

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-1
December 16, 2014
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

Mayor Jim Cason

Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

Commissioner Pat Keon

Commissioner Vince Lago

Commissioner Frank Quesada

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)

Marina Foglia, Business Improvement District, Executive Director

Agenda Item D-1 [Start: 11:58:02 a.m.]

Presentation by Marina Foglia, Executive Director of the Business Improvement District, regarding downtown holiday decoration initiatives.

Mayor Cason: Yes. I wonder if Marina Foglia is still here? She wanted to...

Commissioner Lago: She's right there. She's here.

Mayor Cason: Hi. Come on up, Marina.

Commissioner Keon: You know what, I have an item on Miracle Mile on here too, for a discussion item. Can we do that at the same time?

Mayor Cason: We'll do that right after that.

Commissioner Keon: OK. Because as long as Marina's going to be here.

Marina Foglia: Good morning, everybody.

Mayor Cason: Good morning.

Commissioner Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Foglia: My name is Marina Foglia, Executive Director of the Business Improvement District of Coral Gables. I thank the Mayor, the Commissioners, the City Manager for allowing me to come and talk about our holiday initiatives. We're very excited. The Business Improvement District this year has partnered with Miami International University of Art and Design, to create a contest like no other for our downtown. As a way to promote our downtown and attract more people to come, we have partnered 20 of our stores with students from the University. Thanks to our sponsors, we had the Christmas Palace donated gift certificates to these students, so they could come and decorate these storefronts. In addition to that, we created a social media campaign, so we are inviting also the community to go into Shop Coral Gables to vote, you know, and select the best design. We have many of the stores that are participating, so we have Bloom. We have Bolado Clothiers. We have Cattiva Boutique, we have Essence Boutique, we have J del Olmo, Jeannie's Furs, Marce Men's Couture, My Best Friend's Closet, I & A Formal Wear, Flowers and Services, Bellissima Bridal, Hip.e Boutique, Montica Jewelry, Melissa Shoes, I Design, DoperDoll, Daisy Tarsi. So, as you can see, we have many stores, and it was a wonderful initiative, because it not only allows us to showcase our fashion stores, but it also was a real-life experience for those students. And the University gave them credit for their efforts, so this was part of their visual merchandising experience. So they had to come and interview with the stores and talk about what they wanted to do, so it worked out great for everybody. The theme for this year was "The Golden Age of Glamour, and that was inspired by the small business initiative. As you know, the Chamber was granted a fund for American express, and they decorated the 200 Block of Miracle Mile. So what we wanted to do was keep

the theme, so it was along those same lines, so it was great. So we're going to have first, second, and third place winners. The window displays will be judged based on creativity, effort, use of theme, and how it makes the judges feel. So we have four judges, which I'm not going to say who they are right now, so that nobody can come in and, you know, skew their votes. But the winners and the judges will be announced in January at the Coral Gables Chamber luncheon, and the prizes will be given there as well. So I also want to thank our sponsors and our supporters: the City of Coral Gables, the Coral Gables Chamber, and Terranova Corporation for allowing us, to do this initiative. This is the first of many partnerships with this University. This University is not only about fashion and design, but it's also culinary, so we're looking to partner with them in the future, you know, either to get interns, already start placing people within the different restaurants and the fashion stores and the retailers. We had invited Charlene Parsons, who is the program director of Miami International University. She was not able to attend, but to quote her, she says "We cannot thank the merchants enough. They were extremely eager and helpful in taking time out of their extremely busy schedules to work with the students on this project. It was an amazing experience for students." So the winners will be announced and also the social media for the People's Choice Awards on December 20. We will be giving them gift certificates to use at over a hundred stores in downtown Coral Gables. So, you know, before I leave, I would also like to take this opportunity to remind everybody in the community not to go into the Facebook to cast your votes. You know, we have two stores that have our 3,000 votes already, so there's a lot of attention being paid to it. But not only that, but I want to remind everybody to please support your local businesses, to shop local. Your dollars not only help bolster our economy here by shopping local, but it also helps, you know, fund City services and public safety. So I thank you for your time. I wish everybody happy holidays and a prosperous New Year.

Mayor Cason: And it's a great initiative. I've had visitors come in and commented how beautiful downtown looks. So great initiative.

Ms. Foglia: And it was amazing. You know, when you did the holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony, we had so many people and that there was -- it was really great, and we had a lot of

people trickle in to Giralda Under the Stars. I want to mention that I was concerned because it was Art Basel, but we had over 2,500 people attend Giralda Under the Stars.

Mayor Cason: Super.

Ms. Foglia: That has turned out to be wonderful. January 2 is our next. You know, it's right after the holidays, and every month we're having different themes. January will be family day, so I want to encourage everybody to come out with their kids as well. We're going to have a face painting, balloons, and we're going to have children's programming for children.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Let me ask you another question. We have always had problems with the Junior Orange Bowl Parade when we had it near Christmas. Is it better now than it's in Thanksgiving on Sunday after Thanksgiving; much better for the merchants.

Ms. Foglia: Yes.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK. We traditionally had problems with the merchants and bringing them in that space. It's good to hear that's working out.

Ms. Foglia: And this year for Junior Orange Bowl Parade, I only received one complaint.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: That's really good.

Ms. Foglia: So, you know, and it was right after Small Business Saturday, that Sunday, and I think it worked out very well.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: It worked out well.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So we'll just keep them there. That's a good date for them.

Ms. Foglia: Yes.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

[End: 12:04:40 p.m.]