

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-3
September 14, 2021
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

Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant to the City Manager, Solanch Lopez

Senior Sustainability Analyst, Matt Anderson

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item I-3 [Start: 3:41 p.m.]

Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Program Update

Mayor Lago: Moving onto to I-3, Solanch – Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Program Update. I’ve been looking forward to this for some time now.

Commissioner Anderson: Thank you Solanch.

Ms. Lopez: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, members of the Commission, Solanch Lopez, Assistant to the City Manager.

Mr. Anderson: Matt Anderson, Senior Sustainability Analyst.

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Ms. Lopez: So, we have a quick update presentation for you on how the Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Program has been going. The last presentation that we gave to the Commission was back in March where we had shown you guys what we were working on to kick off the Great American Clean-up Season. So, we are going to go over how that season went, the programs that we did during that time, some additional programs we had after, and some upcoming events that we have coming up starting this very week. So, the Great American Clean-up – as a reminder, the Great American Clean-up is one of the staple annual activities of Keep America Beautiful. The Great American Clean-up unifies and beautifies communities across the country and a grassroots spring-cleaning movement. It promotes individuals to take greater responsibility for their local environment by conducting grassroots community service projects that engage volunteers, local businesses, and civic leaders.

Mayor Lago: Solanch, I'm sorry to interrupt you. At 4 o'clock I have to take Diana Gomez to talk about the Special Assessment.

Ms. Lopez: We will be done way before 4.

Mayor Lago: And Madam City Attorney, please remind me, so I don't move onto the next item, I may forget. Thank you.

Ms. Lopez: So quick program overview of what we as Keep Coral Gables Beautiful did for the Great American Clean-up. The program timeframe ran from March 20th to June 20th, so essentially all of spring. We had three events planned for the season; a plogging event at Matheson, which kicked off the season on March 20th; solo clean-up season, which was held April 5th through June 20th, and then the household hazardous waste collection event on April 24th.

Mayor Lago: Which I went to the plogging event in Matheson Hammock, and it was an eye-opening experiencing, the amount of plastic that is...

Mr. Anderson: Plogging is when you run or jog and pick up trash at the same time.

Mayor Lago: And its incredible the amount of garbage that we picked up.

Mr. Anderson: Started in Sweden.

Vice Mayor Mena: First I have to run or jog.

Mayor Lago: Patty from our office joined us. She brought her sister, and it was a great time.

Ms. Lopez: Yes. It was wonderful. It was really our first official clean-up event, in person clean-up event that we held as Keep Coral Gables Beautiful. We really enjoyed it and it was a good outcome, so we had a really good time with it. So, this was our plogging at Matheson event. These are some pictures of the final amount of trash collected and some of our volunteers cleaning within the mangroves. This was our kick-off event to the season, and it was at the participants pace, so they didn't necessarily have to run or jog, they could walk, they can stop, but we use the term

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plogging because it's getting more use now, especially in the litter clean-up area. Some of the program results. We had 33 participants attend the event. We had capped it at 50 because it was in March back when the Covid numbers were high, so we had capped it at 50, and we had 33 participants. We collected a total of 165 pounds of litter that day from the mangroves in the bike trail. The bottom just shows more or less what the trail that we cleaned looked like. We had the main trail which was the length of the bike trail at Matheson, and a smaller family trail that went along the beach area, if there was anybody with children and things like that, that wanted to stick more towards the sand.

Mr. Anderson: We also had one participant go by water.

