

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-12
March 29, 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 Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-12 [4:43 p.m.]

Discussion regarding the Salvadore Dog Park proposal.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Anderson)

Mayor Lago: G-12, discussion regarding the Salvadore dog park proposal.

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, I have some pictures for you. Let's see if we can dig 'em up.

Mayor Lago: Alright.

City Commission Meeting

March 29, 2022

Agenda Item G-12 - Discussion regarding the Salvadore Dog Park proposal.

Commissioner Anderson: Just keep in mind, the blowers were going at the time. Or I should say -- I walked by afterwards when I was running with the dogs to take these pictures. At the time I measured it, it was the blowers. So, at this end, it's 40 feet wide, okay. At the far end, it's 20 feet wide, and the full length based upon the number of sidewalk pieces -- which if memory serves me correctly, it's 38 sidewalk pieces -- makes the full thing 190 feet long. I call this a pressure relief valve to deal with the problems at Catalonia Park, and hopefully, provide a walkable dog run to take care of some of the neighborhood issues. There's three pictures, if you want to flip them around. There are some drains that are on either end. So, my suggestion -- and I did not measure the distance between the drains -- is that...

Vice Mayor Mena: You're talking about that drain right in the foreground by the street or another one?

Commissioner Anderson: No, I'm talking about there.

Vice Mayor Mena: Oh, okay.

Commissioner Anderson: Is to put the entrance on this end, the narrow end, on the other side of the drain. Then there's two drains on the opposite end, so we cut the park a little short to deal with that and put some landscaping around the one in the middle so the dog...

Vice Mayor Mena: So, you take the landscaping out and go to the fence basically?

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, we could go -- we could do that and leave some of it around the poles just in case...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: We'd also -- would you get rid of the sidewalk?

Commissioner Anderson: No. You know, I mean, if we move the sidewalk, we could go 40/40 both ways, and then it would make it a substantial dog park.

Mayor Lago: I would -- I mean, if we're going to do this right, I'd remove the sidewalk. I'd remove that sidewalk, and there's really no need for a sidewalk. I mean...

Vice Mayor Mena: Is there an...?

Commissioner Anderson: Well, there's a street there. There's still a need for a sidewalk.

Vice Mayor Mena: That goes around the park.

Commissioner Anderson: It curves is why it gets narrower, so it comes back in towards the tennis court at that point.

Vice Mayor Mena: It seems like it could straighten out earlier than it does though. You've got those trees up there, but...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah. I mean, you might be able to go in and out now.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: Our very talented Public Works staff and Parks Department volunteered to me that they have the skill level to install a chain link fence, and we could make it mimic what's already there so visually it's identical but shorter. I think five feet is plenty of height for dogs. I

mean, my Greyhounds are not going to be able to mount that, nor was my Border Collie be able to go over five feet.

Mayor Lago: But would you put the fence all the way to the street?

Commissioner Anderson: No, just to the sidewalk. If you move the sidewalk and if we want to, you know...

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, I don't...

Commissioner Anderson: Go that far...

Mayor Lago: I think it's a great idea, and I support you 110 percent. I just think that if we're going to do this, we should move that sidewalk and make it a little bit more desirable dog park.

Commissioner Anderson: It would if it's wider, you know.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah, because it's...

Commissioner Anderson: That was the only...

Vice Mayor Mena: Very narrow there. I mean...

Commissioner Anderson: That was the only reservation. See, I -- you know, I have other friends that have Greyhounds too, and that was their note was they wish it was wider all the way along, and this would be a walkable park for a lot of folks with the length that it has now. Staff, I'm going to ask them to come back to us when we have the April 5th meeting with some additional ideas.

They had -- you know, they were telling me they could build something over the drains and stuff, but I'll leave that to them.

Vice Mayor Mena: Fred...

Commissioner Menendez: I have a...

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm sorry, real quick. I know we've talked about other small parcels in different parts of the City, and you've always sort of...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: Had thoughts about sort of, you know, what's an acceptable size, and I was just wondering kind of how that -- I get this is an irregular size.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, it's longer. I mean...

