

# CORAL GABLES

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

## Special Property Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Monday | October 22, 2018 | 11:30 a.m.

| PAB MEMBERS                 | J   | F   | M   | A   | M   | J   | J   | A   | S   | O   | N   | D   | APPOINTING ENTITY              |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------------------|
|                             | '19 | '19 | '19 | '19 | '19 | '19 | '19 | '19 | '19 | '18 | '18 | '18 |                                |
| Alberto Manrara             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | P   |     |     | Mayor Raúl J. Valdés-Fauli     |
| Jonathan Leyva              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | P   |     |     | Commissioner Michael Mena      |
| Jack Lowell                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | P   |     |     | Commissioner Patricia Keon     |
| Valerie Quemada             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | P   |     |     | Commissioner Vince Lago        |
| Tony Gonzalez               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | P   |     |     | Vice Mayor Frank Quesada       |
| Edmund Mazzei               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | P   |     |     | City Manager Swanson-Rivenbark |
| Andrea Molina<br>Vice Chair |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | P   |     |     | City Commission as a Whole     |

A = Absent    E = Excused Absence    P = Present    X = No Meeting    Ph = Present by Phone    - =Former Board Member

### STAFF AND GUESTS:

Mayor Raúl Valdés-Fauli, City of Coral Gables  
City Manager Peter J. Iglesias, City of Coral Gables  
Fire Chief Marcos de la Rosa, City of Coral Gables  
Pamela Fuertes, Director, Economic Development Department  
Leonard Roberts, Assistant Director, Economic Development Department  
Mariana Price, Administrative Assistant, Economic Development Department

### Meeting Motion Summary:

**A motion to recommend the purchase of the property at 7000 Old Cutler Road for \$4 million (\$1.5M towards the purchase of the park, \$2.5M towards purchase of the house), with terms and conditions favorable to the City as can be negotiated, and for the Commission to consider the intangible values this site represents in additional compensation, passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 vote against.**

Mr. Manrara brought the meeting to order at 11:34 a.m.

Mr. Manrara announced the purpose of the meeting, which was to revisit a decision made in May relevant to a property the City has been considering purchasing for the purpose of creating a fire station. On May 9, 2018 the deal terms were originally presented to the board, and although this board had a thorough discussion and evaluation of the circumstances around the purchase, the Mayor, City Manager (CM) and Fire Chief believe this property has some unique characteristics that make it an ideal and incomparable location for a fourth fire station for the City, hence requesting the board to reconsider their original motion. The original motions were as follows: A

motion to recommend the purchase of the property located at 7000 Old Cutler Road as Fire Station IV, with respect to the proposed deal terms with a price not to exceed \$3 million, along with a two-year, nontransferable lease to the current owner passed unanimously; and, a motion recommending that one alternate site be suggested by the Fire Department that would fit within the budget and given criteria passed unanimously. The City's current offer on the table to the owner of 7000 Old Cutler Road is \$4 million.

Mayor Raúl Valdés-Fauli spoke before the board and said he wanted to bring to their attention more factors for reconsideration of their recommendation. He noted the importance of having a fire station in the area of that property, pointing to Cocoplum, Edgewater, Gables Estates, and other areas that would benefit from the addition of the fire station. Mayor Valdés-Fauli said it was the only lot the City considered that does not flood. More importantly, during the event of a hurricane it would not flood. The intention with the purchase is to retrofit the house currently there and to build a smaller fire truck storage area. The southwest structure would be used as a dormitory with no more than seven firefighters at a given time. The Mayor said the City has looked at 15 alternatives to this lot and has found none that are adequate for this purpose. He also said he dismissed the three appraisals related to the acquisition saying that the comparables could not be accurate because there truly are no comparables, asking, "What is the value of a fire station in terms of lives saved, of providing rescue services during times of emergency?" The Mayor said this is not just about a property purchase—it's about life, safety, fire rescue, the high elevation level that makes the property impervious to flooding, and a lack of true comparables. He also noted that a park would be added for the enjoyment of the residents and neighbors, and would include restrooms. Access for the fire trucks would be made on both Sunset Drive and Old Cutler. The Mayor closed by respectfully requesting the board to reconsider their decision.

City Manager Peter Iglesias added to the Mayor's comments, pointing to a map of the area around 7000 Old Cutler Road, and saying that the property is at an elevation of 18 feet above sea level. On the map, circles denoting 1.5 mile radii were drawn around the City's three current fire stations in the commercial district, Riviera, and further south. When Hurricane Irma came in, he said, this property was not included in the evacuation zone because of its elevation. It has access to LeJeune, Old Cutler, and Sunset Drive, three main thoroughways in that area of Coral Gables. CM Iglesias said it would be key in covering all of Coral Gables for response times. He said the Chief's response time is under six minutes for fire or other emergencies, however if there's traffic involved, there's not much the Chief can do, especially on those roads. CM Iglesias pointed out the overlap of some of those circles, which showed redundancy of coverage in those spaces, and the addition of this fire house would close the gap between existing fire stations. He said the City looked at 15 different properties for this purpose. He reassured the Board that the Chief is used to operating in residential areas. After all, most of the City's fire stations are in residential areas. The only time Mr. Iglesias would imagine that the Chief would need to use sirens is during rush hour. He praised the Fire Department for doing a good job only using lights and not using sirens during the early hours of the morning (when traffic is not an issue). He emphasized the value of having a fire station site that can be active after a hurricane. CM Iglesias closed by saying this is a unique site located in a unique area that is centrally located as far as the needs from a public service perspective.

