

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-2
May 10, 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 Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-2 [2:56 p.m.]

Creation of temporary "pop-up" area in the northern portion of Catalonia Park to be used exclusively for dogs until proposed dog facility at Salvadore Park is completed.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

Mayor Lago: G-2.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes. G-2, bring it up in coordination with what we just approved, Salvadore Park. We've had the discussions on Catalonia Park. I think when Salvadore is online, I think pretty much everyone that takes their dogs to Catalonia will be trans -- shifting over to Salvadore. But meanwhile, as we've discussed in the past, recently in several Commission meetings, we have a scenario where actually for safety, we need to take some measures to make sure that the kids, the little ones especially that go there and their dogs, on occasion, their dogs are not on leashes, not the fault of residents that follow our code, but there are others that, you know, just decide to have their dogs run free. And when you have a small child, you know, it's a bad situation waiting to happen. So, meanwhile, I propose -- and with the help of the Administration and staff -- a temporary pop-up dog area. And I'll let Fred and everyone please...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, we have a few different things. The design I will show you has the look of a fence, and we could do a chain link fence. I was just looking at an alternative to see if there's something else as a temporary. I found this manufacturer. It's more of a vinyl mesh, and it's -- you just put a sleeve in the ground, and you put the pole in, so it's a little more temporary, if that's what we're looking for as sort of a pop-up. And we might be able to actually use it in other places. It's not overly expensive. For the size that we're looking at, it was probably less than \$10,000.

Public Works Director Diaz: Something like that, yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: It's sturdy enough to withstand the dogs...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Well...

Vice Mayor Mena: Kind of...?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: It...

Commissioner Menendez: She has big dogs.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Here's our concern. Our concern is ...

Commissioner Menendez: They're 80 pounds.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Not the dogs. According to -- and I've -- you know, talking with them, the dog -- you know, the pounds per square inch is over 1,800 -- it can withstand dogs. The only thing that we would have to look a little bit more into is you're sharing a park with kids.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, our kids are going to want to climb it, so that's the other thing. So, this was just an alternative. I wanted to -- I had been in discussion with the City Manager to look at different ways that we can do things, but we'll show you what the design is. Obviously, we can use a chain link fence. We had brought it here before and got feedback that maybe the chain link fence wasn't the most...

Vice Mayor Mena: And that's a little nicer visually. I'll say that.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Oh, I'm sorry. We had heard the chain link fence wasn't the most aesthetically pleasing. So, we -- we're just -- I'm just looking at different options and this -- you know, when it's long like that, it's clean. It's really good from afar.

Vice Mayor Mena: Right.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Like when you're driving by, you know, but yes, durability is something. But if we're looking at pop-up temporary, it might be something to consider, so I know we have...

Vice Mayor Mena: I don't know that the kids aren't going to want to climb a chain link anyways, so...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Correct. This one they might not want to. I'm just afraid they'd knock it over. That's all.

Public Works Director Diaz: If you could please bring out the layout.

Commissioner Anderson: Is the residents around Catalonia Park been consulted with?

Public Works Director Diaz: I'm sorry?

Commissioner Anderson: Have any of the residents surrounding Catalonia Park been shown this?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: No. I think...

Public Works Director Diaz: No.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We're presenting it here today based on the direction that we received from Commission to look at an alternative to split the park in half. That was the direction we received at the last Commission meeting.

Vice Mayor Mena: After their input at the last meeting.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, especially I think the gentleman that had the one-year-old, I think...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: Doberman sort of ran at them showing their teeth. At that point, I think we...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: Felt greatly that we need to do something, even if it's temporary.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: But the understanding was that it was temporary...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: That it would not be a fixed...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, a temporary.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Asset.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, that's the layout that's being proposed, just (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Menendez: So, I ask the Commission to, I guess, grant the Administration the blessing to move forward with a temporary solution until Salvadore is up and online so that we

can prevent, you know, not only situations with dogs and children, but maybe between dog owners and non-dog owners. And I ask for the support and guidance of the Administration so they can start taking action on a temporary basis.

Vice Mayor Mena: The only thing I would say is sort of the realist in me, we're going to do this, we're going to say it's temporary, people are going to like it, or at least get comfortable with it, and then when we go to take it out, "No! Why are you taking it out?" Well, there's Salvadore Park, and I get that. But the only reason I'm bringing it up is because, if at that point in time...

Mayor Lago: It works.