Ms. Lopez: Yes. So, the solo clean-up season, which was the next activity that took place. It ran, like I mentioned from April 5th to June 20th. We encouraged participants throughout the season to go out and host their own clean-ups. We had a registration online that if they registered and needed supplies, we would provide the supplies to them, like the litter picker, the garbage bags and the gloves, so that they could do it safely; and we asked them to track their collection on the clean swale app through the OSHA Conservancy, which is what we've been using to keep track of the number of litter collected. For the solo clean-up season, we did partner with the Community Foundation. They provided us gift cards to local restaurants here in Coral Gables that we could provide as prizes for the most pounds of litter collected contest that we held, and we'll get into the winners of that in a little bit. Program results. We had 35 participants; this is tracked participants; participants that actually tracked their collection on the app. There could have been more that didn't track, but this is the number that we were able to count on. There was a total collection of 253 pounds of litter from throughout the city. This number of 35 and 253 does include the downtown clean-up hosted by the B.I.D. and Chamber, along with the Community Foundation in collaboration with Keep Coral Gables Beautiful on May 13th. They had at that event itself, which was just in our downtown area, 14 participants and 69 out of the 253 pounds was collected at that event. Our most pounds of litter collected contest winners; first place was the South Gables Dental Group. They were an awesome group. They even made their own shirts, as you can see in this picture and the office went out and cleaned around their business area. They collected a total of 90 pounds, and they received first place prize which was \$100 gift certificate, once again made possible through the Coral Gables Community Foundation. Second place winners were the Fiore family, Sienna and DeMarcus. They did multiple clean-ups throughout the season, tracked their collection. They collected a total together of 56 pounds and they received a second-place prize of a \$50 gift certificate. They also received four hours of community service each. And our third-place winners were the Pichardo family. They actually participated at the downtown clean-up event that was hosted. They collected a total of 37 pounds that day and they also received a \$50 gift card for their third-place prize.

Mayor Lago: We have to up the prizes.

Ms. Lopez: I'm sorry?

Mayor Lago: We have to up those prizes.

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Mr. Anderson: We are always looking to.

Ms. Lopez: We are always looking for donations.

Mayor Lago: We had the first time with the plogging, I remember I gave some donations or something.

Ms. Lopez: That was for the International Coastal Clean-up last year when it was a clean-up season because of Covid.

Mayor Lago: How much was that first-place prize?

Ms. Lopez: That one was \$500, that was through your donation.

Mayor Lago: Personal donation.

Ms. Lopez: Yes, through your personal donation through you and your family.

Mayor Lago: You've got to do that again.

Mr. Anderson: Definitely. So next, one of our favorite events, the household hazardous waste collection event, you can go to the next slide. So, the April event we had this year, on April 24, 2021, we collected over, we had 400 cars drive through, 750 attendees in the middle of a pandemic, made it safe for everyone to pass through; and we collected over almost 14,000 pounds of household hazardous waste; 8,000 pounds of paper that was shredded; and over 8,000 pounds of electronic waste, so for a total of over 30,000 pounds. Every event we continue to make a huge impact at these events. Its over 15 tons of waste that we've diverted from the landfill.

Ms. Lopez: That's just at that one.

Mr. Anderson: And that's just that one event. I'll tell you what we've done over the last six years of hosting these events, we are at almost at 300,000 pounds of waste that we've collected and diverted from the landfill. So, it's been a huge, huge success. We thank everybody for their continued participation in that event. I get calls about when the next event is every single day. So, the community just loves the fact that we provide this type of service and again, its another reason that sets us apart from a lot of other cities, and I know that other cities are trying to emulate what we're doing here as part of these events.

Mayor Lago: The next event is in November, correct?

Mr. Anderson: Yes. We are going to get to that, November 6th. We're already planning 2022 as well.

Mayor Lago: By the way, if you get a chance, my colleagues on the Commission, if you get a chance, I've been to every single one of them, they're great, not only do I take stuff, but its also a great opportunity its wonderful to see what the city does. We set an example.

Mr. Anderson: I don't think we've ever had anyone pass through that event that's been, even if they sat in line to get through the event, they are still happy when they get there and like I said, it's been a great success. And that concluded our Great American Clean-up wrap up. Next, we actually partnered, this was a new program that we had. We added Stantec, a local corporate Coral Gables company reach out to us, and they wanted to do a clean-up just for them for their own company. So, we did that, and did that as part of their community week and the way they give back to their community, so we hosted a clean-up, again at Matheson, it's the most popular location, most publicly accessible, and unfortunately there is a lot of garbage there that is brought in through the tides, no fault to Miami-Dade County Parks. So, we hosted an event there on June 22, 2021. We had nine employees show up, collected almost 67 pounds of litter, and that is something Stantec has already said they want to continue doing and we are opening it up to any businesses that want to participate and host a clean-up, reach out to Solanch and I and we'll be happy to help coordinate that, and we have a great working relationship with Miami-Dade County Parks and they are always able to accommodate us and make time and space for us to be able to host these events.

Vice Mayor Mena: Seems like a unique opportunity there to maybe work with either Mark in the Chamber or whoever to try to – a lot of big corporate companies are looking to push environmentally friendly initiatives.

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Mena: And so...

