

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-2
May 22, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain
Arts and Cultural Specialist, Catherine Cathers

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item I-2 [2:47:47 p.m.]

A Resolution approving sole use of the theater space at the Biltmore Hotel (currently occupied by Gables Stage) as a live theater venue for a not-for-profit theater company.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And, the next is a Resolution approving sole use of the theater space at the Biltmore Hotel (currently occupied by Gables Stage) as a live theater venue for a not-for-profit theater company.

Preservation Officer Spain: So, this also comes from the Cultural Development Board. They had a long discussion that the space is not occupied by Gables Stage and the Gables Stage has been approved to move into the Coconut Grove Theater when that project is finished; and so, they were very concerned about losing two destination theaters Area Stage Company, which is on U.S.-1 and that is going to be demolished, I believe it's the Publix site.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Preservation Officer Spain: And, then of course Gables Stage moving out of the Biltmore Hotel. So, they are asking that the space that's now occupied by Gables Stage, once they leave, continues to be a live theater venue for a not-for-profit theater company.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Keon: Can I ask a question with regard to that, because I think that sometimes there are – it is a space that can also be used not necessarily for live theater, but for film production and maybe for some documentary and other uses that would be very compatible in the City that are not just live theater.

Ms. Cathers: The intent was live theater and performance, so they were expanding it to performance, but also their concern was that Coral Gables is a destination place for theater and with the loss of these two companies and in the past other companies now were really down on our theaters, and so they were really concerned about that and its already set up to be a theater space, so it would be easy for that to be maintained for that purpose.

Commissioner Keon: But, you know some of the problems with designating things as a theater space is once the theater moves in there then there are props, there are costumes, everything remains in that place and it's not used by anybody else. It really limits it to only that one group and that group only. Which I think there is an opportunity for a lot of great film, there are a lot of great documentaries that can be shown with a speaker, so it's not – until someone comes along, I wouldn't want to not have it as live theater space, but I think that it could be used once they move out there may be the opportunity to use it and occupy it in some creative ways that really benefit our City, if allowed to function as more than just live theater space. You could have poetry readings, you could have, I mean there are a lot of things that you could have artists speak. It's a small intimate stage with good acoustics and whatever and parking that could be used by a variety of cultural organizations that could come in. So I don't mind leaving live theater, but I'd like to leave it available to other cultural programming.

Commissioner Mena: The other question I had on this was, had we conferred at all with the Biltmore to see...?

Preservation Officer Spain: We have not – and I don't know what our agreement is with them as far as the lease agreement, as far as whether we have any control over what...

Commissioner Keon: I think the Manager was going to look into that.

Commissioner Mena: I think it would be worth at least conferring with them and having an idea. Maybe they have some other idea that we haven't thought of that might be a better idea.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: You are going to have a pretty major item regarding the Biltmore at the next meeting. That gives us opportunity to talk to them about it and fold that into the conversation.

Commissioner Mena: Yes. I think it's a good idea.

Commissioner Keon: So, do we wait until the next meeting?

Commissioner Mena: Yes, I would.

Commissioner Keon: If I could defer this to the next meeting.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

City Attorney Ramos: A motion to defer, is there a second?

Vice Mayor Quesada: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: All those in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Opposed.

[End: 2:52:00 p.m.]