

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-4
June 11, 2024
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz
Governmental Affairs Manager, Fernando Weiner

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Robert Ruano
Silvia Piñera-Vasquez
Nicholas Cabrera
Jackson Holmes

Agenda Item F-4 [2:56 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager and City Staff to plan out and design bicycle lanes on Alhambra Circle from Bird Road to the University of Miami at San Amaro Drive.

(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

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(Co-Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Moving on to Item F-4.

City Attorney Suárez: F-4 is a resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager and City staff to plan out and design bicycle lanes on Alhambra Circle from Bird Road to the University of Miami at Santa Amaro Drive.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So I brought this item because there was a prior resolution at a time period when the individuals in this particular section had voiced concerns about having bicycle lanes or sidewalks. And in order for staff to move forward with a grant request, I didn't want to waste staff's time and have to return grant monies if the residents in this area were not interested in sidewalks or a bicycle lane. So I did two separate petitions. Copies were provided to each one of you. I, together with, I got some volunteers for this particular area, knocked all the doors between Bird Road and San Amaro near the University to assess the interest. Of course, not everybody's home and, you know, that's what happens when you knock doors. The same thing happens when you take ballots. Not every ballot gets returned when you're doing traffic calming. But I would say, based upon the assessment of the folks that were knocking with me and the folks that I spoke with, there's overwhelming support. People are excited about having one or the other. It's not unanimous. It's difficult to get unanimous in anything in life. But I would say we're close to about 80 percent in favor of moving forward. So, phase one for the grant request would be design -- planning and design. Then it goes to the community for community input and the balloting necessary. The second stage would be a separate grant request, and that separate grant request, God willing, the funds are still available, would be the build-out stage. But at least we have the plans and design completed. I've also asked staff to work on grant requests in other areas, including the section here on Biltmore Way, leading all the way from Douglas Road to the residential section so that we have planning and design money in our coffers in order to be able to at least have the designs planned so when Publix breaks ground, so when, you know, other projects break ground, we have clear directions for them on how to build out the bicycle lane that this Commission had given direction on going on Andalusia behind, you know, so we can have the bicycles off of Miracle Mile and get them on to Andalusia instead of having bicycles on Miracle Mile. I know they're not allowed, but people do it all the time because it's so dangerous to be able to bicycle in the downtown area. So that's what this is about, it's to just remove the prohibition from staff moving forward between Bird Road south to San Amaro. It does not touch the section of the prior ordinance from Bird Road north to Coral Way. So maybe some other Commission can take that up at a separate time if the community wants it. So I'd make a motion.

Commissioner Fernandez: The only thing I'll say is I've been bombarded with emails and calls from people who don't want it. Would you be open to maybe having a community meeting before we move forward just to get everybody in the same room and maybe explain the concept? And maybe people better understand?

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Vice Mayor Anderson: Let me tell you what the comments were. Because I responded to every single one of them, and after I went back and forth with the exception of one person who does not live in this area, they were in favor. They're concerned about having traffic calming done first. Now, because of the Sunshine, you're not copied on these emails. Hermes Diaz responded to some of them, letting them know when the traffic calming was coming forward. I do think it actually will help us get the traffic calming money and help us get the traffic calming approved if we also have the bicycle lane. And City Clerk, I have three pictures to show on the -- if you could bring that up. And if you look at Alhambra in the section, it goes from -- just leave that one up -- from Bird Road on, there is actually, I was watching the cars on the road, and as cars were driving on the road, I was speaking to one of the individuals who was against bike lanes before, and I said, there's a crack on the road right where the painted line is and that's because there's so much asphalt in that section from Bird Road down to San Amaro that just putting this painted line on the road helps narrow the traffic. It's called a road diet and it has the impact of helping slow down the cars. It's not the only tool in the toolbox to do it with, and I'm not suggesting that this is just for traffic calming purposes, but the reality is this. Without a bicycle lane painted on the road, bicyclists can go all over the road. They can block the traffic because that's Florida law. Once you put the bicycle lane in, they have to use the bicycle lane. So that's the law. So we now have authority to move them off on the bicycle lane, they have to move out of the way. Bicyclists will, you know, use the road and then wander back into the bike lane. They'll wander into the road if there's no cars there. But they get cars out of the -- I mean, give us a straight line of travel for cars. You can also have the scooters into the bike lane as well. I think the fact that we had human beings knocking on the doors of the individuals who live on this street, not folks from outside of the area that are making comments, is as much of a community meeting as you can get. It's better attendance than you'll ever get in any community meeting. People were excited. You know, they're coming out with their kids, they're really, really excited, they've been waiting for this for a long time. I have a resident who's been a dear friend for a long time, has been trying to get this done for a long, long time, and happy that it's finally moving forward. And the issue of payment is there. We have a deadline for a grant coming forward, and to be able to reap the benefit of grants to pay for this is a time-limited item. We will have community meetings in the future. This is design and planning money, period. Nothing is going to be built without further community input. This was my proposal and suggestion to folks that we don't need anything fancy. It's paint and it delineates where bikes go and cars go, plus a sidewalk. There's no sidewalk in this area. It's incredibly dangerous. My friend jogs. Imagine trying to jog, you know, without a sidewalk in place with students from University of Miami -- I'm just categorizing and I'm assuming they're from University of Miami -- whizzing down the street all the time. Plus Director Diaz, I think you also have more readily available the traffic calming measures that will be coming into effect in this area.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct. I believe there are several traffic circles that are proposed in that section of Alhambra Circle. That's part of the Zone 4, which is something that we're going

to be working, starting probably later this year and probably construction to start sometime in 2025.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, if we have the design and planning money in time for this, you'll be able to dovetail in both projects design-wise?

Public Works Director Diaz: They will have to be -- they will have to be -- correct. They will have to be combined.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right. So, timing is essential. That's why I brought this now.

Mayor Lago: Can you tell me from what street to what street on Alhambra this is on? Because there was a lot of confusion on that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, some of the folks that wrote to me were north of Bird Road on Alhambra, the area with the bridge and so forth.

Mayor Lago: The area that's...

Vice Mayor Anderson: This is south. Yeah, part of the -- the projects that I've been working on with staff are all south, all south of Bird Road. This will provide connectivity for folks going to the university. It will provide connectivity when FDOT brings in that sidewalk on the south side of Bird Road, so now you can go from Alhambra Circle to be able to get to the high school safely between those two connecting. You also have the sidewalk that we've already put in, the City has already put in on University that will interconnect with that. And you know, the bottom line is we're trying to save people's lives. We're dealing with folks' safety. We're also dealing with individuals with disabilities and their ability to be able to use sidewalks out there. My neighbor from around the corner, I fortunately got to be able to see him last week before he passed a few days ago, out there in the wheelchair getting some fresh air underneath the canopy. These people don't have this option. There is no safe place to walk or ride because of the amount of asphalt, the speed people are going, the width of the asphalt. It's like an expressway. The wider the lane, the faster people go. Segovia used to be this way. We also have a picture of what Segovia used to look like. I mean, looks like now, but that was all asphalt before and people would go down there 50 miles an hour, including my husband when he was young. But the idea is to try to save lives and make our city a much nicer place to live.

Commissioner Menendez: A couple questions. Right now on Blue Road, there's a, I don't know if it's a roundabout or circle, I lose track in terms of which one, when it's a roundabout or a circle.

So you go to Alhambra Circle south, there's Blue Road, there's a big circle there, a roundabout, and how does a dedicated bike lane work when you're engaged in one of those with traffic coming from all sides?

Public Works Director Diaz: So the County, based on our experience when working with them, unless you can have it completely separated, which in this corridor you won't be able to. Before you get to the circle, the bicycle will probably have to incorporate into traffic and navigate the circle as if it was a car.

Commissioner Menendez: As if -- a car.

Public Works Director Diaz: And then after the circle, it will go back into the travel lane.