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: You come up to about 3,500 square feet, so it's -- for a small dog run type area, I mean, that's what you're going to get. And we'll have...

Vice Mayor Mena: So, the total square feet, it's okay, but it's more the shape of it that's a little complicated.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah. I mean, it's the shape of it. There's certain things that you -- you know, would be difficult to do, like separate -- this would just be a one area straight run. You couldn't sep -- it'd be hard to separate big dogs and little dogs because of the size, because

of the shape. And the Commissioner's right. There are some things that you have to look at with the drainage. I know I looked at maybe, you know, some sort of barrier, whether it's landscaped. I've looked at other things that you can put over drains, so there's possibilities to do things there. And what the Commissioner said is right. It starts at 40. It goes all the way down to just about 19 because of the way it curves, which is the problem. And if you start in between the drain -- if you start before the drains, it's about 149 from -- like a foot in from the west drain and a foot in from the east drain, it's about 149 is what we measured with the (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Anderson: You have four drains in that area.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: I kind of question...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: Do we really need that many? I mean, two are right next to each other.

City Manager Iglesias: Those are...

Commissioner Anderson: I don't know what the plumbing is underneath but...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, we'll look at that. I did start...

City Manager Iglesias: Those are picking...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I started inquiring with Public Works...

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, those are picking up the...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: About the drains, so we've...

City Manager Iglesias: The water that goes...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Had some more conversations.

City Manager Iglesias: Those courts are impermeable, so it's picking up a lot of the peripheral water coming off the courts.

Commissioner Anderson: I...

City Manager Iglesias: That's what the...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, I know. I just...

City Manager Iglesias: That's what the drains are for.

Commissioner Anderson: Why four?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: There are some things that -- yeah, you know, you do have the courts there. The courts are clay. We'll have to make sure that, you know, we take care of that.

Vice Mayor Mena: Do you expect pushback from the tennis community?

Commissioner Menendez: I thought it was pickleball.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well, I...

Commissioner Anderson: It's tennis.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, it's tennis. Yeah, I haven't...

Commissioner Menendez: I wanted to stir it up.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We, you know...

Commissioner Anderson: It's hard to keep everybody...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We haven't spoken to them but...

Commissioner Anderson: Happy.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question or...

Mayor Lago: It's hard to keep everybody happy.

Commissioner Anderson: I've picked up on that somewhere.

Commissioner Menendez: It's a year after the election and we finally realize that, right? So...

Mayor Lago: But can I -- can you go back to that picture? The previous picture.

Commissioner Anderson: And while you're doing that...

Mayor Lago: And I don't want to -- I know you're going to say, well, it's dangerous because the sidewalk's next to the street. But this is a pretty calm street. Why not push that sidewalk as close to the street as possible and have it elevated with a curb...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: And I see Melissa in the back waving her head. That's a possibility then you would -- it's a possibility, then you could have a much...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Sure.

Mayor Lago: Larger green space.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well...

Mayor Lago: And I know that we don't like curbs because it doesn't allow for water percolation, but there's a lot of green space here. So, if you have that opportunity, demolish that sidewalk, push the sidewalk all the way to the street, you avoid all the roots, and you do a nice sidewalk on the street with a curb. We've done it before. We've done it in many different places where we're left with no other choice. And right at that point, you give the dog lovers....

Vice Mayor Mena: That'd make a huge difference.

Mayor Lago: You give the dog lovers a great park, and it basically will cost next to nothing, except for the sidewalk and the little fence you got to install. Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: So, I absolutely, 100 percent support this. I agree with the Mayor. And we've had this discussion. My -- one of my motivations for supporting this is the issue at Catalonia Park.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Mayor Lago: Sure.

Commissioner Menendez: And I saw -- a couple people saw a 10-second video at Catalonia Park with more dogs than kids.

Mayor Lago: Yep.

Commissioner Menendez: The dogs were bigger than the kids, and more importantly, a group of dogs were running in a pack, which...

Commissioner Anderson: Which they do. They're playing together.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, but when you have a toddler that's smaller than the...

Commissioner Anderson: Sure.

