

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-2
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
Assistant Director Economic Development, Belkys Perez

Public Speaker(s)

Mark Trowbridge

Agenda Item I-2 [11:30 a.m.]

A discussion and presentation by Mark Trowbridge, President and CEO of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, on the importance of the community's participation in the 2020 Census.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Keon)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright. We have an 11:30 time certain. I-2. I-2.

City Manager Iglesias: The Chamber and IT will provide a presentation on...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

City Manager Iglesias: Our 2020 Census.

Assistant Director Perez: Good morning, everyone. Belkys Perez, with Economic Development. Mark and I started talking about this issue and the census around June. And it stems from the need to make sure that we do everything in our power to compel our community to fill out and complete the questionnaire. From an Economic Development perspective, the census helps companies decide where they want to expand, where they see the potential to get a higher ROI on their investment. And that's why it's very important for us to -- that everyone gets counted. So, what you're going to see is that Mark will give his presentation as far as the businesses are concerned, and then it will be followed up by Mark Hebert, from IT, who's been working very hard to make sure that the census receives the most accurate information as far as addresses are concerned and even projecting those homes that will be coming online before April 1, 2020. So, without further ado...

Mark Trowbridge: I know.

Marketing and Events Specialist Perez: Mr. Mark.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you so much. Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Morning.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you so much for the invitation to talk with you today about the United States Census 2020. I have a little presentation that we have put together for you that if folks want to direct their attention to the screen and follow along. I had an opportunity yesterday to present before the County's Complete Count Taskforce, which is made up of about 40 different organizational entities to talk a little bit about the business community. And so, I've tailored

today's program to be a bit more focused on Coral Gables and the role that our Chamber is going to play in activating and engaging our local business community. So, Commissioner Keon, I also want to thank you for the opportunity and for putting us on the agenda today. And it will be the Mark Show because first it will be me, and then you will hear much more excitement from Mark Hebert. So, please follow along. So, I think most of you know that the Chamber has a very specific mission here in the community, but we're also part of a coalition of chambers, which is more than a dozen local chambers that come together on significant communitywide issues. And for 2020, obviously, this is coalesced around the census. And you see here a list of many of our coalition partners, fellow chambers, the Miami-Dade Beacon Council, our convention bureau, our hotel association, as well as chambers that go all the way from the Aventura area all the way down to South Dade. So, it's a very large cross-section, each with individual challenges related not only to their business community, but to the census as well. And I am fortunate enough to be the co-chair of that group and so we have made this a top priority. So, our strategic goals that we have for the coalition really is probably what you'll hear Mark talk about, as well as we'll talk about is that, you know, local chambers represent hundreds of thousands of employees who are members of thousands of companies that are members of ours. And so, it's a unique opportunity for us to engage the leadership of these companies, to engage with their employees and that those employees go home and make sure that the census is completed, that their family and their extended family are counted. Previous censuses, going back to 2010 and 2000, really haven't engaged with the business community. And so, I think this time we have a special opportunity to be part of that conversation and planning as well. And obviously, if you look at just the cross-section of Coral Gables, you have businesses, both large and small, including microbusinesses that might be one individual, members of who are -- folks who are members of the Chamber and those that are not, obviously, and representing all types of different types of businesses, and as I mentioned, from the southern tip of our county all the way to the northern border. For most local chambers of commerce, September is the beginning of a new year. It's sort of like back to school. We are back to business, so it's a perfect time to begin talking about this is a priority communitywide and countywide. And the 2020 Census is certainly going to be front and center on our Chamber's agenda and has been for several months. And so, we're honored to be here