Commissioner Menendez: And the reason why I asked about six years ago, the City installed -- I know there's a difference between shared lane, different symbol, different paint, cars and bicycles share the lane. There was a dedicated bike lane placed on, I think it's Sevilla, coming from 57th Avenue towards Church of the Little Flower.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: Which created a bottleneck for about a week, so much so that the City had to go back and narrow the median, the grassy median along Sevilla to allow cars not to bottleneck. But the thing is, once you come out of Sevilla and you're sort of basically turning right towards the Biltmore, that's Anastasia.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: And the bike lane ends and traffic is merging with the bicycles. It's a difficult ride, put it that way. People can do it, but it's safety concerns. That's why I bring up the circle with cars merging with bicycles. My only other question regarding that aspect of it is, so the bicycle lane would be from obviously Bird Road to San Amaro. When -- I would imagine it's bicycles going in one direction, both directions, because once you get to Bird Road, then what happens? Because I have a feeling some concern in the community is the other side of the Alhambra Circle, that, you know, it's, you never want to bridge to nowhere.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: So, obviously people are concerned, okay, now where is it going to go afterwards? So, I'm just addressing that just to figure out conceptually how that plays out.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So I can probably answer these questions for you because we're also talking about doing an east-west here. East-west is not going to go all the way to -- and I'm talking

about Andalusia -- it's not going to go all the way to (INAUDIBLE) Road. It's going to transition into the residential community. So you're going from an area here on Andalusia that has a very wide pavement and then you're going to get to an intersection where there isn't any more bike lane there. The level of traffic and the speed of the traffic on Alhambra Circle between University and Bird Road is greater than the level of traffic that's going into the more residential area north of it. So, you know, normally you would have people going at a little slower speed anyway. There's a lot of work that we need to do in the city, including on that area north of Bird Road as far as sidewalks and repaving and traffic calming, but we don't have those plans yet. But if we one piece of the puzzle, we can help move forward on the next piece of the puzzle later. And I'm not talking about putting bike lanes on that piece of the puzzle. I'm talking about this east-west route. Conceptually, I believe that once you get past, I think it's Cardena, you will go from a dedicated bike lane to a share the road symbol. Because we're in a built city. We don't have room for dedicated bike lanes everywhere. The idea is to try to put the bike lanes that are separately striped in areas where they have the heaviest traffic, where it's the most dangerous for individuals to ride because I don't think you could imagine safely going on Valencia or safely going on Andalusia all the way over to -- to Douglas Road and weaving between all these cars. Okay, you'd need a bike lane there to feel decently safe. So that's the concept behind this is be able to get students to the university safe, get students to high school safely, so that we're taking advantage of the opportunity that we have now with FDOT willing to put a sidewalk on Bird Road. And you know, I've made the ask we have a wider sidewalk so that, you know, both the pedestrian and a kid wanting to get over to the high school can work out at the same time, you know, side by side. We're trying to do what we can with the footprint that we have left. So yeah, I think it will work out. This is design money and that's why we need design money. We need professionals to design this stuff.

Commissioner Menendez: So the funds that are available via the grant would go there for design?

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct. The grant that we'll be applying for will be for design. The planning, design and some community involvement as well.

Commissioner Menendez: And the sidewalks that are being mentioned, they're going to be installed eventually at some point in the same area?

Public Works Director Diaz: Ideally, and you know, the devil's in the details, right, especially when you -- how you work around trees and stuff like that, but typically whenever you can, you put sidewalks on the rear and the bike lanes on the road.

Commissioner Menendez: That would be the south, Alhambra Circle, south of Bird.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct, yes. Now sometimes you run into trees and you've got to get creative, those sort of things.

Commissioner Menendez: That area doesn't have a lot of canopy.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Commissioner Menendez: It's pretty...

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's pretty sparse. I think -- and you would know better than I would, you know, it used to have probably the ficus trees that went over in a storm. There's a lot of smaller trees. It's actually a fantastic opportunity to work in a sidewalk there. I don't necessarily like putting sidewalks right up against somebody's property line because you get the walls and then you get a bike, you know, people walking here, you don't see them. Clearly, I'd rather have a little bit of space for that triangle of visibility so that somebody backing out of their driveway doesn't hit them. But, you know, that's all design money. You know, this is stage one design and planning. We have community involvement as part of that. A year from now we'll probably have a discussion of is this design acceptable to the community and hopefully be able to get more grant money to build.

Commissioner Menendez: So my only other follow-up question -- two follow-up questions, I apologize. One is -- well, let me start with the -- regards to the idea or the plans for a sidewalk. Is this something that the folks that live there have already been informed of? Or is that in the preliminary that we have not engaged the residents along that area?

Public Works Director Diaz: No, my team hasn't done any engagement. My understanding is that the Vice Mayor and with some staff, she went knocking door to door. But my team hasn't done any engagement on this area.

Commissioner Menendez: My only other question is if, let's say, the vote goes that, obviously, move forward and do the design, use the grant money. I guess it's a question for, I don't know, maybe you or somebody else. What happens if the community is engaged at that point, here are the designs, and they end up not wanting any of it? Do we have to pay back the grant money? We did the design.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think once you have the design, you have the design. The folks that were surveyed are the only ones who have the right on a ballot to make a difference, you know, and whether or not the sidewalk goes there. And those are the property owners. So, you know, we're not going deep into the areas because we're not putting sidewalks on Mendavia. We're not putting sidewalks there. Those folks also get the benefit from it because they'll be able to get to the campus safely. They'll be able to get to Bird Road safely and so forth. So these people all signed in favor of wanting a sidewalk. They want a sidewalk. The design is something that we'll have to take to them and have a community meeting. Do you want a straight sidewalk? Do you want a curvy sidewalk? How far do you want it off your property line? Would you prefer it five feet off? Would you want it, you know, in between the tree and there? We'll get to that stage later, but that's what the design money is needed for. We can't get there until we design it.

Commissioner Menendez: So, Madam City Attorney, if I recall the discussion in the past was it requires 50 plus 1. If I'm not mistaken, this applies, I mean, in terms of concurrency and all those issues. How does that -- is it via the form of a petition or how do we measure 50 plus 1?

City Attorney Suárez: So that's a process that's carried out by Public Works staff, typically by your department?

Public Works Director Diaz: If we're asked to do, yes. The one item we're working on right now was actually triggered by a petition by the residents which is south of Alhambra, south of US 1. I don't believe that we do have an actual resolution that speaks specifically to a process. So, I think it's up to this body to determine what that needs to be.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I do recall it because I was engaged a lot in conversation with Roberta Neway about that. She brought a petition, okay. Then there was balloting just like we do for every speed table, every traffic circle and it was 50 plus 1 of the returned ballots. Okay. So, of the doors knocked here, I think it's fairly clear that it was overwhelming that we had more than 50.1, 50 plus 1. On the sidewalks, there's only one no. The remainder of these are yeses. So I think it's pretty overwhelming that people want some sidewalks, especially, you know, everybody that was in like the 40 and lesser category wanted them. The more active people are, and that was my 40 plus category friend, the more they want the sidewalks, because they can't get out there and enjoy the outdoors. You know, it's too dangerous without a sidewalk there. So the sidewalk was overwhelming. As far as the bike lane, I mean, I had a wonderful conversation with a woman who still had the sign right inside her doorway that said no to bike lanes. She actually pulled it out, and we chuckled, and we had fun. She signed this in favor of the bike lane when she understood what I was suggesting. We're just putting paint on the existing road. We're not going to take your swale. We're going to narrow it, give it a road diet. And if you look at our Alhambra Circle from Le Jeune going west, a member of our community contacted the Water and Sewer Department while they were doing some work there, and they actually made the bike lane a little wider than the picture I just showed you. And it helps slow down traffic. There is a benefit to that because it creates that appearance.

Commissioner Fernandez: So just for clarification, what we're voting on here is to approve staff starting to design in order to get the grant -- in order to apply for the grant?

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, they don't design. The only thing that we're doing is removing the handcuffs from staff, being able to seek the grant. We will then hire an outside consultant...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Vice Mayor Anderson: To do the design, okay? As soon as we get the grant money, you know, we start the design process and then we do community engagement, you know, with those folks

that live on that section of Alhambra because it's their properties that get impacted. It's their properties that would have the sidewalk on it.

