

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1 and 2-1
June 12, 2018
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

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

City Staff

City Manager, Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Walter J. Foeman
Deputy City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Public Works Director, Ed Santamaria

Public Speaker(s)

Karelia Martinez Carbonell, Historic Preservation Association of Coral Gables

Agenda Item H-1[6:05:21 p.m.]

H-1: Update on the status of the historic White Way streetlights

2-1: A Resolution accepting the recommendation of the Historic Preservation Board to the City Commission that the City acquire all 77 sites along University Drive and Riviera Drive (Historic Preservation Board vote: 7-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: OK. Update on the status of the historic White Way streetlights, time certain 9 o'clock in the morning.

Commissioner Lago: Please come up. I want to say thank you for being here all day.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But you've enjoyed it, right?

Commissioner Lago: You are incredible, especially with the efforts that you've done in regards to the white way lights. I want Mr. Santamaria to give a quick update, but then I also want you to share the great news this Commission in regards to what you have found recently, which is

something that is going to amaze this Commission. This is some news that is going to bring a smile to your face. Yes, I think Chelsea was going to have staff put the photos up on the PowerPoint presentation. Here you go, look at this. Why don't you explain what's going on here.

Ms. Carbonell: At the last Commission meeting when I presented on the white way lights, Mr. Tucker Gibbs came over after the presentation and he said, you know, I saw that you presented on these lights and did you know that there are exact lights in Fort Lauderdale and I mean, I was taken by surprise, and I really didn't believe him, so he showed me pictures.

Vice Mayor Quesada: That's Fort Lauderdale?

Commissioner Lago: That's Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Carbonell: That's Fort Lauderdale.

Commissioner Lago: And, not only are the lights in Fort Lauderdale, those are the best examples even better than we have in Coral Gables, because they have the actual top. They are in perfect shape.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: They stole them from us.

Vice Mayor Quesada: How did we find them?

Commissioner Lago: She went up there.

Ms. Carbonell: It was serendipitous with Tucker. He had a client that lives in this little enclave off of 9th Avenue on Davie Boulevard and I was stunned. So, I made the trip and as you can see they are our lights, they are lights from our 500 original commission lights. They are basically a very good rendition of what these lights look like, better than what we have here in our City, which...this is the original...and they have the original top. They are obviously – they do need to be restored, but anyway, there are ten lights that are in Fort Lauderdale. I showed Commissioner Lago, at this point we basically found ten original lights. How they got there we don't know. We don't know if it was from scrap, we don't...we don't know why the City didn't keep them. At this point, I think the next step is and Tucker Gibbs recommended this as well, because maybe officially we should contact the City Mayor, because I think our purpose is to reclaim them.

Commissioner Lago: That's the conversation we had in my office last week.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We are going to steal them.

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Quesada: We are not stealing them. We are getting them back, they were stolen from us.

Commissioner Lago: Maybe Dona, we could kind of put together a letter, a formal letter and the Mayor and the Commission can sign it, we can all sign it. This is a proud moment. This is part of our history.

Ms. Carbonell: Yes. Yes.

Commissioner Lago: And, we can send it to the Mayor and then we could follow up with a phone call saying, hey, can we trade? - can we offer a trade? Something symbolic, we'll figure out a way.

Ms. Carbonell: It should be in good faith and in goodwill. So, I feel like we can make a case that these are ten of our 500 original.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli; Do you know how they got there?

Ms. Carbonell: I don't know how they got there, but as I know the history as far as the FPL relationship with the City. I don't know how long they've had them. Tucker Gibbs saw them maybe two years ago, but it seems like they've been there for many years, but what I love about it is those are the lights. They are not silver, they don't have that globe on top, whatever, they look like Fort Lauderdale.

Commissioner Lago: Great work.

Ms. Carbonell: So that's the discovery. So, I'm asking hopefully to move forward with some official correspondence.

Commissioner Lago: I want to get a little bit of a resolution or something moving forward from this Commission saying, let's move forward in that direction so that we can reach out to Fort Lauderdale.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's a great idea, yes.

Commissioner Lago: Is the Commission in favor of that?

Commissioner Keon: I think we should make a resolution to direct the Manager.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I think the Mayor should write the letter.

