

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-1
September 10, 2019
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

City Commission

**Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors**

City Staff

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

Public Speaker(s)

**Olga Granda
Michael Eidson**

Agenda Item E-1 [9:25 a.m.]

Personal Appearance by Olga Granda, Artistic Director and CEO to the Sanctuary of the Arts.
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: E-1, personal appearance by Olga Granda, Artistic Director and CEO of Sanctuary of the Arts.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mayor. I put this item today on the Commission because I wanted my colleagues and the residents of the City to become a little bit more aware of something special that's happening here in the City of Coral Gables that's going to really continue to set us apart not only as a city, but also, when we talk about culture because we have so many great theaters. We're doing so many great things with art. And I wanted to bring forward and highlight the work of the Sanctuary of the Arts, which is currently -- she'll give you more information, and I don't want to let too many things out of the bag. But...

Olga Granda: Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'll let her explain. But this is a great opportunity. I'm now sitting on the board. I'm privileged to sit on the board of the Sanctuary of the Arts. So, I want to make that very clear on the record. And I think this is an opportunity for the City to engage in multiple different types of culture; everything from music, to theater. It's going to be in -- for children. It's going to be for children -- for inner-city children who haven't had the opportunity to really learn about music and theater and the arts. So, I'll let Olga take it away, but this is something that their commitment is very deep. It's not only going to benefit the City of Coral Gables, but it's going to benefit Miami-Dade County as a whole, so take it away.

Ms. Granda: So, I have printed versions of the presentation. I don't know if you want them before or after.

Commissioner Keon: Now.

Ms. Granda: Now? Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you. While Olga is passing it out, you know, Olga is a long-time resident of Coral Gables and has worked in different places here in our city, and particularly, with the arts and the Colony Theater over on Miami Beach. So, we are really thrilled to have her here

in our city and offer us a world of knowledge from a young woman, from a different perspective.
Thank you.

Ms. Granda: Thank you, Commissioners, Mayor, Vice Mayor. So, as the two of you just said, my name is Olga Granda. I've pretty much been a lifelong resident of Coral Gables and have had various careers in the arts in Coral Gables, a long time had an antique store on Salzedo Street called Alhambra Antiques Art Gallery. And I have moved into the performing arts. So, I'll dive into our presentation. So, the Sanctuary of the Arts is a -- is meant to be an artist-led institution created for the purpose of healing, empowering and uplifting our community. Our dynamic work challenges the framework and achieves artistic excellence through rigor and process. We emphasize joy, accessibility and growth. And what that all means is that we'll have a lot of different types of performances, which can be music, dance, poetry, visual arts, but also offerings of courses and workshops, both for children and adults in the various arts. So, that's that slide, which is basically our mission. And so, all of our spaces are for transformative expression. And where we're going to do this is -- I'm actually going to skip to two -- is that we've recently signed a lease for the property across the street, which is the First Church of Christ Scientist. It is a beautiful campus that has been there since the early days of Coral Gables. It owes its prominent location to Eunice Peacock, who was a Christian scientist and who insisted on having this prime location in the city. And so, it is a place that's really the crossroads of the City, so it brings together civic engagement, a center of the community...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have a question.

Ms. Granda: Sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I was approached by Mike Eidson...

Ms. Granda: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And his people on this. Is this...

Ms. Granda: This is...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Are you working together with him?

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Ms. Granda: Absolutely.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, good.

Ms. Granda: So, he is the founder of this organization. So, I'll...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Ms. Granda: Go to the next slide.

Vice Mayor Lago: There you go.