Commissioner Fernandez: And then as far as the grant, what timeline are we looking at with the grant? When is the application due and when is it normally awarded?

Public Works Director Diaz: The application is due on June 17th. I'm not entirely sure when we will get the award.

Commissioner Fernandez: But is this a grant that is awarded a year from now or is this a grant that is awarded, you know, in three months?

Public Works Director Diaz: My understanding is that, and depending on the grant, sometimes it's --

Vice Mayor Anderson: Here is the expert on the grant.

Public Works Director Diaz: There you go. He's the expert on the grants.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I've had him working on this for a while. In fact, you've been working on the Granada area getting signatures.

Mayor Lago: How are you, sir?

Governmental Affairs Manager Weiner: I'm doing well, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. Thank you. Fernando Weiner from the City Manager's Office. So, it's a yearly award. This all spurred from the Biden Administration's infrastructure bill, the trillion-dollar infrastructure bill. And there are multiple of these programs that are five-year programs. So, it started in 2022, and the last award will be in 2026. Every single year, there is a planning and a construction segment of each of the grants. So we would apply for planning this year and then hopefully we have everything designed and ready to go by next year and be able to apply for the construction grants.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right, so it would be awarded, what, when the new budget year is...?

Governmental Affairs Manager Weiner: For the next, but for this coming budget year. And then the grants have to be -- or the money has to be obligated by 2026. So you have two years for performance of that planning grant and then for the construction, it's five years.

Mayor Lago: Budget Director, how are you? Thank you for being here.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: Right up the stairs. So, we would likely know if we were awarded the grant sometime in November.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. Thank you for that detail.

Mayor Lago: So Madam Vice Mayor...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Lots of expertise in this room.

Mayor Lago: Yeah. So, Madam Vice Mayor, I have received four emails. I know that you, I think, you all were copied on those emails. I responded to them and I explained to them that two things that I think that were a little bit of miscommunication. Number one, I also received a phone call from somebody who was on Alhambra in the area next to the bridge who is out of town. The two key points, the takeaways are, number one, we're not building permanent infrastructure in regards to what would be taking away your swale and building a bike lane. I think that was stated before. What we're building here is potentially a stripe on the ground, on the asphalt. If that even gets to that, that's number one. Number two, this is not the area north of Bird Road and Alhambra.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Correct.

Mayor Lago: This is the area south of Bird Road and Alhambra, the neighborhood which I live in. A few blocks away, but near there. And it would run all the way to Miller?

Vice Mayor Anderson: It would run to San Amaro.

Mayor Lago: To San Amaro. Okay, so a loop.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So you go through -- get all the way down to the university. That's the point. It's all of that. This resolution is only to take the handcuffs off of our staff from being able to do anything. There are no handcuffs as far as doing a project on Riviera, getting the design, you know, putting in a grant application on Riviera or putting a grant application on Granada, assuming that, you know, I've already got the ballot, the petitions back on Riviera and between, again, Bird Road, going past the high school and all the way down to Ponce, okay, to be able to get people to the Underline. It is a very high level of interest by some of our representatives who you may have spoken to and I know in particular to provide funding also for getting people to the Underline. And this would fulfill that purpose as well. This is an overall plan in that section to help address student safety, pedestrian safety, getting people to the high school, getting people to the university, getting people to the Underline. That is the purpose of these projects going forward. I think that one of the things that I talked about with Fernando before and one of our state reps, was the fact that we get more points in areas where there's educational areas or facilities if we install sidewalks and we propose installation of sidewalks and bike lanes, correct? That's my understanding. So I don't have an issue with this as long as there's public input. We had a pretty tough time before on the north side of Alhambra, addressing the issues of bike lanes. And I think we went about it, maybe not. I think it was a valiant effort. I just think we could have maybe tried a little bit different

route in regards to communication. We need to be very careful when we send out the information that we're talking about this project, because four -- I think three out of the four emails that I received were individuals who were in the north of Bird Road and Alhambra. They weren't in -- there was only one in the 4000 block...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

Mayor Lago: 4400 block of Alhambra that I responded to via email. So I think that if we have a conversation and we explain exactly what's happening and what is the purpose of this, and at the end of the day, it'll be -- it'll go out to community input and we're just miss -- we're making sure we don't miss an opportunity to potentially get some funding, some critical funding that will pay for this. I think people will be understanding on that point as long as we transparently tell, look, we've moved forward in this direction, this is what we're looking to have community input after the summer. Another problem that I see is that being -- you know, being in the middle, not in the middle, but at the beginning of summer, it also complicates things because you don't want to have a meeting now and then have those individuals say, I couldn't be here because I was out of town for one reason or another.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So I have two follow-up points on that. One, the process that was used before never included going out door-to-door ahead of, you know, doing anything or seeking grants before seeking the grant, assessing community interest. Last thing I want to do is propose something that people do not want. We lose credibility because we have to return grants. And the only reason you received some emails from people north of Alhambra, because those doors were not knocked at all, is because a particular activist in the community came by and said hello and probably communicated that people are knocking doors but did not have complete information. The person didn't, you know, look at F-4 and said, it says a resolution of the City Commission directing City Manager and staff to plan out and design bicycle lanes on Alhambra Circle from Bird Road to the University of Miami at San Amaro. They didn't have the opportunity to read that. All they heard was bike lanes, you know, people are knocking door to door on Alhambra Circle and they didn't know that it was just this limited corridor itself. So I understand why they emailed in because they were concerned that we were doing something in the area without asking, but I've asked these folks. They want this. Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm sorry, go ahead.

Commissioner Castro: Do you have an estimation of maybe how many houses we were missing that didn't sign this?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I can tell you, you know, I can estimate that we got responses from a good quantity of the folks. And the fact that we have over 90 percent of this in yeses is a strong indicator of the positive nature and receptiveness for this project.

Commissioner Castro: No, I understand. I just want to know what percentage of this 90 percent is really the percentage of the population?

Vice Mayor Anderson: What percentage of the percentage is the population? I think you have to look at the number of signatures here for the bike lane. There are 24 signatures, okay? That doesn't include households that have two individuals or four individuals living in them. And of the ones for the bike lane, let's see, I don't see a single no on it. On the one for the sidewalk, someone did make a notation that they didn't want a bike lane. So that's a single no on that. And there as well, you have 26 signatures in favor of a sidewalk, okay? So that sounds to me like there's a lot of community support in this area for having this.

Commissioner Castro: Right, but it's 26 from 100, it's 26 from 1.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Ma'am, unless you're willing to go out there and knock doors in 90 degree temperature and see who answers the door.

Commissioner Castro: No, I commend you for doing this.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, because it's a Sunday afternoon. It was picked on a Sunday afternoon. We met, you know, I think three o'clock to try to optimize the time when people would be home. Because they're not at church. You know, it's not the busy days on Saturdays and stuff. So you're never going to get 100 percent. So even when you do ballots for traffic calming, not every ballot is going to get returned. And we only need 51 percent of the folks in favor of it so...

Commissioner Castro: I agree with what you're saying. I agree with what you're saying. I just want to have, since we are voting on this, and I was pretty positive how I was going to vote. To me, safety is number one, but when I started getting emails, I started doubting myself.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There was maybe four or five emails and some of those folks, again, are from the area north of the Bird Road because they didn't have complete information that this was a project not for their street. So if you have people commenting on something that is not for their street or not for their property, then that's an irrelevant comment.

Commissioner Castro: Okay, does anybody have an estimation of how many houses are where we're going to put these sidewalks or bike lanes? Any -- no?

Public Works Director Diaz: We'll have to look at a map and take a look at it to get an estimate. So, no, we don't have a number of the top of our head.

Mayor Lago: You want, you need -- how long do you think it will take?

Public Works Director Diaz: I don't know. Remind me to it and give me 15 minutes. We can give it a...

Mayor Lago: All right, we'll take a 15-minute break.

[Later...]

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Clerk, you ready? Mr. Director, you ready? Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Ready to start?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir. Okay. So, Director, we're back.

