

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
May 26, 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)

George Volsky, 1008 Alhambra Circle
Christopher Bailey, 5715 Michelangelo Street

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Discussion regarding metal roofs in residential areas.

Mayor Cason: Metal roofs.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Roofs or roofs?

Commissioner Keon: Depends on where you're from.

Commissioner Lago: Mayor, if I may? I'll be brief. I know we've had a long agenda so far, and we want to get to have some lunch. Just recently, I was contacted by a handful of individuals, one of them is here, who I think wants to speak for a few moments, if you be so kind of indulge him. And it's in reference to metal roofs. It came to my knowledge that this is the information.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Can we go page by page?

Commissioner Lago: That's what I was going to talk about. Commissioner Quesada seems to not be in a hurry, so what I'm going to do is, I'm going to read all 1,500 pages to you, in reference to what the findings were in 2006 by the P&Z, which Commissioner Keon was on the P&Z Board and was one of the individuals that voted, I think, unanimously, in support of metal roofs, along with the BOA, (Board of Architects), and who else? Several other City boards that entertained the possibility of having metal roofs, but let me get to the point. The point is this. What caught me off by surprise was the fact that we already have metal roofs, not as a result of the moratorium. We're allowed a hand for a few dozen metal roofs to be installed in the City, but what really caught me by surprise and I think caught a lot of staff was that properties or cities that were annexed to the City of Coral Gables, one being Snapper Creek and...

Commissioner Keon: Hammock Lakes.

Commissioner Lago:...Hammock Lakes had special provisions that, as part of their annexation, would allow them to have, would allow those individuals located within Snapper Creek or Hammocks Lakes to continue, if they so deemed or were interested in, the installation of metal roofs. My opinion is very simple. My opinion is that metal roofs serve three main purposes: Number one, sustainability because when you get done with a roof, your metal roof, you can always recycle that roof. Right now, barrel tile roof cannot be recycled, my opinion. It's a clay-tile roof. Number two, the maintenance factor when it comes to a metal roof is incredibly simple. If you have a leak, all you do is you remove that one panel, you fix your leak, and you put that panel back on. When you have a tile roof, you've got to remove the tile, you've got to go to the 90 paper, you got to get under the tar, you got to get under the 30 paper, you got to get to the metal, to the wood deck, repair it, and then put that all back. It's very cost-prohibitive, excuse me, especially for people nowadays. And the third is the life of the roof. It is a well-known fact that a metal roof lasts much longer than a barrel tile roof. So with that being said, it was overwhelmingly viewed as a positive in 2006 when this was brought forth and never made it to the Commission. But I saw there was a stumbling block and that was, obviously, one that I

have myself. I would never want to see a metal roof on either a Mediterranean-style home or on a historic home. So, what I would like to do, obviously with your discussion and your input, is request that staff take a look at this again. Tell us, you know, what are the best options for metal roofs, how could they be implemented, when can they be installed, and where? And what I mean "where," I mean historic, non-historic homes or non-Mediterranean-style homes. And could this be a possibility.

Mayor Cason: If I recall the discussion we had almost four years ago, if I recall...

Vice Mayor Quesada: It was only you and I.

Mayor Cason: We were here and it had to do with more the location rather than...I mean, everybody agreed. You can't make them to fit barrel roofs. There was question of color.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Of course.

Mayor Cason: There was a question, there was a time when they were allowed and 15 or 20 homes put them on, but the discussion was sort of like North Gables, South Gables, and it was more about the area rather than the type of home. I don't know how many modern homes we have in the north that want to have metal roofs, but I think that's what the discussion was? Was there an ordinance, Craig, or something that we passed?

Vice Mayor Quesada: No, there wasn't. And at that time, since...

Commissioner Lago: It came to the doorstep, but it never made it in.

Commissioner Keon: Became a very divisive issue.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Well, since you guys are voicing your opinion on how you feel about it, at that time four years ago, I said that I'm against metal roofs in the City. So, I know we're not formally addressing it right now, the merits of it right now, but if you want to have staff take a

look at it again, you know, we'll have staff look at it again, but I think I said that four years ago in moving forward, because you create a situation, a sliding scale, what's Mediterranean, what's not. What type of house wants, and what type of house does not. You know, does it apply for what others; does it not. And we also discussed the neighborhoods. There are some blocks that have 95 percent Mediterranean homes and then there's one modern home in there and maybe doesn't fit with that neighborhood or maybe it doesn't fit in a certain region of the City. And for me, in principle, I'm not against metal roofs. I'm not for it in the City of Coral Gables, just because I haven't heard a good approach on how to deal with it.

Mayor Cason: I have a question. Are there people coming to you now...

Commissioner Keon: I think that that's the issue.