Ms. Granda: Which is -- so, Mike Eidson, who is also a resident of Coral Gables, has had his law firm in the City for a very long time, Colson Hicks. They've also been involved culturally in the City for a long time. They restored the Books & Books building and other important cultural anchors here. And so, he's the one who began this vision of trying to have a center like this in the city. And so, the initial funding comes from he and his wife, and they are really the ones who have pushed this project forward. So, let's see. Go back a moment to what else we're going to be doing or what our activity are. So, we intend to produce new work, so while we will invite companies to present things or we will coproduce things that -- plays and works that have been done in the past. They have to have an element of newness to them, so they either have to be reimagined by

new artists or completely conceived as new work. We will train, sustain and uplift artists. We have a commitment to making sure that artists have a place to work professionally in a way that is sustainable, so real jobs, real growth that propels them to really the global scene. We believe that art is for social change. We believe in applying art-making practices for healing and empowering communities. And we believe in the preservation of our community, so that means both in our historic buildings and in the communities that surround them. So, I have a piece about what our values are, which we consider that we are welcoming, collaborative, inspiring, creative, accessible and joyful. And I underscored joyful because we truly believe that art needs to bring joy and beauty. It's -- while we believe in being provocative and the importance of art in that form, we also believe in simply bringing joy and happiness to our community. I made the point about Mike and Margaret. I think he's going to make an appearance here but has maybe got -- also gotten caught up in traffic. The facilities. So, there's already an existing theater, which is what is the historic sanctuary. It has not been in use since 2014, so it's a great way to bring people back into a beautiful building that was just recently designated historic. Ah, Mike.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Ms. Granda: That was recently designated historic. We'll be transforming some of the spaces which were historically the Sunday school rooms of the congregation into education rooms, residencies for artists and our offices. And there's also a very large green space, which you're familiar with as you see it across the way. And there's also the access to some of the City Hall's parking, and we intend to activate that space as well with outdoor performances, activities, et cetera.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: I have a question.

Ms. Granda: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And before you answer it, let me preface it with where I'm going.

Ms. Granda: Sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Who determines what is art and what is to be shown there? And when I became Mayor in 2017, we had an art festival, which was a disaster, and yet, we gave it permission every whatever on Biltmore Way here in front of City Hall. And thank God, I don't think it's going to take place this year again. I -- what if, say, Julio Iglesias -- you know who Julio Iglesias is -- would want to have a concert there. Would that be available for him because he's a popular singer and not an opera singer or whatever? You know where I'm going. I mean, what -- who decides what is art and what's going to go there and...

Ms. Granda: Right. So, several points to my answer. One is that it's not going to be a rental facility. So, it's not going to be somewhere that...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay.

Ms. Granda: People can just call up and we get...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And rent it.

Ms. Granda: You know, they pay a fee and they rent the space, and anybody can do something. We will absolutely maintain territorial control over...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very good.

Ms. Granda: What happens in the space. So, who decides that? It would be a cross between our -- who ends up being our final board as well as the artistic team, so employees that will be hired and advisors to that team. There will be a process of, you know, criteria, credentials of what it is that needs to be met. We've already started working on that in a way. It touches on the slide that

I was speaking earlier about the work being new, the work being relevant to our local community. So, there will be a pretty stringent list of criteria that those...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good to hear that.

Ms. Granda: Artists need to meet. I think Mike's reputation speaks for itself in that he's been chairman of the Arsht Center. He's been chairman of Miami City Ballet for many years or was for many years. And so, every arts institution that he's been apart of has been of the highest quality artistic standards, and we expect to be the same.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Perfect, perfect. I was just wondering, but yeah.

Ms. Granda: So, let me see -- let me just get...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Eidson, you want to say a few words?

Commissioner Mena: Oh, there he is.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mike.

Commissioner Mena: Good morning.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Morning.

Michael Eidson: Thank you. It is a very exciting day for me to do this. I have been involved in the arts for 25 years, in the arts administration. I was executive at the Arsht Center for 10 years. I was the chairman five years, and the Ballet, for nine. More importantly, I took over the Mainly Mozart Concert Series and upgraded it, and took it to the Arsht Center and all over the community here, we've served over 35,000 people in seven years. I was with the Cleveland Orchestra for ten

years with their board. This is a dream that I've been thinking about for years. This is one of the most beautiful spots in the United States that's on this corner. And for years, people have asked me when I would mention something about it, you know, it needs to be used, and it needs to be preserved. And they would say, well, where is it? And I would say, well, it's one of the most beautiful places in Coral Gables. It's on the corner of LeJeune and Anastasia. Well, where...