Public Works Director Diaz: We counted 95 properties along the corridor.

Mayor Lago: Okay. From?

Public Works Director Diaz: From Bird to San Amaro.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. So, every door was knocked, and those who responded, okay, we have a 99 percentile positive range. This is planning money. They will have an opportunity to respond by ballot in the future whether or not they want it and if they want it. And after the design is done, they can see what it would look like. They can choose an option and move forward at that time or we don't. But this is just to give you authorization to move forward, to put this grant application in. So I'll move it.

Commissioner Menendez: I have -- I have two quick comments. One is I was talking to the City Manager, and we've encountered this issue about grants and deadlines in the past. And I asked the Manager, and you know, you all can chime in, for the members of the Commission, even if it's weekly or monthly, get information as to what grants we are pursuing and break them down into Public Works, Community Recreation. That way we can see something coming ahead of time as opposed to perhaps finding out and then having to make decisions with time running out. So I think the Manager's Office, they're going to work on that to try to help us anticipate a little bit better. And the only other question is, if we don't have a set procedure in terms of how to determine 50 plus 1, how to go about doing that, if we don't have that written somewhere, Madam City Attorney, I think we need to make sure we do.

City Attorney Suárez: So for bicycle lanes, correct me if I'm wrong, Hermes, we do not have a set policy regarding balloting because we haven't required balloting in the past because we would just follow our bicycle master plan. Generally now, I know there's one instance. There was one

instance where we did and the Commission specifically directed the balloting be based on -- or the decision be made on 50 percent plus one of the returned ballots in that instance that was I think in 2022.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, we had a recent one that was just on the other side of US-1...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Vice Mayor Anderson: In a short section that Roberta Neway was spearheading. She went out and she first, like I did, got the petitions of interest. Then there was a balloting after the fact and the balloting was 50 plus 1 and that was only done not too long ago.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right, and if it is the desire for the Commission for us to proceed, we will follow the same process. The same process we follow for traffic calming. You know, we'll send ballots to every resident in whichever area the Commission directs us to.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm of the opinion that if any time that we need 50 plus 1, that it's tied to an official City project that City staff, the administration should be the one securing the number, you know, whether there's support or not. Just like we do, I think, when we do notices of a community meeting, 1,000 feet, 1,500 feet, we should have designated who or what department is in charge of determining whether there is a 50 plus what. Otherwise, we're going to be every project and have a different person or group doing it. I think we should standardize that going forward.

Public Works Director Diaz: We can follow the same process that we have with traffic calming. We mail the ballots to the property owners...

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Public Works Director Diaz: Which is not necessarily who lives there, but that's who'll be getting, these ballots.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So maybe there's some confusion here, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Anderson: This is not in substitute of a ballot. This was a preemptive effort to assess interest before we ever begin thinking of doing anything. Let's not design a single section of sidewalk before we assess if there's interest, okay. This is merely an ordinance change to allow staff to move forward. Right now, they're not allowed to do anything. No balloting, nothing. So

that's why I went door to door. I found out during this process because I identified these grants. I sent them to Mr. Weiner. He has been working very hard on them. We identified the fact that this ordinance was in the way to be able to move forward, okay? Just like I knocked on the doors in this section of Andalusia, I knocked on the doors personally, myself, on every single door in Riviera, okay, to be able to determine if people wanted it. Because as much as I think it might be a great idea, if they don't want it...

Commissioner Menendez: Right,

Vice Mayor Anderson: There's no point in even making the effort of putting in a grant application to do something that somebody doesn't want. That's the way it was done in the past. This is a different way of doing things. And I want to assess whether or not people want something before I put it on the agenda...

Commissioner Menendez: Right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Before I ask staff to work on it and submit it for a grant application. So that's why this was done. I think your idea of having a standardized process in the future for the actual balloting is fantastic, but this is just an assessment of interest and I think it was pretty strong.

Commissioner Menendez: My only other question and let everybody else -- when we do determine later on the 50 plus 1, when it gets to you, is it who lives there or the property owner? Because I remember in Cocoplum, if I'm not mistaken, I know it's a separate thing, but we needed to get signatures and there was an issue as to, is it the person living there or is it the actual owner of the property? Just because I remember Cocoplum had one of those issues come up.

Public Works Director Diaz: The mailings are sent to the property owner.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. And the response has to come from the property owner...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: Not somebody who's renting it or something that...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: That's usually how we handle those votes.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Commissioner Castro: What are the conditions of the grant?

Public Works Director Diaz: Fernando will have to speak to that.

Governmental Affairs Manager Weiner: What do you mean, Commissioner, what conditions?

Commissioner Castro: Like what has to be fulfilled or what has to be done? What is the grant for exactly?

Governmental Affairs Manager Weiner: So, as we were saying, this will just be for planning and design to see how wide we have the sidewalk, how wide we have the bike lane. Is it just going to be a stripe that we paint? Is it anything that's going to be constructed? Exactly how it will look, those are the conditions.

Commissioner Castro: And is there any way we could return the grant? If we obtain it, is there any way we could return it?

Public Works Director Diaz: That's happened before. It doesn't reflect well upon us and it may jeopardize our idea or chance of getting grants in the future in some instances.

Governmental Affairs Manager Weiner: And if I may interject, if this is just for planning and design, there would be no reason to have to return it. Nothing will be constructed. No decisions will be made. This will just be to check whether it can be placed the way that we want it placed in that area.

Commissioner Menendez: That's a good answer. Doing good.

Unidentified Speaker: Good.

Commissioner Castro: Okay, so there's 26 signatures and I think maybe some are repeated, so probably around 22. Some come from the same address, from the same home. I would say maybe this is like 20 percent. I'm a little hesitant in not making a decision now because of the grant, but I don't know if maybe you would accept this, but if we apply for the grant and do a town hall, and if that town hall doesn't go good, then we return the grant.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So this is what I'm going to suggest to you. Because the only parties that have the right to vote are the individuals that live on that street? Let's give them a design, let's have them consider the design, and look at the options, have a town hall for those residents that live on that street only. Because what happens sometimes is we get some folks coming in that have zero votes on this item and they weigh in on something that they have no right to vote on. The entire reason I did this, and it's not required, absolutely not required, was to make sure we're not spinning our wheels and wasting time. This is only design and planning money. It doesn't

build a single bike lane. It doesn't build a single square of sidewalk. But it's a design so the residents can evaluate how it's being built. You know, you'll see some comments in here about don't remove any trees, okay? How it's being built, if it meets with their satisfaction, and if they'll be willing to move forward to the next stage. But to waste time with a town hall, we might as well forget it. There's no point. We'll miss the deadline. It'll be another year. The money will go to another city and this city will lose out once again. Let's do some planning and designing. Let's let the residents have something they can actually look at, aside from the photos that I suggested to them, could fit on that street area. I'm not, you know, a designer. That's why we need to hire designers. But looking at the street and just looking how the vehicles are traveling on the street, there's an excessive amount of asphalt there. And I don't see in the area that I was walking a reason to put another inch of asphalt to fit some painted bike lanes on there. And there was such overwhelming support to just put an obstacle in front of it because you want to have a town hall. It's going to defeat what the vast majority, 99 percent of the people that signed these petitions have asked for.

Commissioner Castro: I don't think -- yeah, I don't think you understood what I said. I said let's accept the grant, have a town hall. If in that town hall...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Commissioner Castro: It wasn't well received, then we could retract the grant. But I said apply for the grant.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Commissioner Castro: That's what I had told you.

Mayor Lago: So if...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. So we can't -- go ahead, Mayor. Maybe you can explain this better than I can.

Mayor Lago: No, no. I think you've done a very good job explaining it. Just -- I don't think it's a very difficult concept. I'll just make it easy for you. Yesterday when I got out of work, it was probably 7 o'clock at night, my kids were in the park on Alhambra near Blue Road. You know what I'm talking about? I forgot the name of the park, I apologize. Which is the park?

Public Works Director Diaz: Betsy Adams.