Mayor Cason:...in the gated communities where you have the metal roofs basically. I think maybe a couple outside.

City Attorney Leen: Well, Mr. Mayor and I would ask Ramon Trias to come up, if it's OK, Madam Manager?

Commissioner Keon: Well, copper...

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS...

City Attorney Leen: The law, what it says is that there are certain areas of the City that had been annexed, and if they're allowed to have metal roofs under their rules, they're either incorporated into site specifics or...I think it's 1-101, I believe, of the Zoning Code, but there's a provision that says that where there's been prior approvals, before an area of the City that's become part of the City, those approvals continue to exist. And generally, we allow that neighborhood to continue having metal roofs so that there won't be a form of spot zoning where maybe 10 houses could have metal roofs and one couldn't. I'm not saying that that's a specific example, but that's generally where that comes from, the idea that...

Mayor Cason: Are there people in those communities that have the metal roofs or that didn't take advantage of the open period to put them in and now want to put them in? Are there people...?

Commissioner Lago: Yes, there are those individuals, but what we have right now, and this is why I brought it up was because you have certain individuals that live a block outside, like the individual who speak to you now, a block outside of a recently...when I say “recently,” I mean 10, 15 years ago annexed area in our city and says, “You know, I want a metal roof,” for whatever reason it may be--aesthetics, sustainability practices, whatever it is; they're a block. They can see metal roofs from the front door of their house, and they are not allowed to have a metal roof. Again, to me, I am in favor of metal roofs, like I said, in non-historic, non-Mediterranean, but I also agree with what the Vice Mayor's saying in reference to it could be a little bit of a contentious issue whether well, is your home a ranch or is your house. I don't know if it exists, but a semi-Mediterranean home. Again, that would come before the City and the City staff. Ms. Spain would have to obviously make that decision, and she would be the end-all, be-all of that discussion, and then it would come before the Commission. But I think it's a discussion that we need to have, because just like years ago for many, many years, this community did not allow trucks, a referendum showed that trucks can be achieved in a tasteful manner.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Hold on. Are you saying we should go to referendum on metal roofs?

Commissioner Lago: I'm saying that...

Commissioner Keon: We should have a discussion.

Commissioner Lago:...we should have a discussion if we should go to referendum or if there is even an appetite in this Commission to have it. Again, the reason why I bring it up is because in the last three months, and this is my last point before Ramon speaks, and hopefully, we can hear from the resident who's been here so patient; is that I've been reached out to by four individuals.

I guess word has gotten out that I'm the design and construction guy up here. They've come up to me and they've asked me, "Listen, we'd like to do this. There's other individuals that are interested. What are the possibilities?"

Mayor Cason: Ramon.

Planning Director Trias: The current Code is very specific about the materials, and it goes into great detail about the fact that tiles, certain roof tiles and so on. In addition to that, you're correct, and some areas have been annexed into the City. Metal Roofs are allowed currently, et cetera. And I think that in the past, this has been an issue of great debate, and disagreement. I would anticipate that in the future, it probably be the same situation.

Commissioner Lago: Hopefully great debate, but not much disagreeing.

Planning Director Trias: And at the end of the day, this is really a policy choice that is mostly about aesthetics. At the end of the day, that really is up to you. So, the more direction you can give staff, the better we can help you on this.

Mayor Cason: OK. Would you like to come up and state your name, please?

Christopher Bailey: I would. My name is Christopher Bailey. I live at 5715 Michelangelo Street, which runs between Granada Boulevard and the middle school, Ponce de Leon Middle School. And as Commissioner Lago referenced, I could hit a house with a baseball from my yard that has metal roof. In my neighborhood, I've driven around and I sent pictures to the Commissioners, the then Commissioners; you didn't receive them, unfortunately, documenting metal roofs in Coral Gables that were in neighborhoods that were not annexed. In fact, there was a house going up on South Alhambra Avenue close to US-1 that had a white metal roof, and this is being built just a couple months ago. So I think, "A," it's a question of fairness; and "B," the Code currently allows for metal roofs for anybody if they're made of copper. Again, that's a question of fairness. Only the wealthiest residents of Coral Gables can afford to put a copper roof on their house. And perhaps some of these that I've been talking about are copper roofs, but

they certainly don't look copper anymore because they've aged. And a color to match the patina of a copper roof or any other roofs, you can get any color you want to just about with these metal roofs, and "C," they provide real and concrete benefits to the homeowners. As was referenced by Commissioner Lago, the last two or three or even four times as long as a regular tile roof. They add to the value of the house. They provide better insulation to the house. They reduce the stress level because they're much lighter on the walls and the infrastructure of the house, so it's really a win-win situation. And in my neighborhood, it's all 1950s grand-style homes. There's no question or any issue as to Mediterranean or historic or anything of that nature. But we were told by the City architect that he would not even submit our application to the Board of Architects because he had been instructed not to, unless he was given instructions, basically by this Commission. So, as I stand in here today speaking to you, I would ask that the fullest consideration be given to metal roofs particularly because of the benefits that accrue to the homeowner and therefore, to the City in increased property values. And that somebody please instruct the architect to submit our application to the Board of Architects, so that we can have it assessed on the merits and not on some procedural level, and again, pointing out the fact that there are homes all through Coral Gables, and I bet you've driven by and never even noticed it, but that have metal roofs and are not in annexed areas.