Ms. Granda: Andalusia.

Mr. Eidson: Is that? Across the street from the Publix parking lot. I don't people are going to ask -- are going to say that anymore. But what we're starting with -- my wife and I have made a gift of one million dollars to this project, which I'm really announcing today because we believe in the arts. We think it's good for the community, for our children, our grandchildren. We want to see all of you there. The answer to your question is, yes, the City, of course, could rent this. We just -- it's a scheduling problem. We'd just work it out. But this is not going to be a dedicated space. This is going to be a state-of-the-art theater, and it's going to -- it has 425 seats right now. There's a second sanctuary. There are other buildings on the property. It's one acre. One little green spot over there. We're already talking to people at the Loft. People are very excited about it that we've talked to. We're already talking about expanding this to another part of Coral Gables to another sanctuary.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautiful.

Mr. Eidson: And I can't divulge where that is right now, but it's going to be exciting. And I think...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That's great.

Mr. Eidson: We'll bring this opportunity to people. And I'd like to say...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And I'm glad you're doing something with it because when I became Mayor in 2017, the former City Manager said -- and we're talking with church people about doing something with that, but they're going 20 or 30 or 40-year certification or whatever. And every six months I asked, well, what about the certification? And they said, no, they're still going at it. And for a year and a half, for however long she was -- you know, while I was Mayor, they were always being certified. So, I'm glad that you certified them and took it over.

Mr. Eidson: Well, I took -- it took a year, okay, when I approached them. And it was a lot of handholding and a lot of assurances that we would respect the tradition there and the history, and we were able to do it. So, we've entered into this...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Beautiful.

Mr. Eidson: Ten-year lease. They seem to be very happy. We've taken them to a lot of concerts so that they could see the quality of what we would do. We won't have drinking there because they don't want it. No smoking, no drinking. I'd like to keep the cuss words out. Lastly, I'd like to say, this was designed, as you know, by Phineas Paist, the architect for Coral Gables who did this building right here. This reflected an optimism at the time that we need now. And we want to make this facility for something that's the highest standards. And we want to educate everybody from the kids to the adults and give them an opportunity. But we want to have a state-of-the-art theater there. And we are not going to be constrained by a dedicated company to just theater. This is going to have dance. This is going to have jazz and lectures. This is going to have creative theater. We want to put on two new plays a year and bring people here and give people an opportunity and nourish the arts. This reflect -- what does it reflect? This was built in 1937 to 1940 and consecrated in 1941. The little sanctuary was consecrated in 1933. You know what we had then? We had the Great Depression. We had two hurricanes that shut down this city and people were looking what? To the future. They were optimistic. With all of that carnage, that's what they saw, and that's what I see in this location. And we're so fortunate to have it. And Pearl Harbor -- this was finished and opened the same year that Pearl Harbor happened. And so, I think

we're all fortunate to have this opportunity, and I'm happy that you gave me a couple of minutes to talk to you about it.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we're very lucky to have you and to have your people and Olga thinking of Coral Gables and doing things for the culture of our people and our City. And thank you very, very much. It was wonderful.

Mr. Eidson: I'm proud of you. It's a great Commission, and I appreciate being here.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: I appreciate...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you...

Vice Mayor Lago: That.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very much. Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you. You want to finish? You want to go over the last few slides?

Ms. Granda: Sure. I'll just go to -- so, one of the plays that we're talking about doing next year is with the Abre Camino Collective, which are Vanessa Garcia and Victoria Collado, who are the women who have written and directed Amparo, which is currently the most successful play ever in Miami. If you haven't gotten a chance to see it, I would encourage you to do so. So, just an example, again, of the level that we're seeking to partner with and to coproduce with. So, Miami's Best but also now, you know, national renowned artists. We intend to be very dedicated to telling the stories of our community and our work, so, through a journal and newsletter that we will be publishing regularly. And then, I'll get to we're hoping to open in December, at the end of the