Mayor Lago: Betsy Adams, thank you very much. There are no sidewalks there. They had walked from my mother-in-law's home on Alhambra. She is one of these individuals that lives on Alhambra, south of Bird Road. There's neither sidewalks nor there are bike lanes. So it's an area

that gets high speed in regards to cars. You have the university, you have St. Augustine Church, you have Riviera Country Club, you have the hospital, and you have cut-through traffic on 57th Avenue. You have a lot of action in that very small, compact area. So I was looking at it yesterday as I was sitting there in the park with them in preparation for today's discussion. I think the best thing we do today is we move forward the process and at the end of the day the residents have the final say. I think that's appropriate. And we also at least have an opportunity to chase a grant down by submitting it. Who knows if we get it or we don't get it. At the end of the day, if we get it and we're lucky enough and the residents are in favor of it after they've tangibly seen a design, not something drawn on a napkin, then we hit lightning in a bottle. Maybe they see the sketch and they say, we don't like it. And we walk away from it. But I think that it's an opportunity that living in that area, I'm confronted with it all the time. I walk that area, and it's an area that, again, has a lot of activity, and it needs some more pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, which it currently is lacking right now because you have certain areas that have sidewalks and then certain areas that don't have sidewalks. Case in point, from Blue Road -- from Blue Road all the way to Bird Road, there's no sidewalks except for in front of the park. That's it. So, just take that into consideration. Vote as you like.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think this is something I promised to deliver on as well. Connectivity of our sidewalks and ensuring that pedestrians have an ability to get to places. I think this goes in line with our City master bike plan that was created over 12 years ago. I do have my concerns about whether the residents in the area want it or not and what the concerns in the neighborhood are, but I agree with Commissioner Castro. I think let's move forward with this. We have a deadline for application of this grant. Let's not leave the money on the table. Let's move forward with the grant, move forward with the design phase, but I would like to see a community meeting as soon as possible with residents to kind of gauge their opinions. Maybe it can be taken into account when we're designing, because there may be areas where the design may have to change based on what the residents want. And let's make sure that we're getting their input from day one, not after we've gone through the entire process. And I think that was part of the problem when we were doing the North Alhambra bike lanes back in the day. I think they felt like they were an afterthought and not part of the process. Let's get the residents engaged. I commend you. I know what canvassing is. I know what it is to knock on 96 doors on a Sunday. And it's great that we have an idea of where the residents stand on this issue, but I would like to get them involved in the process. And I know the ones who will be voting at the end of the day are the people who live on that block. But I do think that people two, three houses in may have something to bring to the table that can improve on what we're doing for the area. And they may see a different need than the person on the corner house may see, because they see it in a different way. So I would like to open it up for more people to be a part of it, just to gauge your input. We don't lose anything by bringing people to the table. And the last thing we want is to go through what we did in North Alhambra where the entire community came out against it just because of, you know, what the design was at the end of the day. So I would say let's move forward with this, let's get the application in, let's get the funding. I think any money that we can get as a city from the federal, state, or county government for any of the projects that we need in this community, we should

definitely pursue them. But I would also like to do a community meeting, and like the Mayor said, I think the summer is probably not the best time to do it. Maybe we can plan it for the fall to start gauging their input and kind of have some preliminary ideas like the Vice Mayor said, there's some pictures, images of what it could be like. I think that's something that we can -- we can do in-house. It doesn't take going -- going to a designer to do it, but having an idea for people to see, look, this is what the impact would be. The Vice Mayor said some of these roads are already pretty wide, so it wouldn't take -- it would literally just take re-striping. Let's present that option to people so they can see it.

Mayor Lago: So really quick, I want to -- correct me if I'm wrong. The North -- the North Alhambra project that was derailed, that was abandoned, that was...

Public Works Director Diaz: The (INAUDIBLE) section.

Mayor Lago: Yes, I understand, but it was dedicated bike lanes, correct? It was actual infrastructure or was it striping?

Public Works Director Diaz: No, it was an actual...

Mayor Lago: Yes, it was taking part of the swale, it was...

Public Works Director Diaz: I don't think we ever got to the point where we said this is what it's going to be.

Mayor Lago: But it was...

Public Works Director Diaz: There were several options between wider sidewalks or widening or -- we could never get to a point where it was specific what we're doing there. There were several things being worked on.

Mayor Lago: We have to be very, very thoughtful and explain that this is not -- that's not even under consideration. It's not under consideration. This is striping.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, yeah, Mayor, I can tell you...

Mayor Lago: Striping.

Vice Mayor Anderson: What the sentiment was: We do not want a protected bike lane.

Mayor Lago: They don't want to lose green space. They don't want to lose green space.

Vice Mayor Anderson: They don't want to lose green space. They don't want to lose a single tree. You know, I know that trees don't live forever, so that's a different issue. But they just want the striping on there, and they want a sidewalk. Simple, simple stuff. Just like on Biltmore Way, they didn't -- you know, somebody lived there, suggested a bike lane on there. They want to vote on it. I'm not going to stop somebody from putting it on the palette of options there. If they want it, they want it. If they don't want it, they don't want it. But I can tell you what the sentiment there was. No protected bike lanes. Just put a stripe in. They want traffic calming. We have traffic calming coming. So I think this will all work out very nicely and it will be better all the way around so...

Commissioner Menendez: Like I said earlier, the bike lane in front of St. Teresa or Church of Little Flower, it was striping. But after the fact, they realized the traffic issues it created, a bottleneck for miles all the way to Bird Road. And then to remedy it, then they narrowed the grassy median. So we lost green space to create more space where they reduced the space. So it's like they cut off one ear and then they cut off the other ear. So if we're going to do it, I want to make sure we get it right and there isn't -- we don't have to come back here and go, you know what, now we have to narrow -- widen the street or do stuff, especially when like I said, the roundabout and the circle. I want to make sure that we don't have to do something additional that isn't being discussed today because that example at Church of Little Flower was a nightmare. We had police stationed trying to conduct the traffic -- control the traffic. After three days, they said, we're out of here, this is a nightmare.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So...

Commissioner Menendez: So let's get it right the first time.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Let me see if I can allay your concern. This is why I want a professional designer to do this. We're not just going out there tomorrow and laying down some paint somewhere.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: So we have a -- again...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I made a motion.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Can we have a second?

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Commissioner Castro: And what about public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have members of the public requesting to speak.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Perfect.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker, Ms. Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I think with age, we learn from past mistakes. And some of you mentioned we had a revolt in this chamber when we tried to force people to have what they didn't want. And I think that the problem that we have today is that we're rushing this because the 17th is the deadline or we lose the grant. That was almost the same excuse we heard the previous time, except that they went ahead and applied for the grant, and then they had to return the money. Okay, now I live in that area, okay, and I do drive in that area, and sometimes we walk in that area when my grandkids are home. Let me tell you, to say that only the people that live there will have a say, the people that live in Alhambra -- I looked at -- I could almost name the people that live in Alhambra from Miller to Bird. I walked that area many times in my lifetime, getting people to sign and to tell me ideas and to campaign for candidates. I'm going to tell you, we have in that area a lot of rental properties. And I'm surprised because Billy says people rent on Alhambra. On our side of Alhambra, yes, because we're so close to the university that you get four, five, six kids together rent a home. And I can name you on my block, there's two homes that are rentals. My block, okay? And I know that there are others because I've heard the complaints of the behavior, and I've seen the people walking from the university, turning right and going up, okay? So we do have a lot of rentals. So question number one is, somebody said the people that will vote are the owners. Somebody said, the people that will vote are the people that live there. It cannot be both ways. Is it the owners whose property is going to be affected one way or the other? Or is it the rentals that may be there six months? Because I know we don't have short-term rental, but you need to tell those people that we don't have -- I -- the house next to me, they were doing Airbnb, okay, 'til some of us realized what was going on and we told them, no, you can't do that. Now they're renting it to somebody who works there -- some kids from the university, okay. So there are several issues. Number one, who decides, the owners or the people that live there? That's question number one. Number two, number two, only the people on Alhambra are going to decide. So you mean to tell me that when people are biking on Alhambra, going to the university, and I get out of my house and I drive past a house and a half, because it's a little bit on Alhambra, and the rest is Miller. And I get to the circle, with all the problems we have already, because I'm going to tell you, years ago when they were trying to do University Village, they said, I'm going to have to get a helicopter to get out of my house, and it has come to be the reality certain times of the day. So people are bicycling on Alhambra, they get to the circle, they get off the bike, they get on the traffic, and the rest of us, what, sit there and wait for this process? Because we need to drive, we need to go places, okay? We have serious problems on Alhambra with the two -- we have two circles on Alhambra. One on Miller, which is a big issue, and one on Blue Road, which is a bigger issue, because that's a cut-through street, okay. You drive and you get to that