Ms. Carbonell: Yes. I think it should be Mayor to Mayor.

Commissioner Lago: That's what I said. Maybe Dona could help us add some history to it and have it come from the Mayor and the Commission. So moved.

Public Works Director Santamaria: If I may, Mr. Mayor and members of the Commission, for the record, Ed Santamaria, Director of Public Works. We've been looking into this item, since it was brought to our attention by Mr. Tucker Gibbs and by Karelia and by Dona. We have found out that these lights are located on a private street.

Commissioner Mena: On where?

Public Works Director Santamaria: On a private street. And, they are subject to an outdoor lighting agreement that appears to date back to 1974. Just for reference, the white way lights were, I believe, designated historic in 1978.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What, I'm sorry?

Public Works Director Santamaria: Just for record, the white way lights, I believe, were designated historic in 1978. So, this outdoor lighting agreement that exist from 1974 indicates to me that those lights have been there since 1974. How they got there, we don't know, but we are looking into the possibility of acquiring through FPL, but it may involve a private entity, is what I'm trying to say. So, we can reach out to elected officials in Fort Lauderdale, but at the end of the day this may be...

Commissioner Mena: Who are the parties to the lighting agreement?

Public Works Director Santamaria: We haven't been able to ascertain that as of yet. This is all we know. So, we are still working with FPL to try to reach out.

Commissioner Lago: We should reach out to the Mayor, get their buy-in and that's why I said in the beginning. I said we should have Dona give a thorough explanation of why these lights are so important to the City and educate those individuals who again, have no clue what they have in their backyard potentially.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So, I'm happy to work with Dona and Karelia, anyone that wants to get involved in this initiative to see if we can move it forward.

Commissioner Mena: I think what you are saying, if I'm hearing you correctly is that the Mayor of Fort Lauderdale may not have any say in where these lights go.

Public Works Director Santamaria: That's correct.

Commissioner Mena: Its worth reaching out.

Commissioner Lago: It's a courtesy reach out. Again, we are dealing with a private entity, but at least it's a courtesy. Maybe we can get someone to buy-in and say hey, send a letter to FPL, say help our fellow city return something in good faith.

Public Works Director Santamaria: Once we find out who the party is that is paying for these lights in this outdoor lighting agreement, then we can probably determine as to the best way of approaching it. That's just my suggestion.

Commissioner Lago: Let's do that too.

Ms. Carbonell: Well, I kind of feel like one of those archeological discoveries where it would be nice to bring them back and definitely we should make the biggest effort to bring them back, because they say Coral Gables. They are our lights. They were commissioned by Coral Gables. I thank whoever bought them, because they have kept them in some form they are the artifact of what they did look like.

Commissioner Lago: I made a motion. I made a motion, so I'm waiting for...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Everybody in favor say aye.

All: Aye.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Opposed.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So, we are happy to continue our investigation into these lights.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Wacky circumstance, but it's good.

Commissioner Lago: You like that story.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes.

City Attorney Ramos: Mr. Mayor 2-1 is related to white way lights, you may want to take it now – white way lights.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: How did you find them?

Ms. Carbonell: Tucker Gibbs.

Preservation Officer Spain: And he's had the images on his phone. He came over to me during the Commission meeting – very strange.

Commissioner Lago: That's awesome.

Preservation Officer Spain: Very quickly. The Historic Preservation Board is recommending through the City Commission that they acquire all the 77 sites. There was a discussion at the Commission level about possibly doing University Drive or whatever. So, I took that to the Historic Preservation Board and they are recommending that all 77 sites be acquired from Florida Power and Light. Restore the ones that are in disrepair, we add the ones that we have in the equipment yard and then we do a mold of the lights and do that. So that's all this is, it's a companion piece to Ed's.

Commissioner Keon: I'll move it.

Commissioner Lago: Second.

Public Works Director Santamaria: So for the record, I did distribute a restoration plan. It's a thumbnail sketch of what we are going to be doing over the next few years, beginning of next year. If you'd like I can go through it, if not, you can review it on your own and ask questions if you would. So, I'm happy to do whatever the Board would like me to do at this time.

City Attorney Ramos: There is a motion and a second on 2-1.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

Vice Mayor Quesada: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Commissioner Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

[End: 6:15:35 p.m.]