

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Non-Agenda Item
February 12, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Parking Director, Kevin Kinney

Public Speaker(s)

Aurelio Durana

Non- Agenda Item [11:44:08 a.m.]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We have Mr. Aurelio Durana here who wishes to talk about Freebie. Really this is out of the agenda. You have three minutes.

Commissioner Mena: On what?

Vice Mayor Lago: Just a quick question on Freebie.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Mr. Ruano: I appreciate the three minutes considering you do not have a public comment section on your agenda.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We don't have it.

Mr. Ruano: You have to indulge me. Three minutes and counting. The problem with Freebie is that you have expanded, technically you have expanded the service, Frank you used to live a half a block from me. I live in the Craft Section just south of downtown. You have technically

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expanded the service, but you have expanded the service basically to move residents, to move non-residents, non-taxpayers from the trolley stops on Ponce and the Metrorail to our Youth Center and our Library. Our Youth Center is already over-burdened. You, Commissioner Keon, are keenly aware that we are allowing non-residents a bunch of free events at the Youth Center that I pay taxes to support and that I pay a membership fee on top of that to attend. Now to add insult to injury, now we have Freebie going from the trolley stops on Ponce across my neighborhood, past my house, but Freebie won't pick me up. The others are only to move those passengers that got off the trolley...

Commissioner Quesada: I didn't realize that.

Commissioner Mena: But you are assuming that somebody would go from downtown to the Youth Center only because there is Freebie. They are just going to go to the Youth Center because there is this Freebie. Like wouldn't they go there anyway if that's where they wanted to go?

Mr. Ruano: That's not the assumption I'm making Commissioner Mena. What I'm telling you, the factual statement that I'm making is that you are making it more, you are making it easier for a non-resident to get on Metrorail, to get on the trolley on Ponce, to get off on any one of the 25 stops by my house, hail Freebie and be taken to the Youth Center by Freebie.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: As opposed to taking their car and driving and adding to traffic.

Mr. Ruano: That may be the case, but why am I being excluded? Then why Mr. Mayor do I have to take my car to the Youth Center?

Commissioner Mena: You are not excluded.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You are not excluded.

Commissioner Mena: You can get the Freebie at exactly the same place they can get it.

Mr. Ruano: Yes, but its driving past my house. Why would you exclude me and my neighbors, all of my residents, elderly residents, when Freebie is driving past my home, that's the whole point. Freebie has service....

Commissioner Mena: I would love to have Freebie for the entire county, it's just not possible.

Commissioner Quesada: I've got to tell you. I thought the neighborhood because it was expanded they would be able to pick up there.

Vice Mayor Lago: Because of the proximity.

Commissioner Mena: They have the capacity, it's way too much capacity.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can I ask you a quick question?

Commissioner Keon: They can pick it up at the trolley stop.

Commissioner Mena: How many cars do they have?

Commissioner Quesada: Six?

Parking Director Kinney: Five.

Commissioner Quesada: Five cars.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you address his concerns, because again, he makes a very good statement about the fact that if the trolley, excuse me, if the Freebie is going right in front of his house, I mean again, there isn't a reason why it wouldn't just stop for a moment to pick this person up?

Parking Director Kinney: We added 30 blocks and almost all of those blocks were residential blocks. Now to get the grant, we did agree to allow the Freebie to go down to Douglas Station, and so it is available along Ponce down to Douglas Station. We added two vehicles and one of the main reasons we added two vehicles was because at peak times we were at over capacity, and so, the 30 blocks almost doubles the size of what we had, but we are under – I mean we have so much money that we get from CIPP to fund public transportation; and so right now we are pretty much at our max. Again, we would like to expand service, but it's a funding issue.

Vice Mayor Lago: Even with the increase now that we were able to obtain the TPO and the demonstration project. You are telling me that there is no way that that neighborhood, the Craft Section can be accommodated?

Mr. Kinney: With five vehicles?- no. We would need to have more than five vehicles.

Vice Mayor Lago: You don't think it would be worth it to maybe run a little test to see how many residents in the Craft area are even contemplating using Freebie. I could not imagine that there are that many.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We are told that their over-capacity as it is...

Vice Mayor Lago: But we just added two additional vehicles.

Parking Director Kinney: We just started the service.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We added two blocks.

Parking Director Kinney: I would like to see if we have adequate capacity for what we have already expanded.

Vice Mayor Lago: You don't know yet if you are over-capacity, because you just started the service.

Parking Director Kinney: We just started.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to be clear on that, because when you say you are over-capacity.

Parking Director Kinney: We did add 30 blocks and almost all of those blocks are residential blocks; and yes, we intentionally chose the Youth Center and the Library as a first expansion, but that was because our residents were asking for that. I'm not sure most of the employees downtown spend time at the library.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can you do me a favor? Can you do me a favor for our next Commission meeting, can we put together some information and see what the potential effects are and what the ridership has been since February 1st since we expanded so that we can kind of get a little bit more, our hands around the opportunity, potentially including the Craft area.

Parking Director Kinney: At the end of this week, I should be getting my first report.

Vice Mayor Lago: So the next Commission meeting, I'm requesting this be put on the agenda.

Parking Director Kinney: OK.

City Manager Iglesias: As you know Vice Mayor, we have almost \$2 million dollars coming in from CIPT, which funds our trolley at \$1.8 million completely. And then we have additional funds for the actual Freebie.

Vice Mayor Lago: That's all half penny money, the 20 percent is allocated just to service the trolleys throughout Miami-Dade County.

City Manager Iglesias: That is correct. So, I think we need to look at what we have now and where capacity is with the current trolley system.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Let's make this study as requested by the Vice Mayor and we'll come back at the next meeting. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ruano: Thank you sir.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you sir.

[End: 11:50:27 a.m.]