

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting

Agenda Item F-2

March 24, 2009

City Commission Chambers

405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Donald D. Slesnick, II

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Maria Anderson

Commissioner Rafael “Ralph” Cabrera, Jr.

Commissioner Wayne “Chip” Withers

City Staff

Interim City Manager, Maria Alberro Jimenez

City Attorney, Elizabeth Hernandez

City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman

City Clerk Staff, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Peter Hairston, Coral Gables Resident

Bruce Brockhouse, Member, Board of Architects

F-2 [Start: 11:51:08 a.m.]

Discussion concerning pilot program to aesthetically enhance Coral Gables bridges.

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Mayor Slesnick: OK, Mr. Kerdyk has asked to go forward with F-2 without objection. Mr. Kerdyk.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Thank you Mr. Mayor; I’m here with a feel good matter, no doubt about it...

Mayor Slesnick: Must not be news.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Anyway, several months ago several neighbors approached me about aesthetically enhancing their neighborhood with how it relates to bridges in the City; and I’ve met with these neighbors on a consistent basis. I also introduced them to staff here, they met with our City Architect, Carlos, they met with our Assistant City Manager Dona Lubin, and I wanted them to come forward and talk to you a little bit about a pilot program that they have envisioned for the City of Coral Gables. We have here today two people, one representing the neighborhood, Peter Hairston, Peter, you want to step up here, and also with him is our famous Architect who has served many years on our Board of Architects, Bruce Brockhouse, Bruce. Gentlemen, you gave me this presentation, let me pass it out, its just an overview of what they have with intent, and Peter if you could just sort of, not necessarily step us through this, but just give us a general

overview of what your thoughts are, and what the neighborhood's thoughts are of what we can do to enhance your community, your portion of the community.

Mr. Hairston: Thank you very much Mr. Vice Mayor and Commissioners for seeing us. The neighbors would like to improve the appearance of our bridges. We would like them to be more in keeping with the decision that we understand that George Merrick had for Coral Gables, and with the standards that are applied to our homes, the facades for example, and the streets which we all enjoy. We think that the white wash appearance of the bridges today is not in keeping with those standards; and we've done some homework to come up with a recommendation as to how they can be treated very inexpensively and environmentally friendly manner, which would produce, we think, dramatic improvement in how they look, and make us all feel even better about where we live.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Bruce, you want to add to that.

Mr. Brockhouse: Good morning Commissioners, Mayor, and Vice Mayor Kerdyk, I was honored by Peter to be asked to help out with this pilot program to see what can be done with the bridges specifically the Hardee Bridge, which you have in your handout. Its always been George Merrick's vision to have the feeling of the Riviera, the Mediterranean here in Coral Gables. I think he's done a beautiful job with the City, with all the features that are already in existence; the Country Club Prado at 57th Avenue and 8th Street along with Coral Way and the Plaza, the Cartagena Plaza, De Soto Fountain, they are all landmarks; and I think the bridges are active landmarks, in terms that they are portals between the waterways and the streets, there are pedestrian accesses. They are connectors to neighborhoods, and they really don't share in the same aesthetic value as some of the features that you see throughout the City; and I think it's a perfect opportunity to have them shine and be in that same light for a very small amount of time and effort they could be as beautiful as some of the other landscape, and architectural features that make Coral Gables a unique place. I was very honored by Peter to be asked to help him with color sections and get the process going, so I hope you will entertain it.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: I think what we are trying to do here is again, assist the neighbors and do something that is complimentary to what the City of Coral Gables has in its vision. I don't think anybody is looking at any radical color selections or anything...

Commissioner Anderson: No metal roofs.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk...What?...no metal roofs; this is simply to paint the bridge and the surrounding areas in a color scheme that is acceptable to the City; and of course we would want to meet further with the neighborhood surrounding this one bridge in particular, which is the bridge on Granada location in South Gables. The funding for this project, and we've already had people talk to us a little bit about how the cost would be for something like this, would probably be in the tune of about twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) to do one bridge. What I propose is that we work through the Community Foundation and bring it through the Partnership Program and fund at least the initial pilot program to see how it works, and then from that point decide on how we want to proceed, if it's successful.

Mr. Hairston: We have already received tremendous support and a lot of enthusiastic response from the neighbors with whom we've spoken about this, and I am very confident we will have much more as we make more people aware what we are envisioning; and I think that it is quite possible if its important to do so that we can get supplemental funding from the neighborhood, people have volunteered to do that, others have actually volunteered not only to put some money into the kitty, but also to make the rounds, passing the hat so-to-speak, not to over promise, but just to let you know that I think that could be done if it would help in a tough economic time to rally the troops; and we would just basically draw circles around the bridge Granada first, and get out and talk to more people.

