

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-2
February 24, 2015
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 Works Director, Glenn Kephart

Parks and Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro

Public Speaker(s)

Gustavo Santano, AECOM

Agenda Item H-2 [1:35:06 p.m.]

Update on Granada Golf Course Improvement Project

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: I think we'll have Glenn stay up...

Mayor Cason: Yes – H-2.

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: Because the next one is the Granada Golf Course Improvement Project, and before Glenn begins, this is not about establishing a walking path, this is about a very specific phased restoration of the course itself, so I don't want the public to think that we are coming forward with a walkway around the course, that would take a lot of community discussion before that would come forward.

Mr. Kephart: Thank you City Manager, and again, thank you Mayor and Commissioners. If I could have the presentation – what we'd like to do is an update on the Granada Golf Course Restoration and Improvement Project. This is just a reminder, in the Capital Improvement Budget of last year; you authorized \$900,000 for improvements to the golf course and also the evaluation of the Master Plan for the area. We've broken the project into different phases; Phase 1 and 2 – Phase 1 and 2 include a restoration of the greens, T's, fairways, and an extension of card pass and we have our designers from AECOM here. This has really been a collaborative effort with City staff through guidance of the Commission, previous meetings that you had, the golf community, a golf design professional working for AECOM and Fred from Parks and Rec to make sure that we get it right for the golf community. And the project also includes the installation of new shutters. In a minute Gustavo Santano from AECOM is going to come up and he'll walk through the boards of the specifics of what the improvements to the golf course are. I would add to this and we'll cover the schedule again at the end, but what we are looking at most importantly is a 90-day closure of the golf course that we are designing, to happen this summer during the slower time, sometime between May and August, the specific dates won't be known until we select the actual contractor and we are in the procurement process now and during that 90-day closure we will do the golf course maintenance improvements that Gustavo will explain, and we will also do the extension of the card pass. The Phase 2, build new shelters that will take a little bit longer. We will be working on, through the community process, to design the shelters this spring and then probably, I put a date in maybe next year until they are actually replaced and put in. We don't want to disrupt the golf to put in those shelters – while the shelters themselves the initial indication is that we don't think they are historic themselves, they are shelters on a historically designated golf course. So, we will need to go through the process to work with the historic community and the Board of Architects to make sure we get them right – and whether the shelters, some of us think that the shelters should in the end, look pretty similar to what they do today and then there are also proposals to have them look something else, but we'll go through the City process to define what that should be. Then there is also a future phase of the project, as the City Manager mentioned, and that's the Master Plan. The Master Plan included elements of, could there be a card pass path around there, could or should there be lighting of the banyan trees and those sorts of things. We didn't come to talk about that project today, because there really is no project and it's going to require future discussions with the City Commission on those issues. With that, I'll like to ask Gustavo to come up and walk you through the specifics of the golf course maintenance project.

Mr. Gustavo Santano: Good afternoon, thank you so much for allowing us to present to you all. As Glenn mentioned, we have – the Phase 1 of the golf course is basically improvements, we are not changing the golf course itself, it will remain “as is.” Basically, there has been some issues with Saint Augustine grass creeping into the fairways, the sand traps...very well defined so what we are really looking at is to bring those assets right back to where it used to be and make it a

course that everyone wants to go and play. As you can see, as part of our first task was to do a maintenance plan to look at the current conditions and be able to improve it. That has been ongoing for the last six months and there has been already large improvements to the golf course. However, this plan that we are going to be showing you now is going to further improve that, and as part of the plan, we'll also look at making sure that the future of the golf course continues, as it is improved. As we have on the golf course, we are looking at improvement of the fairways, T's, colors, and approaches. As I said, everything will remain the same. There will be no changes to the actual fairway; however we do have a situation that happens for Number 3 and Number 2. We have the buildings on the south end of Coral Way that produces a lot of shade into the golf course, that has actually created problems for the Number 3 Green, which is always in shade, so we looked at a shade study to ensure that we can move that Number 3 Green further north away from that shade factor to eliminate some of the issues, because the green was just...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Number 2 Green, 3-T.

Mr. Gustavo Santano: Thank you sir – yes – and the same for Number 2, we have the actual trees, the banyans...so that produces also shade. We are not here to cut any trees, we are not here to eliminate any of the trees that are there, but we want to make sure that the greens and the fairways are growing in the way they need to be. So we are doing the same thing over at Number 2. We are moving about 25 feet further north, we are talking feet not talking yards, so it's a very minimal amount, so the golf course will remain the same as far as the layout. So Phase 1 is happening, as Glenn mentioned, it's going over the bidding process. This is what's happening – the grass and the ruff will remain "as is." We are not doing a complete kill, we want to make sure that everybody understands that, that we are only looking at replacing the fairways and T's and colors. The ruff will remain "as is"; there will be some kill....just to make sure that we actually bring the fairway back to how it used to be. Some areas have gone very narrow, just some St. Augustine encroachment, so we want to make sure we bring that back to what is required. As part of that what's happening with the sod, there is also card pass extension. We looked at different opportunities on what this card pass extension would be. We met with our golf community, and with their comments and suggestions we literally sat down at the table and they were the ones who told us, this is really how we play, this is what we want, and this is what we want to see as far card pass improvements in extensions. And as you can see, there is a small dash – some dash lines that's basically the card pass extension. So we are looking at the card pass extension in anything from 25 feet to 40 feet to 50 feet. Over on the west end will be the longest extension, where it actually connects the two, Number 7 and Number 8, where they will be connected. And the reason why that is, is there are some trees and some banyans and some issues with where it gets a little muddy after it rains. So they want to be able to eliminate that, so they were very...we actually kind of walked around to make sure that this is what they wanted. So we listened to them and that's what we have.

