

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-1
April 28, 2015
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)

Agenda Item I-1 [2:14:00 p.m.]

Status report regarding legal research and potential legislation relating to workforce housing for teachers.

Mayor Cason: You want to do I-1 and then we'll finish any more K issues.

City Attorney Leen: Yes Mr. Mayor. And this was initially in response to an inquiry from the Vice Mayor, Vice Mayor Quesada regarding workforce housing related to educators, teachers. And the question was, can the City of Coral Gables adopt a housing policy or housing provisions that essentially promote housing and new developments for teachers; and the answer to that question is yes. I did my own research on this issue. I also double-checked it with Holland and Knight, because there is not a lot of this being done throughout the state right now. We did find a program in Miami-Dade County, but its my understanding it wasn't used very much, if at all. So, I wanted to get a second opinion on it and I have an opinion from Holland and Knight as well, its basically the same as mine, which is that Section 166.0415, under the Florida Statutes gives the Commission extraordinarily broad authority over workforce housing programs, and it doesn't put

any limitation on it, so its about as broad an authority as you can have. In addition, with the Home Rule Powers Act gives this Commission the same authority as the state legislature on items as long as it doesn't act inconsistently with state law. Here you are acting consistently with state law, so you have the broadest possible power in this area. So you could adopt basically any program as long as there was a rational basis. So that's the answer to your question.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Thank you so much. And for those of you watching at home or the audience, this is an idea that I came up with when we were discussing, I was having a conversation with the City Manager, related to trying to create the best public schools possible for our residents in the City of Coral Gables. How do you get a great public school?- you get great teachers. So the idea is really to incentivize teachers to teach in Coral Gables schools. Again, the idea, we haven't voted on it, its just a conversation that we've had is if you are teaching at one of our public schools then you are going to be illegible to live in one of these workforce housing units within our City, and its only going to be illegible to those teachers who are currently teaching at our public schools. The idea is when we have – try to create some minimum requirements, if you have a Masters or a Ph.D. in Education or a specific field within our public schools academia then you would be entitled to it. Again, the idea is, if there is a teacher that's considering teaching at Carver Elementary in Coral Gables that a Coral Gables resident attend or another school, maybe out west or down south or up north, that this incentive the teacher that we would love to have in our school system that that teacher would chose us to work in Coral Gables because of this provision, because housing – they can live in a great place, they can live at a reasonable price if they can afford on their salary and again that would benefit the City. So, its something that we need to vote on, maybe for future discussion, but the first step was making sure that the idea was even legal, so thank you for providing that.

Commissioner Keon: Would you envision that as renal? I'm assuming it would be rental housing.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes. Yes.

Commissioner Slesnick: But we have workforce housing, don't we already in Coral Gables?

Commissioner Keon: No.

Commissioner Slesnick: My son-in-law is a teacher, he used to be with Ponce Middle School, but I worked with Wally Carlson when the building that's on LeJeune and Ponce went up where Epicure is, that was voted on to have workforce housing, it was part of the program.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I'm not sure.

Commissioner Slesnick: I don't know if they ever instituted it.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I'll ask the City Manager to look into that, that's a Gables Residential project.

Commissioner Slesnick: And that was residential rentals and of course they are kind of expensive already.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes, they are.

Commissioner Slesnick: But I think there was workforce housing provided in that complex when it was approved.

Commissioner Keon: I know that when we...

Commissioner Slesnick: You were on the Planning and Zoning Board.

Commissioner Keon: I remember when we sat on the Planning and Zoning Board, we – what they were using for the numbers for workforce housing were based on the average income in the City of Coral Gables. It wasn't what you would normally or generally use as income to base the rents on. So I think that there is a real issue...

Commissioner Slesnick: It was too expensive.

Commissioner Keon: Yes. Its very expensive.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Well, we can address it very easily, if we just have the City Manager take a look at it, but my idea here is, I'm not looking at income based, if you are a teacher in one of our public schools and you have a minimum requirement, whatever we decide what it should be and there are several different ways that you can break it up, and I would ask the City Manager to propose, if the rest of the Commission likes the idea to move forward, I will ask the City Manager to really draft some language the best way she sees fit. One way is to incentivize the developer to say, hey the next project you build maybe you can build "X" more units if you provide student housing or saying you can't build the project unless you provide this teacher housing. There are two aspects to it; who we would want it to apply to, number one; and then second, how do you either incentivize it or require it?- and I would ask that staff, if the rest of the Commission is sort of in agreement at this point, to have staff create some language for us on both points, so that we can have further discussion in the future.

Mayor Cason: Yes, see what you can come up with.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Because my goal is to attract all the best talent in Dade County so that all of our schools – it was a little bit unfortunate, one of the unintended consequences of the controlled choice discussion is, there was a lot of discussion on that some schools were better than others, and there is a little bit of a perception that one of the schools isn't at the same level as the others, even though you asked the parents who send their children to that one school and they all love it, there really is a perception should be every school in Coral Gables has all the best teachers and all the best programming and that's where we need to be. So, I guess that's what I'm trying to create with this proposal. That's it.

Mayor Cason: OK.

[End: 2:20:11 p.m.]