Commissioner Lago: I have a feeling, the home that you mentioned before that was not part of an annexation. I think that home was part of an annexation.

Mr. Bailey: No. It's on Granada Boulevard.

Commissioner Lago: Oh, it's on Granada. OK, I'm sorry.

Mr. Bailey: I could hit it with a baseball from my backyard.

Commissioner Lago: Do you have the exact address?

Mr. Bailey: I didn't bring the e-mail I sent, I circulated. I could circulate it again when we get home today. But we submitted to the Commission the photographs and addresses of homes in

non-annexed parts of the City, including the one that I mentioned on South Alhambra, which is a brand-new construction. Making clear that I don't know if you have the right connections or what the deal is, but you can get a metal roof in the City of Coral Gables.

Commissioner Lago: But let me just make clear, just so you know. First off, I'm interested in seeing the list. I haven't seen the list. Maybe I overlooked it. Probably, I overlooked it. Even though I'm really good with e-mail, but no worries. Everything that's done in the City is done across the board to be fair to everyone. So if it happened, I want to take a really good look at it, but it may have happened during that moratorium where, like the Mayor had mentioned, there was two dozen homes that were given, I think it was 24-hour window to apply for...

Commissioner Keon: They had a period of time.

Mayor Cason: Couple weeks.

Commissioner Lago: Thirty days, 24 hours.

Mayor Cason: A month.

Commissioner Lago: It was a very tight time frame. Now, what I'm very interested in is finding the address to that home that is supposedly on Granada that may have installed the metal roof. I think that's something that we need to get to the bottom of.

Mr. Bailey: You mean the new build on South Alhambra?

Commissioner Lago: Yeah, the new construction. And I need you to send it to the City Manager and please copy the Commission and staff...

Mr. Bailey: Absolutely.

Commissioner Lago:...today so that we can look into that.

Mr. Bailey: Thank you. Thank you for your time.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: And I promise you that we'll have a healthy discussion in regards to this. I'm going to have the City Manager direct staff to please, you know, prepare some sort of a synopsis so that we don't have to drive the Vice Mayor crazy and read all 1,500 pages. But we are going to review this, and maybe staff can just give us a quick synopsis of what occurred in 2006 and what the opinions of the boards were, and hopefully, we can come to a decision on whether we either make it through Commission or we put it forth as a referendum, if that's even as an option as Commission so desires, but the decision will be made by the Commission as a whole.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Mr. Bailey: Thank you.

Commissioner Slesnick: You had mentioned Granada, but it's Alhambra where the house...

Mr. Bailey: The new construction, yes.

Commissioner Slesnick: But there was a section under annexation that was like two blocks long between Mainada and...

Commissioner Keon: It's like right in back of...

Commissioner Slesnick: By the canal that was...

Commissioner Keon:...the area where ... Sunset Elementary School is, on that section of South Alhambra. It's behind like where...

Mr. Bailey: No. This is almost to US-1.

Commissioner Keon: That's what she said.

Mr. Bailey: It's five or six houses away from US-1.

Commissioner Keon: On South Alhambra?

Mr. Bailey: On South Alhambra, yes.

Commissioner Keon: Wasn't that a house they just redid and I think it had a metal roof on it and they probably were allowed to replace it with what it was?

Mr. Bailey: I don't know if it had a metal roof or not.

Commissioner Keon: OK.

Mayor Cason: We'll look into that.

Commissioner Keon: I think I know the one you're talking about.

Commissioner Lago: Like I mentioned before, we'll get to the bottom of it, but let's not get away from the main topic. The main topic is, you know, the sustainable aspects and the qualities in metal roofs that are more beneficial to the end user, like yourself. And we'll get to the bottom and we'll present something.

Mr. Bailey: Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you.

Commissioner Lago: All right. Thank you. I appreciate it.

George Volsky: Mr. Mayor ...

Mayor Cason: Yes, of course.