Vice Mayor Mena: There's going -- well, but if at that point in time, there's going to be a willingness to do that, then we need to think about whether what you're doing now and expending funds on now is a permanent solution or will stand the test of time.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: So, that's really good feedback, and that's what we thought about. So, that's why maybe the chain link is the way to go because the chain link -- it can be temporary, but it can also be a lot more permanent. And if we do get a good reaction from all of the users in the park, they might be happy.

City Manager Iglesias: Let's -- chain link cannot be used on a permanent basis. It's against our Zoning Code.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: So, let's be clear.

Commissioner Anderson: Well, here's my...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: But I'm going to share with you what I heard from other dog owners, and I just want to go over the big picture here to of what is happening in the neighborhood. The 500 block of Valencia, we have the Villa Valencia building going to have a small dog park. Exactly when it's going to open its doors, I don't know. The dog owners that I did speak with when I talked about splitting the park, in general concept, said it'd be too small. We do have fields elsewhere, not too far away, some of them across from the library if you want to, you know, consider that for a temporary site. But again, you have to have enough space there, so it's realistic, you know, for a dog to run it because this is a small lot to begin with. Catalonia, you know, it is small, but people were enjoying it. So, I don't necessarily want to take away from the children either. And we have another item here on the agenda too that I'm going to ask the City Manager to give you an update on regarding the open space that's currently fenced on Ponce de Leon Boulevard. So, I think it -- we need to look at this a little more holistically before we do make a decision because the input I got from the dog owners is this is too tiny to even consider.

Vice Mayor Mena: And I'm -- I don't disagree with you, and I think we're going to have more options come online, and hopefully, that'll help.

Commissioner Anderson: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'm just saying then if and when that request comes later, we need to be willing -- that needs to be the answer is, "Hey, this was temporary. We're committed to it being temporary. We want it to go back to being kids and you have these other options now for dog owners." So, that if you all take a temporary measure here, we're not then in a, you know, weird posture where we're trying to make something permanent that wasn't intended to be permanent. That's all I'm saying.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Sure.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, if we're on board with it -- if we're committed to it being temporary, I'm on board with that, and I just think we need to give staff that direction so that what they're implementing, it's okay for it to be a temporary solution as opposed to a long-term one.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm totally for the support of temporary. And like I said, I just think we need to take measures now. And for every dog owner that says, you know, they want it to stay the way it is, there are parents of small children and grandparents that want to be able to use the park and feel their kids are safe, so let's make it safe, even on a temporary basis, until we have other options.

Mayor Lago: So, I think we have...

Vice Mayor Mena: Okay.

Mayor Lago: You have some marching orders.

City Manager Iglesias: Let me just say that if we do...

Commissioner Anderson: We do.

City Manager Iglesias: Decide to have...

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Manager Iglesias: If we do decide to make it temporary, then we should use that fencing that was just shown.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: Clearly temporary fencing.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Mena: Yep.

City Manager Iglesias: And it can easily be installed and...

Mayor Lago: And it sends the appropriate message, okay.

Commissioner Menendez: And you can use it...

Mayor Lago: But we'll...

Commissioner Menendez: For something else.

Mayor Lago: Will we come back to the next Commission meeting with pricing or what's --? We're just moving forward?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We can.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Anderson: So, on that...

Mayor Lago: Or you want to wait to...?

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: We'll look at it. We'll -- I'll work with Hermes and we'll...

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: If that design is good, then we can look at -- we'll talk with the manufacturer and make sure -- what the product placement, and what would the -- what their (INAUDIBLE).

City Manager Iglesias: Correct. I think what we can do, Mayor, is we can optimize that design and come back with that type of system...

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect.

City Manager Iglesias: Which is clearly temporary.

Mayor Lago: Alright. So, let's move on. Let's move on.

Commissioner Anderson: I know. I'll just put in one more hypothetical for them. If they have resistance from the residents in that area, look at the grassy space across from the library along University.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Anderson: And that might be more palatable for the residents. Okay, move on.

Mayor Lago: That'd be perfect, yeah.

Commissioner Anderson: Sorry.

Mayor Lago: That's good. I mean, that's a great option, by the way, especially that -- where it kind of...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Bulbs out...

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah, it goes down University.

Mayor Lago: Towards the street.

Parks and Recreation Director Couceyro: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: It won't bother the neighboring -- it won't bother the neighboring neighbor.