Ms. Lopez: We are creating a form to make it easy for them to submit that we'll put up on our website when that's finalized.

Vice Mayor Mena: Maybe you loop them into your clean-up events.

Mr. Anderson: And honestly, tying it into what we talked about earlier with the Green Business certification program, building it into that as being able to participate in events like that, so we can continue to build that momentum.

Mayor Lago: And the first opportunity that you'll see that in action is September 30th, that we are going to do a downtown clean-up with Mark, the B.I.D., and the Chamber, and that's something that Solanch and the Manager's office are going to, we just came up with that this week and I'd love to have everybody there and we are going to invite as many businesses as possible to show up that day.

Mr. Anderson: Absolutely. Next is what we did – we had to do a litter index for our first year as being an affiliate, a Keep Coral Gables affiliate, so we put this together. And basically, these are not pictures from the City of Coral Gables, they are pictures that are used throughout the country
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for all the Keep America Beautiful affiliates, to be able to use to benchmark the litter in their community.

Ms. Lopez: This is straight out of the appearance community, appearance manual that's provided to us for the litter index, so the pictures are not us, but it gives us a sense of what the scoring system is.

Mr. Anderson: So, you see one being little to no litter, to two, slightly littered; to three, littered; and four; litter all over the place. So, we use this standard, and I'll turn it over to Solanch to talk about what we did.

Ms. Lopez: So, for our citywide litter index, like Matt mentioned, this is an annual requirement of our affiliation with Keep America Beautiful, so this is something that we're going to be doing every single year around the same time and that will give us a comparison on if we are improving, if we are getting worse, if we have problem areas, things like that. So, the city, as part of the program is divided into five areas. Each area has ten sites and each of the areas, each of the sites is a mile to half a mile in length. You'll see there, that is a screenshot of the G.I.S. map for our litter index that we have. We are going to have that online visible to our public. We had two for this year, because of Covid, we kind of adapted. Normally the way that this litter index is done, is we get three to four of our board members that would be from the Sustainability Advisory Board since they sit as our Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Board as well, get in a van and we drive by the city, all throughout the city. We didn't want to do that now during Covid, having that many people in one car, so what Matt and I did is that we jumped in one of the city cars, IT got us a GoPro, a 360 view GoPro, we mounted it to the car, and we drove all of these areas, all 50 sites throughout the city and recorded them, on a 360-degree view. We then had Zoom sessions with our scores, which were made up of three of our Sustainability Advisory Board members and Matt as the city staff voting. I was kind of like the moderator saying when to start, when to stop, all of that good stuff. And they scored each site on a scale of the 1 through 4 that we looked at now. That G.I.S. map, all of those recordings are going to be linked to the individual sites. I'm in the process of still converting the videos and posting them online. They'll be linked on the G.I.S. map when that goes live, so anybody can go in and look at the video themselves and see why we scored it the way that we did.

Mr. Anderson: And I believe as a result of us shifting and using technology to our advantage there, especially during the pandemic, other cities have been looking at doing something similar, because they obviously have to fulfill that same requirement.

Ms. Lopez: So, in the chart you'll see the individual area scores, average scores. Our overall city litter index score is at 1.16, so we would be considered having minimal to no litter as an average when you look at the city as a whole.

Mr. Anderson: So, we did a comparison looking at other local and one national affiliate and it puts us pretty much lower than anyone else. So, we have Keep Miami-Dade County Beautiful, which their average score what they did in 2019 was at 2.36; you have Keep Miami Gardens Beautiful, their average score was 2; and then Keep Rolette Beautiful, which is a city that's comparison in

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size and nature to ours, was at 1.8. So again, us falling in at 1.16 a lot lower litter than a lot of other cities around.

Ms. Lopez: Keep Rolette Beautiful is an affiliate over in Texas. We reached out to their state affiliate, and they connected us with them, because they are comparable to us in both size and population, like Matt said, and the type of city that we are.

Mr. Anderson: So, we truly are the City Beautiful.

Ms. Lopez: An additional index that we did was a UM campus focus litter index. This was actually a student-lead initiative. They reached out to us through Teddy that sits on the Sustainability Advisory Board. They had heard that we were doing a citywide index and wanted to do something on the campus itself, because it was a much smaller area. We divided the campus into three areas with four sites in each area and we actually walked it instead of driving or video taping it. You'll see in the picture the three students and Teddy who were the scores and again, I acted as just the moderator. UM had a litter score average for the entire campus of 1.33, so we are lower even than UM.