Commissioner Menendez: That group...

Commissioner Anderson: We need...

Commissioner Menendez: So, we've gotten the emails. So, I'm asking...

Commissioner Anderson: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Menendez: I'm asking Fred and the Administration, if we're able to move forward with this, then can we find a solution for Catalonia Park?

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: Could this be the place that the dog owners can go instead of Catalonia, where we're having such conflict between families with kids, families with dogs. This would be a way to sort of relieve the pressure at Catalonia.

Commissioner Anderson: No, I mean, Catalonia is really not even a good dog park, even if you had it as a dog park.

Commissioner Menendez: Right.

Commissioner Anderson: Because you've got rocks.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No, no. I think there is a relief. I think, you know -- and we'll talk further at the Sunshine meeting. There's a lot of other things that we need to work on with relief as well. I mean, little areas like this, but bigger dog parks as well. And...

Commissioner Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I'm looking forward to...

Commissioner Menendez: I would love to see...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That discussion.

Commissioner Menendez: This implemented, the sooner, the better. That's just my personal...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, that's why I was looking for some...

Mayor Lago: Can I just say something? And I don't want to hijack Commissioner Anderson's...

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Mayor Lago: Proposal.

Commissioner Anderson: It's okay. You can...

Mayor Lago: Now, remember...

Commissioner Anderson: You can hijack it to improve anything.

Mayor Lago: I remember that this was -- I remember this started with Commissioner Mena's efforts like four years ago, and I'm happy that they've come together like a -- you know, like Transformers.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: They come together, and they make the big robot, and they get this done. So, I'm a big fan of robots and all that kind of stuff.

Commissioner Anderson: I would have never known.

Mayor Lago: But -- so, my point is that I would like to see April 5th, in a Sunshine meeting, a simple -- don't go crazy -- a simple diagram, an overhead shot with a sidewalk on the street and a fence. You could either include the trees in the park, or you can exclude the trees in the park, whatever you want to do. And make it so that it's a simple fence with a sidewalk so that we can get an idea of how it would look. That's what I would like to see.

Commissioner Anderson: I...

Mayor Lago: Would that make you happy, Commissioner?

Commissioner Anderson: It would. And as far as the small dogs, Villa Valencia will have a small dog park. So, anybody that doesn't want to run with the big dogs can go over there.

Mayor Lago: I would like to see...

Commissioner Anderson: So, we'd put some signs up (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Lago: Can we get that? Is that -- do you have enough time for that, or no?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: I'll have to talk to people. I'm not sure, but I'll do what I can. I'll see what level of detail we could put together, but we will put together something.

Mayor Lago: Simple, something simple.

Commissioner Anderson: Pencil drawing. You want to help?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We will do it.

Commissioner Anderson: I can help you with a pencil drawing.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We will do it.

Mayor Lago: Do it simple.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We'll figure it out.

Commissioner Menendez: Can I make a suggestion?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We have somebody that can do CAD, I'm sure.

Commissioner Menendez: If I could make the suggestion also that if and when this comes to the City Commission ready for a vote, if -- because I asked -- you know, we've done this in the past, if we can do in the resolution or a parallel resolution where we waive certain obstacles that the Administration itself has in terms of implementing certain changes or constructions to expedite the issue. Because I think, you know, I'm -- my personal opinion, at Catalonia, there's a safety issue, so the faster this can be done in the right way -- so, if there's anything we as a body, government body can do to waive certain, you know, hoops that you all have to jump through, I would be more than happy to support something like that, to expedite the whole process.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yep.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah. This is a small cost item by comparison to some other things that we do, so I think it would be, you know, something that the residents would look forward to. I

mean, you guys have been spared most of the emails because they've decided that Kirk and I are the folks to contact regarding Catalonia Park, but it's...

Commissioner Menendez: Donny and Marie. O

Commissioner Anderson: They're getting pretty bad so...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: The sooner, the better.

Commissioner Menendez: The sooner, the better.

City Manager Iglesias: I'm not sure if we have time to survey anything, but I think we could use aerials.