corner, and you can't go around the circle because the people that are coming think that they have the right-of-way, and you wait there until they decide to stop, or you get into an accident, okay? Those are questions -- statements. From Miller to San Amaro, which is a small, you know, a few blocks only, and it turns and it shrinks, and the street is very narrow as it is now. You're going to take some space from the street to have bicycle lanes, right? And what, it's going to be a one-way street? Because there's no way you can put one bicycle lane and still have two lanes there, because the swale will eat the street. There's no possible way there. From Miller to San Amaro, it's very difficult to do this, okay? Now...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Can I help you out a little bit?

Ms. Cruz: Please tell me. I've only lived there since 1976. I don't know the area.

Vice Mayor Anderson: This is what design money is for.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. But the design...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Because I've had discussions with folks...

Ms. Cruz: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: On why we need design money as well for the Andalusia section here.

Ms. Cruz: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There's a point at which it's going to stop being a dedicated bike lane and it's going to be a share the road symbol just like it does on Sevilla, which again, is why we need a professional designer for these things, both the sidewalks and the bike lane. This is only planning money.

Ms. Cruz: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Only planning money.

Ms. Cruz: Why are we getting to this point that we're going to have a bike lane, but only for some part, and then they're going to go on this. That creates issues.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No.

Ms. Cruz: It's either one bike lane or share the road. When you have multiple issues, people get, you know, confused. That's the problem.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I don't.

Ms. Cruz: I don't mind having a bike lane. I don't mind if the bike lane can go all the way through. But if you're going to have part of a bike lane, then the person is going to supposedly get off the bike to get into the circle, because you know what? Sometimes they don't follow the rules. What, are we going to have a police there every day to make sure? Get off the bike? This is -- I'm going to tell you, this is -- this is very, very poorly thought out at this point. I think that getting the grant, as long as the grant doesn't say, if it doesn't come through, you have to return the money, because that was a big issue before that we got in trouble because the owners did not like to do this, okay? I also have a problem with doing any kind of petitions, any type of questioning during the summer, as soon as the summer comes. And you know, some schools ended beginning of June, some schools ended in May. And when they ended, what did the people do? Flee. They left. So how many people were there. And I'm going to tell you, Ms. Vice Mayor, to find in an area where we have so many families, to find people on a Sunday at 3 p.m. is like saying on Christmas Day during dinner. Because most people, I'm going to tell you, because I live across from the church, after noon mass, people don't go home. They go out. They go out. So how many people were there that really lived there, that were owners of the property, those are the questions. Have we looked at do we get to keep the money for the design? Are we going to say, oh, but we already spend money on design, so now we want to do it? No, no, no. I agree, take the money, do the design, but don't use that as we already spent the money, now we need to do it. That's the big issue, because that's what we were confronted with before. And you know what, before you do this, why don't we find the money that we were promised to put lights on our neighborhood so people that are bicycling can see what they're doing so we do not have those issues. The university proffered a million dollars, and the group -- and if I remember correctly, even Mayor Lago was part of that group that got together and we said, okay, first thing we need are lights.

Mayor Lago: May I say something?

Ms. Cruz: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Just to wrap it up because you've been...

Ms. Cruz: You remember that?

Mayor Lago: Talking for nine minutes almost. Just really quickly. Mr. Manager, at the next Commission meeting, I would like for you to speak to UM, speak to Ms. Maria Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Mrs. Mrs.

Mayor Lago: Ms., Mrs., whatever she'd liked to be called, Cruz. And I would like for you to address that matter and find the money.

Ms. Cruz: But do you know where the money was?

Mayor Lago: Again, but let's...

Ms. Cruz: I know.

Mayor Lago: That's not what we're talking about.

Ms. Cruz: Okay, so let's (INAUDIBLE)...

Mayor Lago: If you don't mind, if I may, if I may.

Ms. Cruz: No, no.

Mayor Lago: I don't want to overstep with you.

Ms. Cruz: That's okay.

Mayor Lago: But I think nine minutes of -- nine minutes is three times the allotted amount.

Ms. Cruz: That's all right.

Mayor Lago: So why don't we...

Ms. Cruz: Other people spoke longer than I have so far.

Mayor Lago: Nobody -- nobody's spoken more than you today.

Ms. Cruz: Oh, yes.

Mayor Lago: Today?

Ms. Cruz: Oh, yes. They did because I was timing. I object also to the fact that when you ask, we need to follow the same procedure that was followed for other things, not just the people on the street, but the people that use the street because they live in the area. Okay, all of us have the same.

Mayor Lago: With all due respect, you've mentioned that three times.

Ms. Cruz: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Ms. Cruz: I'm getting old, I'm sorry.

Mayor Lago: That makes all of us.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we're going to go to Zoom. We have several speakers on Zoom. The first speaker is Robert Ruano.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Ruano, the floor is yours.

Robert Ruano: Hello?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir, the floor is yours.

Mr. Ruano: Okay, can you see me now? Okay.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Mr. Ruano: Great. Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. First of all, let me start by saying I won't use any -- anywhere near nine minutes not even three. I do support -- I do support this item. I think it is -- it is a responsibility of the City and specifically the City Commission to keep our residents and our visitors and our students at the university safe. And as such, keeping them safe is not just police and fire, but keeping them safe is keeping their streets safe, keeping their ability to traverse their street on foot, on bicycle, on scooter, keeping their ability to do that safely. What we're talking today and the fact that we've spent a little, probably about an hour now, even with the break on this is really very disconcerting to me. We should have flown by this. It is our responsibility as lead -- well, or your responsibility as leaders of the City, I -- in my opinion to make a connection to the Metrorail ASAP. You've done -- and I applaud Vice Mayor Anderson for bringing this up, by the way, because this will help make a connection. But you've spent \$7 million on the Underline. You did a plan in 2004, a bike/ped plan. You did a bike/ped plan in 2014. You did another plan in 2019, and just recently the Mayor asked for the Transportation Planning Organization plan that recommended several connections to the Metrorail into the downtown. And while this is important and I hope that everybody on that Commission votes yes on this, because this is a matter of public safety, I think you should also go back and think about those other plans that you've done and see what you can do. Because Vision Zero is zero deaths, zero serious injuries on our roadways. And if you're really going to commit to Vision Zero, you have to commit not only to the design and planning, but ultimately to the construction. And then finally, I want to give you a name, and I hope you remember it, because it won't be the last one you hear. The name is Daniel Bishop. That's a young man who died in March on a street in our city, a FDOT street, by the way. But if that young man had had another opportunity, a protected lane, a striped bike lane, maybe he would have used that road. You need to think about that, because that won't be the last death on our streets by far. We will have more deaths. The

scooters are coming. I personally don't think they're that safe. Scooters are coming, they're here, bikes are here, the kids will be here in September and we need to keep them safe. Daniel Bishop, folks, he would have graduated three weeks ago at UM. Now, he's not. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Silvia Piñera-Vasquez.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Vasquez, how are you? Ms. Vasquez?

City Clerk Urquia: We can't hear you, ma'am.

Commissioner Menendez: Unmute.

City Clerk Urquia: She is unmuted, but I don't know if...

Mayor Lago: Ms. Vasquez, can you hear us?

City Clerk Urquia: She's unmuted but her voice is not coming through.

Commissioner Fernandez: No, we can't hear you.

