame it a little bit. There is title 74 of our code, which gives the Manager the ability to establish, manage, regulate parking zones within the city. When you are talking about commercial mixed-use or large multi-family properties that's usually a meter zone, and over the year we frequently have gotten requests in those situations to have ADA space placed in the right-of-way, and that between parking and Public Works and Raquel's office is considered. There are a lot of things that are considered. For example, if its in front of a business and the business has off-street parking, the first conversation will be well, you are required to have ADA space within your off-street parking. I will say that if there are reasons for it to be in the right-of-way and Hermes and I talked about it. We haven't done one since he's been here, but I know of at least six times we've established an ADA space in the right-of-way. The last one was at the corner of Almeria and Galiano and that was because there was a building there that has no off-street parking, and they had a disabled person that worked there, so we established an ADA space. Now, in general, I will just make sure we all understand within the City of Coral Gables our history has always been to go above and beyond. If you look at what's required for ADA, the state lies, one out of every 100 spaces within the right-of-way.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm going to help you along. I'm requesting a service and I need a handicap placard and I had a resident on Sidonia that's requested this, and it's been months. There is no process, there is no process right now. We need a process. So, they don't have to go see a City Commissioner and take the time to come here and so forth. There needs to be a process for an individual with a disability to request a parking space.

Parking Director Kinney: Typically, in the residential zones we do not install, typically, especially if there is off-street parking.

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Commissioner Anderson: Okay. So, I'm going to stop you again there, because I don't want to take three hours on this. We have historic buildings in the north Gables, there is off-street parking, first come, first serve. Well, that's great for the able-bodied. It doesn't work for the disabled.

Parking Director Kinney: What we do for residential zones is, there is a process to establish residential zones, if there is a situation where there's traffic that's intruding in a residential neighborhood, it can be restricted to just residents, which typically has solved any issue within a residential zone, but the difficulty becomes the Fair Housing Act requires building owners to provide the parking, ADA parking for their residents.

Commissioner Anderson: That doesn't exist on a historic building. So, let's cut to the chase again. I made a specific request for handicap sign to be put on a particular area on a street within a reasonable distance from the building. I can start naming buildings to you in the north Gables that have zero parking in them because they are historic buildings because historically people park down the street. But they weren't thinking about handicap accessibility in 1926 and 1927 when these buildings were put in. We need a process.

Parking Director Kinney: Well, its going to have to be carefully drafted, because in our residential areas most of the areas would require substantial projects to create an accessible space. Most of the locations there would not be access to the sidewalk and most of north Gables, we don't even stripe the streets because if we started striping the streets, we would significantly limit the number of cars that could park there. There are a lot of locations where I cannot put a legal space, so if I stripe the street there is a number of places where we can see cars where I would have to prohibit.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm sorry to interrupt. So, is your answer no that you don't want to establish a process for an individual with a disability to obtain a parking space?

Parking Director Kinney: If we are going to look at it, we need to be very careful about how its established, because if we are going to start spending the money to create a parking space and create access, that's not something that we've ever done in residential streets.

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioner, if I may ask. I'm not well versed on the topic or the actual location. I'm going to drive by it this weekend. Is there an opportunity, potentially, on the site of the property. I know that it's a three-plex or four-plex, is there an opportunity for the owner to provide something where – is it a flexibility issue? – is it they don't want to provide it on site, would they rather have it on the side, because it will take up too much space. I just want to understand kind of a little bit about that.

Commissioner Anderson: Here's the catch 22. On that particular site, yes, the owner could probably do it. The owner doesn't want to do it. You are dealing with a tight rental market right now. So, do we want to create a situation where an owner could decide to raise rents on individuals

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and require them to move on and jack the entire building up on rental rates, or do we want to accommodate? That avoids the broader question and problem that we have here. We have many historic buildings in our northern northeast corridor that have zero parking on site available, none, and we have provided no mechanism for an individual with disability that wants to have a parking space within a reasonable walking distance of their property that they are renting, to be able to get there, whether they own it or otherwise. So, they are going to have to park three blocks away or four blocks away and they are not capable of really walking that far or rolling that far. So that's why I'm saying, you need to provide a process, and if you don't provide a process then the alternative happens, where someone finds that this is a denial of accessibility that you haven't provided a route within a reasonable distance because you didn't establish a process. I look at this website, there's nothing. There is no process for either the parking sign process or establishing handicap parking spaces. However, I can tell you from my experience from dealing with other suits that have been brought against other business properties and otherwise. There is a process that you can write the city, other cities, and get an accessible parking space assigned and we need to get up to speed on that.