Fire Chief De La Rosa elaborated on comments made by the Mayor and City Manager, saying

the reason for how the City got here was because it had a “response challenge,” pointing out that between the Riviera and Fire Station on US-1 there is almost a five-mile span. Traditionally, for EMS (Emergency Medical Services) and Fire services, however, the goal is to be within a 1.5-2 mile radius. The structure that will house the fire trucks will look like a two-car garage. The Fire Chief told the board that with the other fire stations, they have always managed to coexist peacefully among surrounding neighbors and not impact their quality of life.

The Mayor added that the three appraisal reports were not a true reflection of the value the site has to the City for Public Safety. The City Manager said the State would provide a \$1.5 million grant towards the purchase of a combined park/fire station use. Mr. Mazzei said the board agreed this was a great site for the fire station. Ms. Quemada asked for the opinions of the neighbors, to which the City Manager said that would be the next step. Mr. Roberts said the Budget Advisory (4-1) and Economic Development (unanimously) Boards voted in favor of the acquisition. Mr. Lowell asked for a description from the Chief to explain the value of this site from \$3M to \$4M of what makes this site so unique. The Mayor answered that what he [Mr. Lowell] was asking for was exactly what the City was currently bringing before the board.

Ms. Molina asked about the 15-16 properties that the City considered and said she was sent only seven. Regarding the point that the 7000 Old Cutler site was being considered for its elevation, she argued what good it would do if all the other properties flooded if the trucks would be trapped there anyway. Mr. Roberts answered that they looked at city-owned property, private property, and open spaces. Ms. Molina pointed out that if the City was willing to pay a premium for the site, then there were probably several other potential sites that would be willing to sell for a premium. The Chief offered that he and Mr. Roberts had approached the Riviera Church on Sunset Drive for their adjacent parking lot that the City currently leases, but they [the Church] were not interested in selling. Ms. Molina reemphasized the importance of having another property for consideration even if only as a negotiation tool, saying that there would probably be many interested sellers for a premium.

Mr. Manrara also pointed out his concern for the availability of the site since the seller is requesting a two-year lease period before he surrenders the property entirely. CM Iglesias said once the City takes over the site, the City has to provide the drawings to turn it into a residential-type fire station, and the Chief can mitigate any issues in the short-term. Mr. Manrara asked if there was a chance the park would never come to fruition to which the City Manager reassured him it was part of the grant requirement. Mr. Manrara then asked about whether or not the City responds to the areas in the circles (drawn around the fire stations) that are *not* within city limits. Chief De La Rosa answered that the City only responds to areas within the City limits.

Ms. Quemada asked what the last terms on the table for negotiation were. Mr. Roberts responded that the City initially offered the owner \$1.3M, and through authorization from the previous City Manager then subsequently increased the offer to \$3M, \$3.5M, and then \$3.7M when the initial offer was rejected, then finally offered \$4M in the last discussion. CM Iglesias told the board that the City stands behind this offer because of the considerable intangibles of this site, including access from different streets, proximity to difficult-to-reach areas, elevation, and obscurity from view.

The City Manager, Mayor, and Fire Chief excused themselves from the meeting in order to allow the board members to more freely discuss their concerns. Mr. Manrara stated the existence of the park is reasonably assured. He acknowledged that it is troubling that the present owner wants to hold onto the property for a few more years. Ms. Quemada added the concern that the property could potentially be cheaper in two years if the market changes. Mr. Roberts told the board that the City would have access to the property immediately, but that rezoning the property would require a four-fifths vote from the City Commission. He also added that the City will call a neighborhood meeting, inviting all residents within a 1,500 feet radius of the property. If even a single residence within a homeowners association falls within that radius, then the entire association would receive an invitation to the neighborhood meeting as well. Based on the vote made at that neighborhood meeting, the prospect would be brought back to Commission. Mr. Roberts also told the board that in past park acquisition deals, the City has noticed a trend that the closest residents are more likely to be opposed to passive parks, but mid-range residents are typically for it. Therefore with this case, the City will give more weight (of the vote) to the residents who are closest.

Mr. Mazzei asked if the residual property, after subtracting \$1.5M for the park, was worth \$2.5M. Board members generally agreed, citing the two appraisals from Blazejack and Maggenheimer. Mr. Roberts stated that no other sites have the 16,000 SF that would enable the City to acquire a park adjacent to the fire station and therefore make the City eligible for the State grant to acquire a park. Mr. Roberts further added that the City still does not have a signed contract, for which there would be a 60-day due diligence period. The property under consideration would be called Fire House IV, and the house would be retrofitted for personnel sleeping quarters. The City plans on retaining the 136 trees around the house.

**Mr. Lowell made a motion to recommend the purchase of the property for \$4M with allocation of \$1.5M to the park, \$2.5M to the house, with terms and conditions favorable to the City as can be negotiated, and for the Commission to consider the intangible values this site represents in additional compensation. Mr. Gonzalez seconded the motion. The motion passed with 6 votes in favor and 1 vote against.**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mariana Price, Administrative Assistant - Economic Development Department