Silvia Piñera-Vasquez: Yeah?

Commissioner Fernandez: Now.

Mayor Lago: There you go.

Ms. Piñera-Vasquez: Yes. Sorry about that. Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners. Thank you for giving us this opportunity. There's a couple of things that I'd like to say so I'd like a little bit of patience, maybe not nine minutes but a little bit. I was intricately involved with a 2020 bike lane issue which resulted in the 2020-28 resolution directing the staff to cease any further consideration of bike lanes on Alhambra Circle. And aside from Mayor Lago, who is familiar with this issue, the other four of you were not on the Commission. So it's important for me to explain how this came about. Commissioner Anderson has referred to this as handcuffs on the City. I would not mention it -- I would not label it a handcuff. These were restrictions that were put on the City staff to protect residents and respect their voices. Because very similar to today, there was a grant that was up and there was a huge timeline, like now that you've only given us a week to deal with this grant issue. And as a result of the time constrictions, City -- certain City staff and several of the members that did the canvassing with Commissioner Anderson manipulated data that allegedly had resident support. And it did not have resident support and we had to give back the grant. And by the way, I am -- just let me get my address, I live at 3516

Alhambra Circle. I am north of Bird. I am that exception that Commissioner Anderson keeps mentioning, but when this Alhambra Circle project went forward, it was the entirety of Alhambra Circle. So we all got to know each other very well. And as a result of my involvement, I was also placed on the TAB, the Transportation Advisory Board, by former Commissioner Fors and reappointed by Commissioner Castro. Now what I find very odd about this process is that it was never presented to the TAB as it was in the past. And Debbie Swain, who actually did a lot of the canvassing with Commissioner Anderson this past Sunday, didn't raise -- didn't bring up the fact that this was happening. So it almost feels that this entire process was kept from the TAB, which is supposed to advise the Commission on these types of transportation issues. It was never brought up. I was not aware of it. Nobody on the TAB was aware that this was going forward. I don't know if this was something that Commissioner Anderson took upon herself with these individuals, I don't know, but I just lay it out there because usually this goes through the TAB. The next thing I'd like to point out is several times Commissioner Anderson has said that there was overwhelming support and that people were very excited about the bike lanes. Well, I, having been involved in this situation in 2020, received several emails and texts from individuals who had quite the opposite concern, asking me what happened. I thought this was not going to happen again. I thought we weren't going to be pushed bike lanes when we don't want them. I find it very troubling that when Commissioner Castro raises the idea and Commissioner Fernandez at the town hall before applying for the grant that Commissioner Anderson says that it's a waste of time. How can getting resident support and opinion ever be a waste of time? How can seeing what people want in their neighborhood ever be a waste of time? It is not right for us to be put in a position as residents that we have a week to decide whether to apply to a grant that we may have to give back because we don't want the lanes. I think the appropriate course of action is just as suggested, do a town hall. And then if they want to apply for grants or they want these bike lanes, then go forward because I'm sorry, 22 signatures out of 95 houses does not suggest anywhere of overwhelming support by something that could be so life-altering for that Alhambra Circle area. And then the last thing I'd like to point out is the resolution. The resolution was drafted before this meeting a while back because I've got a copy of it. I don't know what kind of support Commissioner Anderson got if she just did the canvassing this past Sunday because in the resolution that was drafted, I would say probably two to three weeks before, it says that there was a large support for bike lanes between Bird Road and San Amaro. But by the way, I know that it's only Bird Road -- I mean, south of Bird Road. And let's be clear, we're not talking about sidewalks because there's been a lot of confusion between sidewalks and bike lanes. This only addresses bike lanes. And I don't know where this support is if they only went out last Sunday at 3 o'clock to canvas the area. And then the other thing is safety. I don't know how anybody could possibly think that drawing a green stripe on a busy road without any barriers would be safe for any bicyclist, much less pedestrians. So, you know, I think the most important thing which our residents demand and why the last time this had such a bad -- left such a bad taste in everyone's mouth is because it was no prior resident input, no prior transparency. My suggestion and with all due respect, Commissioner Anderson, I think you're wrong in just going out and canvassing at 3 o'clock in the afternoon on a Sunday and saying that that is community support. Have a town hall. See if they want bike lanes before you even apply for a grant for design and then -- and then apply.

But don't make it a week before the grant is due and then blame us, the residents, that, you know, there's no time and it's a waste of time for a town hall. On the contrary, we should be the ones asking for this, not the Commissioner and two other -- three other individuals going out, not even City staff and canvassing.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, may I respond to you on a couple of things?

Ms. Piñera-Vasquez: (INAUDIBLE) if I could finish.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I was present...

Ms. Piñera-Vasquez: I would request that you actually seek community engagement of that area and then apply for the grant if that's what they want.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, may I respond to you? May I respond to you? Number one, this is not for construction dollars as the prior grant request that was returned was done. I was present during the town hall the prior time. The town hall -- there will be a town hall on this, but when there's actually something for residents to see. They can't exactly opine on whether or not they want something if they don't know what it looks like. So no, it's -- in order for a grant request to be filed at this time, I was informed by staff that this ordinance needed to be modified, the prior ordinance needed to be modified, and therefore I wanted to assess resident support by going door to door before having this vote upon by this body. A draft of an ordinance doesn't mean that it's going to be heard. If, in fact, I didn't get strong support for having bike lanes or sidewalks in this area, I would have withdrawn this item from the agenda. But there was overwhelming support by those who were home and answered the door and signed their names and provided their email address, so now we have contact information from them. This is an initial step in the process. There's no need to return the grant money if it's given because this is only designing and planning money. It will give us the opportunity to have a complete and comprehensive town hall and inform the residents completely of the options that they have. Without it, we won't be able to do that. Without it, we'll have another Daniel Bishop. Without it, we'll have dangerous streets continuing on in the future. Without it, you will have bicyclists going down the center of the road because that is what Florida law allows them to do, and they will be blocking the cars on their way in, and they can get injured. So while no device that you put in is entirely foolproof, having folks in a bicycle lane to designate where they go as opposed to where the cars go is ultimately safer for the driver as well as to the bicyclists. So I asked staff to draft the ordinance in the instance that we got sufficient support. I think we have sufficient support for at least going ahead with design and planning money, then we can schedule the town halls with the folks that have the right to vote on it.

Ms. Piñera-Vasquez: I have a question. Can I have a question?

Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Piñera-Vasquez: My question is, several times you've mentioned they can choose the design, but how about in the town hall they say we don't want bike lanes, we don't want any of the design. I believe Maria Cruz brought this up. We don't want any design.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's their choice. They can make that choice.

Ms. Piñera-Vasquez: And that's why I -- okay. I just don't understand why there wasn't -- why it's such a rush and why there wasn't -- if we knew the deadline was June 17th, why not have community engagement to find out if they even want to apply for a grant for design, that then if we don't take -- if we don't do it, then as the prior City staff member said, that it looks bad on the City if we don't.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We're applying for grant money for other streets too. Unlike those other streets, this street had this ordinance that would not allow staff to submit the grant application for design and planning money. That's all we're going for. Staff asked me if I wanted to go for design and construction money. I said no, just design and planning money so we can get the balloting back from the residents and know whether or not we're going to take the next step. If they're happy with the design and they want to move forward, we can do a separate application in another year, hopefully, to be able to move forward to the next step to have construction money. Okay, construction for a bike lane with a painted line as I envision it is not going to be that expensive as opposed to a separated bike lane, which I'm -- from what I ascertain from people that I spoke to, they don't want.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, is Nicholas Cabrera.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Nicholas Cabrera: Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

Mr. Cabrera: Good afternoon, members of the Commission. My name is Nicholas Cabrera, and I reside at 45 Antilla Avenue. However, prior to this, I lived at 1410 Cantoria Avenue for 24 years. This is the home I grew up on, and these are the streets I played on. And the reason I bring this up is because Cantoria is located immediately along on Alhambra Circle, the very roadway we're discussing at this moment. As soon as it came to my attention that a group of residents would be canvassing the neighborhood this past weekend, I did not hesitate to volunteer myself. In fact, I personally knocked on doors along with Vice Mayor Anderson and experienced the overwhelming support for this item myself. This is a positive effort for this neighborhood and for the city as a whole. This is aligned with the Vision Zero effort and provides for a safe transportation route for cyclists and pedestrians traveling from Bird -- from Bird Road to San Amaro Avenue along