today to talk to the entire community that is listening, both on TV and online about how important it is they are counted. So, the census is more than a county exercise, so we'll make a business case. That's what chambers do with our local communities and like we have done with you on many other topics as we have come before the Commission. But it's more than just counting every single resident every ten years. It's an opportunity for us to gather data, for us to know what's going on. If you look at just what the role of the census is, I highlighted for you. It relates to our economy. It relates to allocation of resources, and of course, business decisions that are made each day, including municipal governments. It wasn't that long ago -- and I'm glad that the Vice Mayor is here -- that we were fighting to remind the folks at the MPO, now the TPO, that we were a community of more than 50,000, how critical that benchmark was. Because in the 2010 census, we were under that threshold, and therefore, we were possibly not going to have a seat at a very formidable table. And the City went through a number of exercises to show that we were indeed above that threshold and take our rightful seat, but that's just one situation very tangible that we went through over the last three or four years. In addition, it's all about resource allocation. I think most of you know that we are undercounted in Miami-Dade County. Some would estimate that countywide we may have been undercounted between 25 and 30 percent last census. Many folks who are uncomfortable with filling out those types of forms, may not have access to the Internet, or worse than that, have some fear that filling that out might require potentially some retribution or follow-up. And so, I want to assure folks this is really about counting -- we met with the Department of Commerce and the Census Bureau folks when we were up there for our DC fly-in back in May. And again, there were some unresolved issues about questions, but that has been resolved. And the census, again, very focused on making sure we have a complete and accurate count. So, we did a little back-of-the-napkin math that over a period of ten years, if you take some of the data that says for every person that is not counted, it's about \$1,800 a year in resources that don't flow back into our state. Take that over a ten-year period, you're looking at almost nearly \$20,000. Take that over just Miami-Dade County, undercounting even by 10 percent, you're talking about almost \$6 billion. Take that number for Coral Gables, where I do believe we probably are a higher count than that but still don't get everybody, and that number could equate to 90-plus million over a ten-year period. So, think about that, almost \$10 million a year that we

could have in resources that could flow back into Coral Gables and do so many of the great things that you, as leaders, do. Some of the things that are important programs -- not all of them relate as much to Coral Gables -- but certainly are students who tap into the Pell Grant at the University of Miami and our other university partners is significant. School lunch programs. We have a number of students that are on that in our public schools here, as well as Title I grants to local education agencies and other types of things related to transportation and planning and construction. So, take all of that, we want to have as complete and accurate a count as possible. And then, of course, the final business case is that the census determines our representation. I think all of you know because we have an interface with our local officials, your colleagues, as well as our state and federal officials. It's important that as we now are a state of about 21 million, which is the third-largest state in the union, that happened between the 2010 Census and the upcoming census, but that relates to representation. So, some believe that we may have an additional one to potentially two additional members of Congress that would be part of that count and that would occur shortly after the 2020 Census. So, our voices must be heard and at the loudest decibel level possible. So, how are we going to make this happen? Well, you know, chambers communicate with our members each day. It's something that we do, whether it's an event or an opportunity or a conversation that we are posting. We're asking for feedback. We're in constant communication with our membership. And it's our goal, as I have shared with you, to make that business case to them about how important it is that they not only complete that, but that they are reminding their employees and their employee families to do that. We'll also drill down even further to curated email messages, use of our social media, as well as forums where there are opportunities for engagement. As Belkys mentioned in her opening remarks, we have already brainstormed a number of ideas that may be of benefit, including, hopefully, being able to have a message as part of each of our Commission meetings going forward in 2020, just as a reminder whether it's significant or more passive in approach, letting folks know how important it is they complete those forms. Some of those key messages, again, are around opportunities to get the appropriate resources that are due to us; economic prosperity, representation, data, something that you all have talked about, and I know you'll hear from Mark a little bit about that well -- as what the IT folks are doing and continuing to have a very robust business climate. You know, across

Miami-Dade, as you look at those dozen or so chambers, all of them are going to work together in tandem to ensure prosperity for our employees, their families and the greater community. We're going to drilldown into areas that are often not thought about in terms of garnering support to complete the census. The most undercounted population is children under 4. So, we have daycare centers and Pre-K programs right here in Coral Gables. We'll be talking to our public and private schools, our public charters. Senior living facilities. We have a number of those right here in Coral Gables, and we need to make sure that those folks are being appropriately counted. Work through our colleges and universities. Students are also a very difficult group to count because many of them think they should be counted from where they live. Their family might count them or not because they're at school, and then there's a gap there. Doctors' offices, again, especially where young children may go, pediatricians and other specialists. Professional service firms. Of course, our hotels and hospitality entities. Again, we have a number of those folks here in our community that need to be counted. Our real estate companies, as folks move into the community, and of course, as you heard Belkys mention, every new business that opens its doors in 2020. We do suggest a countywide campaign, but it can be drilled down, obviously, right here to the City Beautiful. We want op-eds by our City Commissioners. I hope some of you may help us pen those that will go into the community newspapers reminding folks why it's important that they fill out those forms and complete an accurate count. Potential events. We've talked about that here in the City where people come together during that time. You'll have things like the farmer's market and other activities where it's great to remind folks of the importance of that. We hope that Coral Gables TV will do a TV segment and promos and opportunities to keep that conversation alive because, as the year goes on, I think people may suffer from some fatigue related to that. But it's important that that process is completed accurately. And of course, asking each of you to talk about it in your town halls and other activities that you may host as a leader of our community. So, what's next? I think you'll hear from Mark, but most importantly, we understand, as the business community, how critical the count is. With your support, your ideas, your enthusiasm, we'll get the most accurate count. And while it's hard to ask for a hundred percent because folks are moving in, moving out, I think that should be our goal. We are a city focused on excellence, and this is an opportunity for us to do excellent work. Thank you very much.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Is it made clear to the public that we're not counting citizens and we're not counting -- we're counting...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: People.