Mayor Lago: Simple.

City Manager Iglesias: And look at moving the sidewalk. We have two options, near the trees or on the other side.

Mayor Lago: I prefer on the other side to make...

City Manager Iglesias: So...

Mayor Lago: The park even bigger.

City Manager Iglesias: So, let's -- so we can take...

Vice Mayor Mena: That's a possibility.

City Manager Iglesias: A look at that.

Mayor Lago: Oh, yeah. And that -- and by the way, a prime example if you'd like to see how it'll look, just go to my house on San Amaro and look across the street. You have an elevated six-foot...

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: Next to UM.

Mayor Lago: Sidewalk with a curb and that runs all down San Amaro. So, it's done in front of my house, and it works perfectly.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: It perfectly works.

Vice Mayor Mena: Can you also at the Sunshine meeting have the renderings for the park we already approved?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: And also, an update on where we are with that?

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah, that...

Vice Mayor Mena: (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Anderson: That would be nice.

Vice Mayor Mena: Such a thing.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It's a little -- yeah, we'll get an update. As you know, it's...

Mayor Lago: Also...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Being built...

City Manager Iglesias: The County is doing that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: By another agency. It's the County, but we will get you...

Mayor Lago: Fred, I also received -- and you were copied on it. I know you were dealing...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: With the issue that there was some columns that were a safety hazard at Salvadore Park. Did we ever end up taking care of those?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yes. Well, we sectioned them off to make sure that they're okay, and we're waiting on getting them -- we got the pairs ordered -- I mean, the parts

ordered, and we're waiting for them to get installed. But we secured it, so it shouldn't be an issue. We barricaded it off.

Mayor Lago: I'm saying it's a pretty sharp, sharp issue.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, a car ran into it.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, and right next to a tree, so if a kid, you know, gets up on that and falls from the tree, he could be impaled.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Mayor Lago: So, I want to make sure we take care...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We barricaded it and caution taped it as much as we could, and we're on a rush order for those.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: One other footnote on it, currently, there's some park -- people take up a couple of parking spaces there. So, if we leave in a couple of parallel spaces or so forth along those trees, see if there's space for that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, I think you're going to have to make a decision about the sidewalk then because I don't think if you have it on the side of the -- there won't be anywhere to park, I don't think. I mean, we'll look at it, but just based on what I've seen and when I walked the space, there's not a lot of space there if you move that sidewalk over.

Mayor Lago: I just think -- this is my -- again, this is your initiative and I fully support you, whatever you want to do. If you want to move it on the other side of the trees, we can.

Commissioner Anderson: I would love to.

Mayor Lago: I think at one point, we have to make a decision, either it's the cars, or it's the park. And if you want to do something -- before, we were talking about leaving a little sidewalk and -- you know...

Commissioner Anderson: No, no. I get it.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's...

Commissioner Anderson: I just haven't measured it...

Mayor Lago: I want to give you...

Commissioner Anderson: So I don't know.

Vice Mayor Mena: But does...

Mayor Lago: How many cars --? Somebody just wrote me about that, and I said, I'm going to visit there on Saturday morning. I'm going to see how many cars are parked there, and I'm going

to visit there a few times in the morning during the week. I'm going to drive by and see how many cars are parked on that swale. We have asphalt parking. We have parking on the other side. Something's got to give if we're -- you know, we can't have everything we want.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's other swales.

Commissioner Anderson: Right.

Mayor Lago: There's other swales.

Commissioner Menendez: Dogs can use Uber.

Mayor Lago: You know...

Vice Mayor Mena: (INAUDIBLE) swale. There's other swales.

Commissioner Anderson: And you can walk. It's a park.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, that's the whole point. They walk to Salvadore -- I mean, they walk to Catalonia, at least I've seen a lot of folks walk their dogs.

Commissioner Anderson: Majority.

Commissioner Menendez: Majority, exactly. And I would assume with the tree canopy we have and the beautiful landscape and everything we have, walking their dog to Salvadore is part of the experience of being in Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you all. I agree.

Mayor Lago: We'll have further discussions on April 5th at the meeting.