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioner, do you think there is an opportunity to maybe continue the discussion and bring it back and maybe you could meet with staff and try to find a solution that meets the needs of the disabled community and potentially takes into consideration some of the shortcomings that we are having in regard to parking.

Commissioner Anderson: I would hope so. I would hope so, because this request has been pending for some time and we need to deal with the broader question of, not just this one site, but all the sites.

Mayor Lago: So, let's schedule some time.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, I also see something else that I think we need to look at. How many can we provide? So, I think there is a lot of things to look at here, maybe we can have a little time to sit down with you and take a look.

Commissioner Anderson: It's really easy. If building 1 has one individual in it that's handicap and they need to request a sign to be placed close to their place, we can establish a system where there is a timeline where we move these signs around and where the buildings are needing this parking. So, you have a handicap placard that allows for it. There are other areas in our city, more like the Central Business District where we need to take a tough look at how many handicap accessible parking spaces, we need in some of our more legacy buildings that cannot have it built into the building itself and include them within so many feet, a thousand feet or so.

City Manager Iglesias: I think in the north part, we have many areas, we have four-unit buildings one after another in 50-foot lots. If you have multiple requirements for handicap parking, you will wipe out almost all that on-street parking completely. In addition to that, the handicap spots available to anybody with a placard, not to that person.

Commissioner Anderson: The problem is distance. So, if you have four 50-foot properties and you put in one space, you look at the percentage of times that you need that space for. You don't need one for each building. You need one per block.

Mayor Lago: I think the conversation is evolving.

City Manager Iglesias: I think there are a lot of issues, because we could have multiple people ask for it and then we put one in, do we put two in, if multiple buildings ask for it. So, I think we need to sit down and maybe discuss it a little bit.

Commissioner Anderson: It's based upon need. Its like if you are at a hospital, you are going to need more handicap spaces than if you're at the sports clinic or a sports facility.

Parking Director Kinney: We are very cognizant of the need issue and like I began with, the City of Coral Gables historically has been above and beyond. For example, on Miracle Mile, by state code, there would be one ADA space. If Miracle Mile was a garage, there would be three. We provide a 11 ADA spaces on Miracle Mile.

Commissioner Anderson: But Miracle Mile is not the issue.

Parking Director Kinney: But that's the approach we have, but still if there is a request and there is off-street parking, we generally make sure the property owner is abiding by their requirements, and I don't know why that would be different in a residential zone, as opposed to the commercial zone.

Mayor Lago: So, let's continue the conversation and we'll bring it back to the Commission meeting, but I think we can find an answer.

City Manager Iglesias: Let's look at it internally and see if we can come up with some solution.

Mayor Lago: And I look to have it at the next Commission meeting.

City Manager Iglesias: I think one per block, I think we just have to look at, if you have a block and it's a four-story building is in, you have three requests, do we provide three on that block?

Commissioner Anderson: I'm not saying by request. It's based upon need. It's a need-based thing. Need is determined by a number of things. You have a building on the block that has accessible parking, off-street parking, there is less need, okay. As opposed to situation where you have zero

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off-street parking and you look at it, you need to provide something within 1,000 feet, so that's one block, one per block. We have zero per block in many blocks. So, I'm going to be in on Friday afternoon, can you reach out to Lina and make a time to meet with me, so we can get this first one resolved and then we'll draft up something.

Parking Director Kinney: Sure, we are available.

City Manager Iglesias: That's fine, Commissioner. Then we can look at this on a more general area and a more general scope, so we can have some balance there. I wish we could provide every spot handicap.

Commissioner Anderson: I'm all for balance, that's why I talked about need. Its need based.