Mayor Cason: What are you doing around the stretch along Coral Way there on the loop, where part of that is paved and there is a lot of mud and sand and it's just a mess there?

Mr. Santano: That is part of the extension as well on the Coral Way side. We are extending it and connecting to the other side as well. Keeping away from the right-of-way, keeping away from Coral Way, as you know that area does have some grading issues and that's not necessarily something that we'll be looking as part of the card pass improvement, but we will be looking at what the grade is to assure that we provide a safe environment for the card users. So that would be part of the Phase 1, and that will happen together because if you are going to have the grass killed, it already make sense to be able to add on to the card pass and improve the card pass at that time.

Mayor Cason: So it's going to be easier to get a whole-in-one now?- it's closer?- no.

Mr. Santano: Not sure about that.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: How about the grass?- what kind of grass you are going to put in, in the fairways?- in the greens what are you going to do?

Mr. Santano: Fred, the first and final grass that was described...[inaudible]

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And are you sprigging it?- you are.

Mr. Fred Couceyro: Right now we are looking at a Bermuda grass that is "celebration".

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK – "celebration".

Mr. Couceyro: Now there are still some hybrids that we are still looking at and depending on the weather – if something comes up there is mutations all the time. The green grass is a little different than the fairway grass. The greens is something called usually a "Tiff"...but for the fairways we are looking at that "Celebration" and that will also be the same....

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: So you would basically resprig the whole fairway and....right?

Mr. Couceyro: Not resprig the whole thing.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: What are you doing?- just around the greens did you say?

Mr. Couceyro: No. The troubled spots and also the intrusion of St. Augustine on the edges, that's really – there are some areas where we have a lot of them, weed or tropical sledge, those rare grasses that have popped up. There are going to be some spots all over the course...

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: How many/- you going to hit all the T's?

Mr. Couceyro: T's we are going to....

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Complete—

Mr. Couceyro:...the fairways we are hitting spots.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Are you making the T's any bigger or anything?- so it allows more...

Mr. Couceyro: The plan doesn't call for that right now.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: OK. How about bunkers?- what are you doing with the bunkers?

Mr. Couceyro: The bunkers we are going to try and attack some of the intrusion that's come in.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Yes – because you need to fix those up and put some sand in those bunkers there.

Mr. Couceyro: We are looking at one bunker along the third grade, you know that one that's a real small bunker, we are looking at whether to make that one a title bunker, and get rid of those three little ones, so it's easier to maintain and it doesn't intrude on that green.

Commissioner Keon: I think it's more than playability than the maintenance that you need to consider when you are going to change....

Mr. Couceyro: Absolutely. We did talk with the golfers – there is no difference in play value with the three little bunkers and just...

Mayor Cason: Please make sure that you get the information out to people around the golf course, because they are holding meetings thinking that we are onto the walking path, which we are not. I'm not sure that – there is always the right wheel know what's going on, but you've got it in Burger Bob's and should be on E-NEWS and maybe we can even mail it to the homes around the golf course, just so the lack of information that we always seem to get when we have a project.

Mr. Kephart: If I could ask, if we could get the last slide back up, so that we can put up for the public. This is how people can find out about the project; we will be keeping it updated on the City's website. There will be flyers distributed for Burger Bob's and the Pro Shop, they are not there yet, I think it's a little bit premature to talk about the golf course being closed this summer, but we are working on developing the flyers and having them out there in plenty of time in advance, and then certainly by April you want to know if the course is going to be closed in June. And then also they can always call or address the website, Public Works or Parks and Rec and we'd be glad to talk to them about the project.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: Ninety days seems like a short period of time. Can you get it all done in 90 days?

Mr. Kephart: The professionals are telling us yes. We need to...

Mr. Santano: It needs to happen within 90 days because of the growing season....the sod...needs to happen fairly quickly...[inaudible]...it is scheduled for that reason as well, so we can get as much of the growing season as possible.

Commissioner Keon: Right. Did you say July – what is the period of time we are hoping, you are looking at starting?

Mr. Kephart: Can I have the slide back up? The actual maintenance on the course, we are looking at May through August...

Commissioner Keon: OK.

Mr. Kephart:....and a 90-day period somewhere in that window, whether it's May 18 through August 18th, whatever that is, and then the shelter design, we'll be working on this spring.

Vice Mayor Kerdyk: And we are going to have somebody who can maintain it once it gets finished?

Commissioner Keon: I think we really need to – I had asked Cathy, I think, who is going to have a discussion possibly with the Biltmore and a contractor that is doing that course to see if maybe...

City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark: We are going to reach out. We have the contact and whether it is an informal discussion or a formal contract, we are going to have that recommendation back to you.

Commissioner Keon: Because I think it's important that we have someone that is actually certified in golf course maintenance – the individual that's there is a very good lawn man, but that's not a golf course maintenance person and you need somebody that is certified in golf course maintenance.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Mr. Kephart: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

[End: 1:49:16 p.m.]