Commissioner Withers: I wonder if the Garden Club would be interested in adopting this as a project.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Maybe, maybe.

Commissioner Withers: I can see a calendar of bridges of Coral Gables on sale a year from now; there are a lot of opportunities.

Commissioner Anderson: Actually some of the more romantic ones are at the Biltmore Golf Course, the old bridges, those are beautiful, so all the vision that was there from before, that's great stuff. So I applaud you. That's good that would be actually very nice.

Commissioner Cabrera: Madam City Manager, Madam City Manager, about three months ago I brought to you, to the City's attention, the concern of a number of residents along Roduna had brought to us with graffiti on the bridges...

Interim City Manager Jimenez: Yes sir.

Commissioner Cabrera: And I don't know whatever happened, we were supposed to have a meeting with that group, but that never happened.

Interim City Manager Jimenez: And in reality we are waiting for them to...

Commissioner Cabrera: Why don't we do this, instead of, why don't we get them in contact with Mr. Kerdyk's group so that they can be part of this opportunity, rather than try to do a bandaide approach to what they wanted to do, because their concerns were not only the way the bridges looked, but the lack of lighting on the bridges, and the actual state of disrepair of each and everyone of the bridges, that they went through as boaters. So maybe that...its three or four gentlemen that were very interested in this, is there a way for your office to put them in touch with Mr. Kerdyk's group.

Interim City Manager Jimenez: Oh absolutely, I have their information, I'll be glad to extend that call.

Commissioner Cabrera: Great – I'm sure they would appreciate it.

Interim City Manager Jimenez: Sure.

Mayor Slesnick: It seems to me too that what you need to maybe do with Mr. Kerdyk if you get together with the foundation that's already a 501(c)3 that donations can be made to a specific fund to do this project, and therefore people get tax benefits and so forth, its better than giving the money directly to the City for them, and the foundation works for the City on a number of these projects, and whether it goes to the "Parknership" Fund or a new special bridge fund, it can be worked out.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: No doubt about it. There was one last thing I wanted you to touch on because you have researched a little bit of the paint materials, and how "green" friendly the paint materials are; you talked to Carlos about them and Dona is quite aware also of the painting material, could you just elaborate briefly on that paint material so that the Commission can understand what we are thinking about doing, so its not only beauty, but it also is environmentally friendly.

Mr. Hairston: Certainly – the mineral and silica paints that we are proposing are all natural, they are beautiful in tone, earth tones, so they will adapt very well to the color palate that Gables would accept and would be consistent with George Merrick's early slate of colors, and so forth. There is experience locally with materials of this type, which I think will lend itself very well to a comfort level and the precedents include, as I understand it, the Alhambra Water Tower, some work that was done on Marjorie Stoneman Douglas' house and I believe Bruce's experience with some historic homes in the area using...

Mr. Brockhouse: We took the Baker Homestead, Dr. Jude, Sally Jude's residents, and the paint, the silicone based paint that we are talking about is naturally patinas, and changes with light, and with water, so its inherently is better for, I think, with graffiti because you won't have such a blotch when you paint over it, you'll have the same modeling effect, so I think its probably going to be an advantage there also.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So it soaks into the material.

Mr. Hairston: As an example, on the cover of last year's report the Alhambra Water Tower was treated with the same material.

Commissioner Cabrera: That's a collector's item, that Annual Report.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: This is a big collector's item right here. You can't find those anywhere, they are tough to find. We don't have them anymore.

Mr. Hairston: [Inaudible – off mike]...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: On our way to Australia she said...

Mr. Hairston:....she has the colors that we....a search ensued and we found a historic preservation office....Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Thank you very much Peter.

Mayor Slesnick: This will be done acceptable to George Merrick Mindreau, right (Laughter).

Commissioner Withers: Which bridge is going to have the purple neon under it? (Laughter)

Mayor Slesnick: One last question though, who is that we conceive would be doing the painting, Public Works or outside?

Interim City Manager Jimenez: We are considering using an outside vendor to do the actual painting that has some experience in applying this paint.

Mr. Brockhouse: And with along with that we discussed with him he would be able to train Public Works if there is a maintenance program that would need to be ensued to keep them up, or there would be other possibilities to keeping the bridges current.

Interim City Manager Jimenez: OK; very well.

Mr. Brockhouse: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Thank you.

[End: 12:03:12 a.m.]