

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item 2-1
August 29, 2017
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Craig E. Leen
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Historic Preservation Officer, Dona Spain

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item 2-1 [12:28:08 p.m.]

A Resolution by the Historic Preservation Board recommending a line item in the City's 2017-2018 Fiscal Year Budget for the restoration of the windows located at Coral Gables City Hall.

Commissioner Lago: Do you want to address 2-1 now?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: As Dona comes up I have to embarrass her. She was the winner of the George E. Merrick Legacy Award with the Chamber of Commerce and we are very, very proud of that.

[Applause]

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very proud of that, well deserved.

Ms. Spain: I'm still in shock, a huge honor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Well deserved.

Ms. Spain: I so much appreciate it. It's a cool statute too. OK. This item is from the Historic Preservation...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I'm sorry sir; I didn't know they were going to do a photo.

Commissioner Lago: You should be proud.

Ms. Spain: I am. I am thrilled and thank you so much for coming Commissioners Mena and Commissioner Lago and Vice Mayor Keon were there. Thank you Cathy, I appreciate it. OK. City Hall windows – Historic Preservation Board, one of the responsibilities is to recommend to the City Commission on the historic properties that the City owns and they passed a motion unanimously to include the restoration of the City Hall windows in this upcoming budget. Now it is in the five year capital plan, the scope is, but their recommendations that it will be done sooner.

Commissioner Lago: May I ask you a few questions?

Ms. Spain: Sure.

Commissioner Lago: I always agree with you on all these issues. I just want to ask a few questions. What's the cost difference from revamping what we have here existing the wooden windows, to potentially finding something, which is in the same vain color-wise or look that makes you feel comfortable, I'm not sure anything will make you feel comfortable, but what are we looking at?- what are we looking at?

Ms. Spain: So, the issue that we had with the Coral Gables Elementary School windows was that they replaced the original windows in the school and that's also on the national register and that was not appropriate. They should have restored those windows.

Commissioner Lago: I agree with you a hundred percent.

Ms. Spain: So, the same thing should happen in this building on the national register and these windows should be restored.

Commissioner Lago: Let me tell you my only fear and you've been here for a while at the City. I haven't had the pleasure having your experience in the City. My fear is that we are here right now and we are committed to excellence, we are committed restoring our fountains and our entrance features and really working to celebrate our historic.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And our annex out there.

Commissioner Lago: Our annex looks great. My fear is that we spend all this money and we don't provide the necessary maintenance for these windows. You know windows are very sensitive, you know they are made of wood, these are not metal, it takes a little bit more of a beating and not so sensitive. That maybe in the near future, ten years from now, we are going to be back in the same spot we are in right now.

Ms. Spain: Well these windows were installed in this building in 1925, so they've lasted this long and they can be restored. I have an approximate cost, it's a ballpark estimate. It would be, I believe, \$2,500 a window, I think that's a good estimate on restoring them that would be taking them out, redoing everything and painting and reinstalling them. They are approximately 100 windows in this building, so that's \$250,000 for this building. There are ten windows in the annex building and that would be less expensive, they are much smaller, \$1,200 a window, so that would be another \$12,000, so for \$280,000, that's a ballpark estimate, we'll be able to restore the windows.

Commissioner Lago: I know, I'm not going to hold you to it. But they won't be impact though.

Ms. Spain: They will not be impact. I've had that discussion with Jodi Rubin, who was responsible for restoring the windows at City Hall, we walked the building and they are actually in fairly decent shape on the interiors, it's the exteriors that are an issue.

Commissioner Lago: But, my concern is not only – you get an impact window it has a handful of positives to it. Obviously, safety holds the air conditioning in, gives you protection from the elements, it's a reduction in maintenance, that's my only concern. Again, I'm all for moving forward and making sure that they are preserved in the historic nature you want. I just want to make sure that people understand that this is going to be, instead of eliminating an issue; we are going to continue to deal with this problem for a long time.

Ms. Spain: Well maintenance will always be an issue, but I'm telling you, my recommendation to this City Commission and the City is to restore the original windows.

Commissioner Lago: And, there isn't a product out there that can mimic it exactly the same. I've seen certain products that look really good, like for example, remember that artist's home that we went to.

Ms. Spain: Oh yes.

Commissioner Lago: On Old Cutler, that he has a beautiful stone house...

Ms. Spain: On Coral Way.

Commissioner Lago: Yes, excuse me, on Coral Way; his windows are top of the line.