Mr. Anderson: So next is another exciting program we just recently launched in the city. We are always looking for new innovative ways to continue reducing the amount of waste we have ending up in our landfill and we started the battery recycling pilot program We launched on July 12th, locations included at City Hall, which I know that one fills up pretty quickly. Our community has been definitely taking advantage of that. We have one at the War Memorial Youth Center. We have one at the new Police and Fire Headquarters and we also have one out at Public Works. So, we have employees and residents that are all taking advantage. We've been doing a lot of advertising and we have people coming and dropping off batteries adds on to the other programs we already had existing, like our prescription drug disposal program where we were the first city in the county to ever start that type of program. So, we are just continuing to add to ways that we can reduce the amount of waste that we have ending up in the landfill. So, we look forward to continue that. We partnered with E-Scrap, which is a company that we use for our household hazardous waste electronic recycling, so they were happy to do that at no cost to the city.

Ms. Lopez: And just a quick overview of a year in review recap. This is considered from July 2020 to July 2021, July 2020 being when we became affiliates. So, since our affiliation, as Keep Coral Gables Beautiful in that first year, we launched or hosted nine different events or programs. We had close to 5,000 participants in those programs, whether it be the household recycling, which was the biggest number or some of the smaller clean-ups that we've held. We've also collected and/or diverted/recycled 216,672 pounds of household hazardous waste electronic or litter, and that is essentially about 108 tons or for comparison about 22 garbage trucks full.

Commissioner Anderson: Wow.

Mayor Lago: Incredible.

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Ms. Lopez: We also received one award in our first year, the Outstanding Recycling Efforts Award from Keep Florida Beautiful; received \$17,500 in grants that were used to put some of these programs and initiatives together and received a little of \$3,500 in in-kind donations, whether that be direct donations for different prizes or actual supplies from our Keep Florida Beautiful and Keep America Beautiful affiliates that they provided litter pickers and things like that, and again, that's just from July 2020 to July 2021, so we've done a couple more after that.

Mr. Anderson: So really quick. That was our year in review, that was the past year. We're not done. We are continuing to build on all the successes we've seen in this program year one. We have a lot of great upcoming events. Real quickly, we have this Saturday, its International Coastal Clean-up, so we'll be out at various locations. We have Cartagena Park, Matheson Hammock, Riviera where the kayak launch area is, which is where I'll be located, Gables Estates, and then a lot of our private communities are doing their own private clean-ups this Saturday. So, we invite everyone to come out and register. I know a lot of the sites are already actually full, because the first time we are hosting this in partnership. I think there are over 50 sites throughout the entire county that are participating in this, so it will be a huge International Coastal Clean-up Day that we are partnering with VolunteerCleanup.org.

Mayor Lago: So, in regard to Cartagena Park, you are going to go all down to the waterway, correct?

Mr. Anderson: Yes. Correct.

Mayor Lago: That's where I'm going to be. I may not be able to be there at 9 a.m., but I'll be there 9:30.

Mr. Anderson: Yes, we'll be there from...

Ms. Lopez: That's just the entire length.

Mr. Anderson: We'll be there from 9 to 12.

Ms. Lopez: Another upcoming event now in September is our Parks Pollinator Palooza on September 25th from 10 a.m. to 12 at the War Memorial Youth Center. This will act as our kick-off event to a new Keep Coral Gables Beautiful Conservation Event Series in collaboration with Community Recreations. This will be the first event that we host, and it is in partnership with the Coral Gables Garden Club. The event will feature a talk by Dr. Jason Clayborn on butterfly gardening and imagination and they'll be a butterfly gardening planting in front of the Youth Center where the snail is. Those beds there we are going to have the kids do the actual planting. It also will have different activities for the kids as well, in terms of crafts, readings on butterflies and an introduction to the I-Naturalist App that allows them to track and record local pollinator species in our community in their own backyards. Tickets are available now for a family pod to keep the numbers down at playgables.com or through the Keep Coral Gables Beautiful page on our website. The second event in our conservation series is a documentary screening of 100 yards of hope and a panel discussion following. This is in collaboration with Forest Blue, which is a non-profit
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veteran organization that actually filmed the documentary and we'll be hosting the panel discussion. Keep Florida Beautiful that connected us with Forest Blue and gave us this opportunity and of course the Coral Gables Cinema who is going to be doing the actual screening of the movie for us. Participants will receive a gift card provided by Keep Coral Gables Beautiful with each ticket purchase and the ticket pricing is at the Cinema's pay what you can rate, so its just a minimum of \$5.00, but if you'd like to give more you can. The price is just to cover the production cost at the Cinema's end to actually show the movie. Additional event information and the link to purchase the tickets will be available on our Keep Coral Gables Beautiful web page in the coming weeks as we finalize the details. Aside from the actual screening event on October 20th at 7 o'clock, the Cinema is now also working with Forest Blue to keep the film on for the entire week during the day so that members of the students at the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Middle School students can go and see the film, and its essentially about ocean conservation, especially our coral reefs, as the 100 yards of hope was essentially, they worked with the NFL when it was here in Florida and they planted 100 yards of coral reef in South Florida.