Alhambra Circle. The reason I'm speaking is because I'm frustrated by the comments of opposition on this item, both from Commissioner Castro and particularly by Mrs. Maria Cruz. I sense immediate opposition to this item before those in opposition take the time themselves to knock on doors for three hours like we did this past Sunday. It's not easy and it was something I was proud to do and would be proud to do again. There was resident input and there was transparency. Neighbors answered their doors and they spoke with us. Some even invited us inside their homes to have wonderful conversations. The support is there and the conversations will continue. We sought community engagement and they appreciated it. Now as a former Vice Chair of Bike Walk Coral Gables and a neighbor of this area, a previous neighbor of this area, I encourage anyone who would like to have a more in-depth conversation about this item to reach out to me. I'm happy to talk about this. Matter of fact, as many residents know, we have a community discussion group chat on WhatsApp, where we're talking about this item right now. I'd like to applaud Robert Ruano and Roberta Neway for their messages of support on this item, and I ask that the members of this Commission show support for this positive and impactful effort for our community. This is a positive effort for my generation, which has a lot of value for transportation and mobility, and especially in Coral Gables. We want safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists, and this is how we get there. Vice Mayor Anderson, thank you for leading the effort on this this past Sunday. I'd be happy to walk with you again, and I'd be happy to walk with Commissioner Castro if she wishes to join us and knock on doors as well. Thank you all.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker is Jackson Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes.

Jackson Holmes: Hello. Thank you. Let me turn on my video so you can see it. Hi. So a lot of you know that I worked as a taxi driver and an Uber driver and sedan limo driver for over 30 full-time years. And I think if there's one -- there's a couple of really horrendous memories I have, one of them -- many of them involve cats being run over. And it's dangerous. It's flat out dangerous. So I understand the desire for bicyclists, but my recommendation to you, how many of you -- it's a rhetorical question -- have seen the barriers protecting bike lanes, bicyclists on the Venetian Causeway, leading from the Old Miami Herald to South Beach? That's a slow moving thing there. And what's really amazingly...

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mr. Holmes: Good about the bike lane that they have there is that you couldn't hit a cyclist if you tried because they got these -- it's like many speed bumps and you'll crash before you reach the bicycle. It's a very good protection for bicyclists. So as a long-time passenger driver, what I would ask of all of you is, if you can't get those mini speed bump protection lanes, don't do it. But if you can, why not? Yeah, do it. Get some federal money. You know, I'm very reluctant to

suggest that something that ends up with a fatality, then it's on your conscience for the rest of your life. On the other hand, I don't want to dampen the enthusiasm, but it's -- for me the cutoff point is either you get the mini speed bumps or don't do it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right. So we'll close the public comment section. What is the will of the Commission?

Vice Mayor Anderson: We have a motion and a second.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Clerk?

Commissioner Castro: For me, in order for me to vote -- vote on this, I just -- I want to clarify that there will be a community meeting and that there will not be any concerns -- that this, accepting this does not mean we're good to go to the next phase.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, you can't go to the next phase without balloting, without a community meeting, without a design. This is design and planning money. We cannot vote on anything without design and planning.

Mayor Lago: So the intent -- the intent of this is to avoid what happened in the past where there was a discussion in regards to North Alhambra from Bird Road on where there was massive confusion in regards to what was the actual infrastructure that was being possibly considered in that area. This will provide an actual design that will show the residents an actual design for them to look at and make a decision whether in favor or they're against. And it may be there -- and maybe that can be tweaked to find consensus. That's my understanding, and of course, there's going to be public input, there will always be public input and it will not happen over the summer because I don't think that's going to be number one, the grant's going to be awarded. Number two, they're not going to start design without the grant being awarded because the purpose of the grant is for design. So we already found out, I think you said Fernando, I think 'til November?

Governmental Affairs Manager Weiner: November.

Mayor Lago: Till November. So you're not going to have a public meeting until you have a design. You're going to get an awarding grant in November. You'll probably take at least a minimum of a month for the documentation. You probably will start design in January. You'll probably take a few months to finalize the design. So, you're talking about a year from now, potentially, you'll be able to have a sit-down conversation with the residents and say, do you like this or do you not like this? What is your opinion? And maybe there will even be a town hall

meeting before the design process begins in December or in January to say -- probably January because it's going to take a minimum at least from when if we are lucky enough to get awarded to say, what's your input? You have 70 percent of people that like A, 30 percent of people that like B. Okay, we're moving with A. Let's tweak it to try to get to a higher consensus, then you do the design and you come back after the design is completed and you have another public meeting to have a conversation in regards to what the final outcome was and see if there is an appetite for the community to move forward. That's my understanding. Fernando, am I wrong or do you think I am okay with that timeline?

Commissioner Castro: There...

Mayor Lago: I just have -- one second.

Governmental Affairs Manager Weiner: Yes, I think that is fine. The next cycle of applications begins in March, so the funds will absolutely be dispersed before then.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Castro: There has to be an option of A, B, or what about C, we don't want it?

Commissioner Fernandez: So just let's vote on this item, and I will proffer a motion after this vote to do a community meeting in November once we have word if we're getting the grant so that we can start getting the community engaged at that point. So let's vote on this because I think if we start adding clauses to this, it could affect the grant application. So let's vote on this and then I'll make a motion to...

Mayor Lago: Let's do this. Let's not do that. Why don't you, so you can have your motion, you accept his amendment so that you can have a town hall meeting once we are either awarded or not awarded the grant to get input. So it comes...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, I'll accept the friendly amendment. Absolutely want to have a town hall meeting. I'll sit down with staff and maybe we can have A, B, C, D, E, F, G in a way of options and people can check off which ones that they like the best and then we can provide that to the designers so -- to make it, put it in where it's feasible.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a friendly amendment request, even friendlier. If this...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I like friendly.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, I'm doing my best. It's -- I mean, we're running close to the deadline for this grant because we've been here for two hours on this great issue.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And I'm turning into a pumpkin.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, so I'd love this to go to the Transportation Advisory Board so that they can be aware of it and discuss it. It's an advisory board, but as another, you know.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It will go -- it goes through them when they have something to look at.

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. They, you know -- they can -- they can also offer up some suggestions as to, do you want the armadillo bumps? Do you want reflector bumps? Do you want a rumble strip? What is it that you want on there? Do you want nothing on there other than paint? What color of paint do you want? All that the Transportation Advisory Board can do.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm all for armadillos.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I asked the Transportation Advisory Board to do something about the share of the road markings. We ended up doing it because action wasn't taken. I would invite them to do whatever they want. They don't have to have direction from us. They can give us direction.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm ready.

Mayor Lago: So, we have a motion and a second with a friendly amendment?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, friendly amendments.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

City Attorney Suárez: Just first, so we have a clear motion. The town hall, is the intent for it to be scheduled after there are designs completed?

Mayor Lago: First off, the intent is for it to be scheduled once you win.

City Attorney Suárez: Correct. Assuming -- assuming we -- assuming we are awarded the grant, then do you want it after we award the grant?

Mayor Lago: Not during summer...

Commissioner Fernandez: After the grant is awarded.

Mayor Lago: It's not during summer.

City Attorney Suárez: But prior to design.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes, yes.

City Attorney Suárez: But prior to...

Commissioner Fernandez: Engage the community as early as possible.

Mayor Lago: It's not during summer. It's not during Christmas. It's after it's been awarded in a time where before the design commences, you get input from the community.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I mean, if it's on November 1st, we may be able to get something in before -- before Thanksgiving. If it's after a certain period of time, we have to squeeze it in, but not too close to the holidays. If not, we do January, as soon as we possibly can.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: That's fine.

Mayor Lago: All right. So, we have a motion a second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)