

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-12
July 9, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain**

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item G-12 [3:24:32 p.m.]

A discussion item regarding the clarification on the terms for the restoration and rental of the Fink Studio (Sponsored by Commissioner Keon)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: G-12 and City Commission Keon, I would like to address that because its been my issue for the last year and-a-half.

Commissioner Keon: It has, yes, and that's why....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I would like to give you an explanation of what's going on.

Commissioner Keon: OK.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Our former City Manager, it took us forever to choose a potential tenant. We offered it and I had lunch with him, the Dean of the School of Architecture of UM and certain

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other people, they couldn't come up with \$200,000 to do the interior work. Eduardo Padron, it wasn't anywhere near big enough for him. FIU wasn't interested at all; and then we put it out for bids, I guess, not bids...

Commissioner Keon: Like an informal...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: An expression of interest and there were two entities that expressed interest. One was the Institute...from Italy and the other one was the Spanish Cultural Center, which started, as a matter of fact the...in our City. After a six-month vetting process by whoever it was and our property manager, the Property Advisory Board, we chose the Spanish Cultural Center. There has been a process of what to do with it, because the...fell and the balcony is falling and the restoration of the property, it's a historic property, and the City Manager has come up with architectural and engineering and whatever and they think that it would take us a million and-a-half to restore the property. Then the Spanish Cultural Center would use the inside, but not the whole inside or anywhere near the majority of the inside, because the front part of the property is historic with the fireplace, that's where the Fink reception area was; and in the second story there's a tiny historic office, again, that's unusable. What they would do would be to take what used to be the drawing room, which was cut up in little studios, they would restore that and have that as a meeting place for poetry readings, movies, theater, small theater, whatever. There capacity is 200 people and the proposal is that they would pay for the restoration of the inside...

Commissioner Keon: I know.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli:... and also pay a rental based on what they are renting.

Commissioner Keon: Right. I know all that. I have no issue with that. What my concern was is in talking to the Mayor, I mean to the Manager over the last couple of weeks is, just what is in the agreement. And I know that they are starting to work on the lease agreement, some of the conditions of the lease. I asked CGTV if they could pull up that quick video or the YouTube that was done, can you pull that up please, that was done right after we bought it just so for Commissioner Fors benefit, you can see.

[Video Presentation]

Commissioner Keon: Thank you CGTV, you don't need to do the rest, that was the part I really want to talk about. My concern was in speaking with the Manager, I said to him, what this issue was when we purchased it, it was really to ensure that the interior of this space was kept, was maintained, but I also really believe that it should be open to the public. But in speaking with the
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Manager, he did not believe that there would be any access by the public to that living room and Fink Studio, which is the front of the building. I wanted it in the lease agreement that would be open.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The Spanish Cultural Center is open to the public 9 to 5, or whatever it is and Saturdays, it is open to the public. It depends on Dona, how much open to the public she wants to have that living room, but that's our decision.

Commissioner Keon: OK. But I would like to see is that the door is open so that people can come in and they understand that if its listed as one of Denman Fink's Studio and that your visitors are welcome or whatever, somehow so that they can if you are walking down the street or on a map, a site map of the City that someone is strolling down Ponce they can walk in and it's not a problem.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It is a cultural center and the Fink Studio is open to the public when they were at Douglas entrance, which was a historic space that was open to the public and today you go there and you have art exhibits or you have whatever it is, but it is open to the public.

Preservation Officer Spain: I think that that can be delineated in the lease. I haven't seen a draft.

City Manager Iglesias: I think the fact that it is a cultural center and its public that we can delineate that. You'll probably have a problem delineating that on a private lease, but this is a cultural center.

Preservation Officer Spain: I think it has to be open 24 hours a day, but that main living room space and the original entry space and there is a bathroom in there, that's original to the building, that can be retained very easily with the cultural center. What's nice about their plans for the building is, they are going to open up the original drafting space. So, the entire interior, not just the front piece has been designated as historic and they are going to restore the original drafting space. The space where they are putting your offices, they were additions, and so, they can do what they want to with that space. And so, for me architecturally, they are doing what is appropriate for the building. And I agree with you, there should be something in the lease about those restored spaces in the front because that is why we saved the building.

City Manager Iglesias: We can put that Commissioner, we can put that as part of the lease...the cultural center.

Commissioner Keon: I just want to make sure, because in our discussion you were very hesitant for that.

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City Manager Iglesias: Let me explain. I said that if you leased it to a private person, a private entity it would be a problem, but the fact that this is a cultural center, a non-profit and open to the public it would be different...

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely. We would always only lease it to someone that we would retain the ability to keep that front space open to the public, so they could – its not to have a party or to sit down and bring a packed lunch, but it's to walk through.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It would have to be open if you had a movie going on.

Commissioner Keon: Whether to walk in, to look at the interior, the way that it is designed.

Preservation Officer Spain: The study that was done by Eddy Alvarez firm to bring back the original colors in that space, its going to be spectacular, and it should be open to the public, and I don't think the Cultural Center has an issue with that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No, no, no, on the contrary.

Commissioner Keon: But I would like it delineated in the lease that it is in the event that someone may object later on or its problematic or whatever else, and you can determine...

Preservation Officer Spain: I need to have that conversation with the City Manager about the furnishings whether we want them to stay. Because the architecture itself is stunning, so it doesn't necessarily have to have the furniture in them.

Commissioner Keon: Well you can make that decision, that's why I think you should also be part of whatever that lease is to make sure what you want to take out or put in or what needs to be protected, where it needs to go, but I just want to make sure that, that is committed to the public trust, and so that we have the ability, the public has the ability to go in and there is some signage there that says public welcome and its listed on our maps or whatever.

Preservation Officer Spain: A plaque going into that, thanking the...family for the interior, so we have that.

Commissioner Keon: Oh, OK. But that its open and that the door is unlocked and whatever else.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

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Commissioner Keon: Thank you. That was my only issue was just that it remains open, that's the only issue I had.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Vice Mayor Lago is gone, this is his issue.

[End: 3:35:56 p.m.]