month, with a market in the green space and performance space and live theater. So, we're also looking to drive, you know, so economic development to the area. As you know, west of LeJeune in the evenings is really not very active. And so many families come to the Holiday Park. It's a beautiful thing the City offers, but there's a limited amount of things that they can do. And so, we're offering that same area and that same community that's already coming out something more. You know, experience music, experience dance and buy some interesting things during that weekend. And so, I just want to close with -- Mike spoke beautifully, but this is another quote that he has said in the past, which is that arts institutions are leaders. They energize neighborhoods, catalyze economic development and nurture new artists. They complete our cultural fabric and they require support.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, Olga. Thank you. Great presentation...

Vice Mayor Lago: So...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And a great project.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you. Can you just tell us for a minute, so everyone realizes your experience, too? You've done this before.

Ms. Granda: I appreciate that.

Commissioner Keon: So, we are fortunate to have someone...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Commissioner Keon: That is experienced and very...

Ms. Granda: Yeah, so...

Commissioner Keon: Very competent.

Ms. Granda: It's really -- it's absolutely my honor to be artistic director of this project. So, I trained to be a dancer here locally and then studied abroad in New York, et cetera. And then after my antique and art dealing career, I was given the project of transforming the Colony Theater on Lincoln Road, with Miami New Drama, under the leadership of Michel Hausmann. That was a venue that was owned by the City of Miami Beach and used maybe 20 days a year because it was just run as a rental venue out of the Convention Center. And so, the City of Miami Beach recognized that this was a venue that this was a venue that could be a cultural institution. And so, they brought in Miami New Drama to make that transformation. And so, I was there helping make that happen for the past almost three years. And we really took it from, you know, something 20 days a year to, by the end, we had 250 events per year. So, based on 365 days, that's a lot of events. It's bringing a lot of people to see great theater, and nationally recognized theater. So, again, the quality needs to be at the top, always bringing the best artists from wherever they are.

Vice Mayor Lago: So...

Commissioner Keon: So, this project is in good hands.

Ms. Granda: Yes, thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Mayor, if I may, just to close out.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: (INAUDIBLE), yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, you know, this is the type of project that is a transformational project for our community. And I'm blessed to serve on the board. And I welcome all of you to get engaged. We've been working on this for probably, what, a few months now, three, four months? And it's been a great road moving forward. We've identified projects -- property, excuse me. We've been working on construction budgets. We're building a board, critical board, as you heard Mike speak. But you know, the future moving forward -- and I've had the pleasure of knowing Olga for probably two decades now when she used to work at Alhambra Antiques -- when she owned Alhambra Antiques, where we ended up buying some of our furniture for our house -- my wife did. The future for this organization, besides doing all this great programming, is going to come at a cost. And I'm -- I don't know if you were going to say it, but I'm...

Ms. Granda: Absolutely.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm going to say it. And that cost is something which is going to bear fruit for this community, and it's going to be a wonderful opportunity for this city to be highlighted all over the United States. As you heard, from the discussions we've had, this is going to be a multimillion-dollar budget a year. Mike has been incredibly generous, making his commitment, as he always has for many, many decades. He's always been incredibly generous, and he's been a leader in the arts, and he's never said no. So, I just want this Commission to be prepared that we'll be presenting to this Commission and to the City in the near future. When we have grant opportunities, I would like to see the Sanctuary of the Arts considered. They will be submitting for those grant opportunities, and any type of options that we may have -- that staff may have to really push this project forward. I think there's a significant economic benefit that's not only going to help the CBD, but I think it's going to help the city as a whole. So, I don't know if you wanted to touch or...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Lago: Highlight that.

Ms. Granda: Yeah. I think particularly for our opening in December there will be an economic development opportunity. I think that there's a chance, if the City can help participate in that, that would help us lower the cost for vendors and participants to be a part of it. And so, if there's any possibility that the City can support that, that would be...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Ms. Granda: Appreciated.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Olga, and thank you, Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Lago: I appreciate it. Thank you.

Ms. Granda: Thank you.