Mr. Volsky: George Volsky, 1008 Alhambra Circle. I believe that this is an issue which has been discussed ad nauseam for over the years, and I agree with Commissioner Lago; that it ought to be discussed and accepted with greatest leeway possible. I wouldn't even go into the issue of making exceptions for historical buildings. I think most of you know that every historical building in Europe almost everyone, in Paris, virtually all houses are covered with other brass or plum or whatever; Cathedrals, and these are historical buildings. So, there's no reason to make many exceptions of it. I think aesthetics is the key, not historical. I imagine all of you have seen the movie "To Catch A Thief," where you see Gary Grant walking on and almost slipping on the actual metal in a palace somewhere in... So in other words, this is it all over. It's costly. I wish I could put metal roof on my house, but it's very costly. People want to pay the money -- I mean, pay for it, fine, but as little exceptions as possible. This accrue to the benefit and to the longevity of houses, because the greatest vein of houses in Coral Gables are leaks, and this will prevent leaks, and I don't know that...I think all of you are here sitting here and you live here have had a leak, and there sometimes they are so incredible, you cannot find them, but they still leak and leak, and metal coverage of a house will prevent it. Thank you.

Mayor Cason: Thank you, George. All right, let's move on to G.-1. This is a resolution amending resolution 3021 by revising...

Vice Mayor Quesada: I'm sorry to interrupt you. I just don't know where we ended up there. So, staff is going to come back to us?

Commissioner Lago: What do you want to do?

Vice Mayor Quesada: I'm wide open. I'm always willing to have conversation on any topic you guys want to discuss. So absolutely, if you want to have the discussion...

Commissioner Lago: Commissioner Slesnick.

Commissioner Slesnick: In your thousand-page booklet...

Commissioner Lago: For you. I brought it for you.

Commissioner Slesnick: Thank you. I have enough reading. Thank you.

Mayor Cason: I read most of it.

Commissioner Slesnick: Why did it not come to the Commission at that time? Is there any research in there?

Commissioner Keon: It was public outcry.

Vice Mayor Quesada: The last time we had a discussion was four years ago.

Mayor Cason: Four years ago.

Vice Mayor Quesada: And it came to Commission.

Mayor Cason: Came to the Commission and it was not approved.

Vice Mayor Quesada: And it did not pass at that time.

City Attorney Leen: And my recollection, I don't think it was an actual ordinance. It was just there was no direction from the Commission.

Vice Mayor Quesada: The Commission chose not to move forward.

City Attorney Leen: Chose not to proceed.

Mayor Cason: We can get the transcript for that item.

Commissioner Lago: This is why I'm requesting, through the City Manager, to take these 1,000-plus pages and really condense it to maybe...

Vice Mayor Quesada: To like 990.

Commissioner Keon: Right. We could make a book on tape for Vice Mayor Quesada.

Commissioner Lago: And just something real simple, and that's so that it can be disseminated to the Commission, and then, hopefully, we can have a spirited conversation in reference to metal roofs, because I would like to do that, if possible.

Mayor Cason: Yeah.

Commissioner Lago: Even if we have another vote and the vote is no, but at least we had the vote, which is the keys to democracy, in my opinion.

City Attorney Leen: Procedurally, you would make a policy decision whether you want to look into that. It would then have to be drafted. It would go to the Planning & Zoning Board and then it would come to you because it's a zoning change, essentially.

Mayor Cason: But you could come back in a future meeting and bring us the elements that we need to know why copper versus non-copper.

Commissioner Lago: And that's why...

Mayor Cason: Why historic.

Commissioner Lago: ...once the City Manager stated, "Look, we're ready to go in three months, two months," whatever the time frame is, "we've reviewed the documents," I will move forward with staff and hopefully try to educate everyone on this Commission, along with myself, what other municipalities are doing, what the exact longevity numbers are, how it's really more sustainable, what the true benefits are of having this product, and then we'll see if it falls in line, like what Mr. Volsky said. In Europe, when you see historic buildings, there's metal roofs everywhere.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yeah, but...

Commissioner Lago: No, but...

Vice Mayor Quesada: When you go to Paris and you look at that, they've had those copper roofs for centuries.

Commissioner Lago: You know what...

Vice Mayor Quesada: That's part of the skyline. That's part of what it is. It's not the case here. So, I understand what he's saying. I didn't think about it from that perspective, but at the same time, it's a different aesthetic character.

Commissioner Lago: And that's why I put two caveats, and that was, number one, non-Mediterranean, non-historic.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Commissioner, I am absolutely open to having a further conversation on it when we had time to digest a little bit more.

Commissioner Lago: I'm not going to make you read this, I promise.

Vice Mayor Quesada: I will, I'll read it.

Commissioner Lago: Here.

Mayor Cason: So, I think staff has instruction to come back when you can condense this. Let us know appropriate areas, how many homes have them now, whether that particular home was approved or not, and then we have some more elements for a discussion.

Commissioner Lago: Yeah.

Mayor Cason: OK.

Commissioner Lago: Perfect. Thank you.