Mayor Lago: Remember we actually did something here.

Ms. Lopez: Yes, for the Super Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: So, we actually collaborated with them.

Mr. Anderson: Real quickly. You asked, November 6th is our next household hazardous. We are rebranding it now and calling it a recycling drive-through. Why? – because we are actually adding clothing donations to this in partnership with the Camillus House. So, we'll be doing electronic recycling, household hazardous waste, paper shredding, and clothing donations, which will go to help Camillus House and potentially Lotus House and help with the homeless. So, we'll be adding that component to the event. This would be the first time we will be doing that, so we'll be in the City Hall parking lot from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and again, just continuing to grow the already success we've seen with these programs.

Ms. Lopez: The final two events consist of attracting birds to your South Florida garden conversation on November 13th at the War Memorial Youth Center. This is event number three in the conservation series, that is still being planned. Some more details are to come.

Mr. Anderson: And we have our popular recycle your Christmas Tree Program that we'll have toward the end of the year. We'll be doing that again this year and last year we collected over 2,800 Christmas Trees from our community, and we were able to create about 140,000 pounds of mulch out of that.

Ms. Lopez: So, the information for that will be online as we get closer to the holiday season. And finally, just quickly, in the works, the Mayor mentioned it already, but the downtown clean-up with the BID and Chamber on September 30th, that's in the very early stages. We'll work with both the BID and Chamber to get that coordinated, and the final event that we have that we're working on for the year, still under the planning process is actually with the Girl Scouts of Tropical South Florida, who presented to you all earlier today. We are in communication with Lorie Ross on

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behalf of the Girl Scouts, we are working with Miami-Dade County Parks, our Park Department, our Green Space Management to put together a large clean-up and educational event at Matheson for the Girl Scouts. It will include different areas, not only to actually clean-up, but to have speakers to talk about different educational components. So, at the beach area, we have sand sifters, we are going to be sifting up micro plastics and have somebody talking about the dangers and the damage of micro plastics. We'll have someone from...

Mr. Anderson: The Chief Resiliency Officer, Aurelo will be there talking about the Boards of Biscayne Bay and water quality and teaching the young girls about the importance of that.

Ms. Lopez: And then our Green Space Management team will be there to talk about the mangroves in the mangrove clean-up area and why they are important and different trees and aspects like that. And that's what we have in the works. We look forward.

Commissioner Anderson: The date for the Girl Scout event?

Ms. Lopez: We are looking at December 11th, but it has not been finalized. We had an initial brainstorming session with all of the parties, and we are moving forward with any of the actual coordination now.

Commissioner Anderson: Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: I want to congratulate you. You've made some very big strides since you brought us this idea over a year ago. What both of you are doing is incredible and its really setting the tone for other cities to emulate the City of Coral Gables. So, I look forward to September 30th. I look forward to electronic recycling. All the efforts that you're doing. I was very impressed by the battery recycling which the first time I saw it, I don't know how we are going to fill that, but it was filled in like 24 hours.

Ms. Lopez: I will say not that it's a contest, but the one here at City Hall has now been fully filled twice.

Mayor Lago: Yes. So that's something to be very proud of. So, I congratulate you and we are very grateful for your efforts and anyway that we can support you – we talked about the prizes, we'll raise money, we'll figure out a way to make it even more enticing for people to join us and take a stab at being more sustainable and more conscientious in regard to our precious outdoors. So, thank you.

Ms. Lopez: Thank you Mayor.