

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
March 14, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Frank Quesada
Commissioner Jeannett Slesnick

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Mario Garcia-Serra

Agenda Item H-1 [3:57:57 p.m.]

An update regarding the proposed plans for “The Plaza of Coral Gables” previously referred to as the “Mediterranean Village.”

Mayor Cason: OK. City Manager you said that the Agave people have delegated you to....

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I wanted to give you an update on where we are with the Mediterranean Village.

Mayor Cason: OK.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We will come back to you at the next meeting with actual visions to the site plan and possibly updates on the development agreement, but in the meantime, I think it’s important for you know that the building, the project today has been reduced. It was an FAR from 4.0, and now it’s down to a 3.8, that may not make a lot of sense to some people, but it is a reduction of 526,000 square feet; there is a reduction in the maximum height and that

maximum height, which really related to the restaurant with a view is down from 218 feet 6 inches, to 190 feet 6 inches. There is an elimination of the basement levels of parking, the garage. As you'll remember there was an underground parking that has been eliminated, there is a reduction of the retail component from 300,000 square feet to now approximately 165,000 square feet, and there is a new one acre public plaza fronting Ponce de Leon and Ponce Circle Fred Hartnett Park. So we have an acre of public plaza, we have now 165,000 square feet of retail, down from 300,000; we have the elimination of the basement levels of the parking garage; we have now a reduction in the maximum height from 218 feet, down to 190 feet, and we have a reduction of FAR that will result in a reduction of 526,000 square feet. We will bring you back, we are not asking you to vote today, we just wanted to advise you, we will come back at the next meeting with a physical site plan.

Commissioner Keon: Can I ask what was proposed – it's a reduction of 526,000, what is the total square footage now?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: That's an excellent question Commissioner, I don't have that info.

Mayor Cason: Wasn't it 1.1 million minus...?

City Attorney Leen: I wanted to add that the City is providing more process here than would otherwise be required. I've given an opinion that this can be approved by the Planning and Zoning Director, because it's a reduction and because it fits within the land development regulations that are in place.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Understand but our office believed it was appropriate to bring it back to the Commission to share with you that information and to have you look at the site plan that is proposed. We believe that this is something that would be favorably received by you and we'll also bring back any modifications in the development agreement. At the same time, we've met with the neighbors, particularly areas around Santander and that immediate area, and they've shared some concerns about the physical improvement or lack thereof, and so when we bring back the development agreement we'll also bring back a timeline to address those.

City Attorney Leen: And I meant that in a positive way. In the sense that the Commission ultimately should have the say of what happens here. This has been a lot for many years, this is a major issue that came before the Commission, so even though the Planning and Zoning Director has his administrative authority, it's being brought to you, you'll make the decision that he can act in accordance with that.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: But we think it's a very positive change.

Mayor Cason: And the reason that they are doing it is not anything that we've done, it's because it cost too much and they got the numbers wrong, so this is how they are addressing from 600 million to 500 million which is the budget and so the principal of the underground garage is what's going to do it, and we are all talking about the "iffiness" of the second floor retail anyway.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: The vast majority of the second floor, but there is still a second floor component.

Mayor Cason: And I asked them, are you keeping all of the things you really liked, the great quality materials and trees and all the things they've agreed with the neighbors and they said yes. So I think this is nice, hopefully they can get on the phone with this, because it's been like, how many years has this site been empty now?- 15 years?

Commissioner Slesnick: And one other thing they are really expanding in the hotel and I sense it's really going to be a first class hotel and they are creating two ballrooms and they are expanding the size of both ballrooms, so it would be great...

Commissioner Keon: What is the size of the larger ballroom?

Mayor Cason: They said that they could get depending; I think they said up to 700 or more people.

Commissioner Slesnick: Yes, 700 plus people.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, I just want to – Mark, can you come up here one second, if you don't mind. I had a conversation with a developer, I think each one of us met with them when they showed the iteration, the latest iteration of the project and obviously the downsizing, which is very significant, a reduction of 526,000 square feet, along with two levels of parking is something, again to commend them, again it's a business decision, construction costs are through the roof. One of the things I did bring up, and I want to memorialize and they were interested in ensuring that the residents who live around the property have their goals met and they understand that they've been through a lot over the last decade, just to memorialize it. I spoke to them about potentially finding a way as long as the area is not impacted with construction, the areas that are available to do the sidewalks and the tree plantings and the lighting as proposed, let's see if we can put that on the front burner and not on the back burner, and I mentioned this to them already. In reference to the agreement they have TCO to provide this, but I think it's a good faith gesture

to proceed in the areas where they are not going to be affected by construction. For example, I'm not going to ask you or even make the most ridiculous request of putting pavers or redoing a street in an area that's going to be frequented on a daily basis by trucks carrying dirt or bringing in concrete, it's just going to get destroyed, let's be realistic. But in areas where there is proposed construction and revitalization of the existing infrastructure, like adjacent to near Vicky Bakery...

Mr. Garcia-Serra: At University Drive.

Commissioner Lago: Yes, but adjacent to the neighborhood, one of the streets that's going to have lighting, it's going to have new sidewalks, and new trees planted in that area. There is no reason why we can't do that kind of work there.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Sure.

Commissioner Lago: And also more adjacent to Coral Gables Hospital, which has also has some infrastructure. I brought this up to your attention, and they said, Vince of course, as long as you don't have to do it twice, it makes sense. So can you bring it up to attention and see if maybe as you work toward final CD's, construction documents that are going to come for the City's approval that maybe we can start working on a plan. I know you met with the neighbors last week or maybe we can come to some sort of agreement in the next few months get the process started.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: By all means; the neighbors have been cooperative with the project and supportive and they want to see...to the extent that we can accommodate their concerns and improvements that we have already obligated ourselves to do in their neighborhood, we should try to accommodate them as soon as possible.

Commissioner Lago: The neighbors are ecstatic, the neighbors are ecstatic.

Mayor Cason: For the public, when are we likely to see the first shovel go in the ground?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Definitely this year, assuming that these changes have administratively approval, the necessary changes to the development agreement. Also, we are thinking demolition of the bank building should be happening within the next few weeks and then ultimately you will see....there before the end of the year.

Mayor Cason: OK.

Commissioner Keon: Its 190 feet it's down to is that habitable or that's just overall height?

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Habitable.

Commissioner Keon: That's habitable.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Habitable – so the component before that was 208 feet in height has now come down to 190.

Commissioner Slesnick: That was the restaurant, the two story restaurant on top.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Correct.

Commissioner Slesnick: So the tower has come down.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Right

Commissioner Keon: The tower is down because that part is down.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We are going to have a very detailed presentation at the next meeting that will speak about the different components. We just wanted to give you an update of, a sneak preview, if you will, so that when we bring it back for the resolution for your consideration, you'll be advised.

Mayor Cason: Thank you Mario.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: There is a 22-page presentation on the web for the public that is watching, they can log onto this item and they can see more detail on the project.

Mayor Cason: Thank you. So stay tuned for the next meeting for more details.

Mr. Garcia-Serra: Thank you.

[End: 4:07:07 p.m.]