Ms. Spain: Absolutely beautiful, that's true, and the Biltmore is doing a good job doing new windows too.

Commissioner Lago: By the way, those are impact windows and they are wood.

Ms. Spain: They are impact and they are wood, but they were not replacing original windows. The windows in the Biltmore were replaced at some point in the past, I'm just telling you as a preservationist I have to recommend....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It's our signature building.

Vice Mayor Keon: But, at this time as we move forward with the renovation of City Hall, would we do the windows before we would do other work?- what would be the process that we go through. I know that there are a lot of other things that need to be done first. Would windows be the first thing to be done?

Ms. Spain: Peter can you weigh in on this?- only on that issue, not on whether we should replace them.

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Keon: No, I don't have a problem with doing the windows, it's just to allocate dollars that aren't going to be used until a future date, I would rather allocate dollars to do what needs to be done, you know a schedule of work and in what order that work is done so that its funded as we go through, with the anticipation that we would fund the windows too.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Replacing windows Vice Mayor, is difficult, because you have to remove them, you have to restore all the interiors and rebuild them completely and come back and reinstall them. We also have a limestone façade which causes a number of issues there, so we are working from the interior, so it's something that I think would be best done as an overall, as the construction as a restoration of the overall building, instead of just one particular item.

Vice Mayor Keon: Is the issue that you are coming forward with is to ensure that the windows will be restored and not replaced?- is that what it is?- or you want the money?

Ms. Spain: No. I think the concern – this is from Historic Preservation Board and I think their concern is because when you look at the windows they really have fallen into disrepair. I do think it's important to wash this building, because it's also just dirty, so I think that could easily be done prior to any type of restoration, big restoration project that we have, but I think their concern is that they have fallen into disrepair and they don't want it to get any worse.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear a motion?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Mayor, I just want the Commission and the public to know, this is not a budgetary measure. You have allocated over \$3 million for the restoration of City Hall, also the little cottage and 427, the adjacent building. It is a matter of a commitment to do it right, because it is a critically important project. We have streetscape, thank goodness it's coming near completion, you have the Public Safety Building that you've just approved today, we have a Trolley and Fire Station 2, those are significant projects. When we start City Hall and I'm thrilled that Peter and I believe, Dona actually agreed that you do it all at once and you do it right, we have to have all hands on deck to do that. We have to have it well staged, we have to have proper contractors and so we have postponed it, so that we make sure that we get it right; and so that is, I just don't want you or the public to think that we are trying to save money, it is in our Capital Plan, it has been well funded, and we are excited about it, but we want to wait till we do it comprehensively and correctly, this building and this community deserves that.

Vice Mayor Keon: Is there a problem with cleaning the building?

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: We are looking at pressure cleaning the building very carefully and doing that.

Vice Mayor Keon: When are we going to start pressure cleaning this building?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We had a very spirited conversation with Mayor Valdes-Fauli yesterday about it, and so that is independent of the renovation and so Peter will work with

Dona, will work with Public Works on a proper cleaning of the building that really gets some of that aged look properly addressed.

Commissioner Lago: Can I add to that the Aragon Parking Garage?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Mr. Kinney is not here, but I believe the group is Cliff Hangers, I have that out of my office, I see it on a daily basis much to his disappointment and so Procurement has allowed Cliff Hangers to do....but it is being addressed.

Assistant City Manager Iglesias: Its being addressed now Commissioner.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Let's move on this and we'll take up the Aragon Parking Garage. It's time to go to lunch. Do I hear a motion?

Vice Mayor Keon: Are we going to allocate it this year?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: The money is there.

Vice Mayor Keon: The money is already in the budget for that?

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Yes. We have over \$3 million and I know that the windows are an important part of that improvement; \$250,000 I would probably guess is less than if we were replacing all of them with custom high impact. The money is there and we are going to allow Commissioner Lago and Dona to duke it out along the process as to what the proper treatment is for this process.

Ms. Spain: The process is difficult, because it's the whole issue of taking them out and then there is security.

Commissioner Lago: I appreciate your honesty....

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Do I hear a motion?

Commissioner Lago: I will make the motion.

Commissioner Quesada: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Commissioner Lago: Yes
Commissioner Mena: Yes
Commissioner Quesada: Yes
Vice Mayor Keon: Yes
Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes
(Vote: 5-0)

Ms. Spain: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, we'll take a break, come back after lunch.
[End: 12:39:50 p.m.]