Commissioner Keon: People.

Mr. Trowbridge: Right. We're counting...

Commissioner Keon: We count...

Mr. Trowbridge: Residents.

Commissioner Keon: People.

Mr. Trowbridge: Right.

Commissioner Keon: So, it doesn't make any difference what -- whether you're registered to vote or not, whether you're a citizen of the US or not. Even whether...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: As opposed to (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Keon: You're here legally or not.

Mr. Trowbridge: That is correct.

Commissioner Keon: Is not -- it's every person that lives here.

Mr. Trowbridge: Yeah. I think there is some fear factor, as I had mentioned earlier...

Commissioner Keon: I think there's a very big fear factor.

Mr. Trowbridge: Yeah. And I think there was a lot of rhetoric, so folks were listening to conversations that took place over the last six months. There was a lot of conversation about Supreme Court decisions and conversations that were happening regarding citizenship. The reality is that, you know, our constitution mandates that we count everybody.

Commissioner Keon: Everyone.

Mr. Trowbridge: And that word is not in a little e or big E. It's the word everybody. So, if you're here, we're going to count you. If you're in Miami-Dade County, you need to be counted. If you're in Coral Gables, you need to be counted.

Commissioner Keon: You need to be counted. But we have many people that live here that have come here from countries where they really choose not to engage with their government because...

Mr. Trowbridge: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: It's not always a positive experience, so are hesitant to involve themselves with any government-related anything. Is there a special program that is going to go out or a particular message that's going to go out that will maybe help them understand or encourage people that if you're here, just tell us?

Mr. Trowbridge: Yeah. So, that's a great question.

Commissioner Keon: Only a numbers...

Mr. Trowbridge: You know...

Commissioner Keon: Question.

Mr. Trowbridge: One of the things I think that is interesting about the County's Complete Count Taskforce is that it's a very broad cross-section of...

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely.

Mr. Trowbridge: Community organizations.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Mr. Trowbridge: So, you have chambers of commerce, like us. You have groups that work with veterans, groups that work with the homeless, which is a very difficult...

Commissioner Keon: Absolutely.

Mr. Trowbridge: You have groups that work with student groups. FIU is one of 52 census centers that are part of universities across the country, so we're very fortunate to have an entity like that that's going to help us with that. You know, the census will still be a multistep process, so I think each one of those is an opportunity to assuage some of those concerns and take another shot at it. So, the first thing folks will get is some type of mailer that says it's a-coming, so be on the lookout. I mean, the census is not a small document. It asks a lot more questions than just how many people live in your household. It's a great data-gathering tool. And for us, I think, in Coral Gables, that

uses a lot of that information, we need to continue to push in that direction. Secondly, the Commerce Department will still hire a significant number of enumerators. Now, they will work most diligently in some of those undercounted and known undercounted communities. But in many cases, they will be here in Coral Gables as well because they will find information and pockets where folks have not filled that out. And of course, the online version will be much more robust in 2020 than it was in 2010. And so, I would expect in Coral Gables you'll see a lot more folks that will fill out that form online, but we still have nearly a quarter of this county that don't have direct access or any access to the Internet. So, we have to make sure, to your point, that we're looking where those populations are and that we're making sure that the message is always how important it is that you're counted and that there is no retribution. There is no reason to be fearful. I understand that folks have that fear. I think we've created that, unfortunately. And so, it's our job -- and the Chamber will be part of that as well. But I encourage all of you to carry that message as well because you interact with so many constituents, so many that reach out to you directly or come to your office hours or town halls, and make sure this is on your agenda along with the other items that you're discussing.

Commissioner Keon: And does the libraries -- have you worked with the libraries? Because of all of the computers there, so many people go to the libraries.

Mr. Trowbridge: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: So...

Mr. Trowbridge: So...

Commissioner Keon: They'll be some...

Mr. Trowbridge: Yeah. So, the library is on the Complete Count Committee. And so, what we've done in each one of those subsequent...

Commissioner Keon: They'll maybe...

Mr. Trowbridge: Meetings...

Commissioner Keon: Make a notice of it, okay.

Mr. Trowbridge: Is had conversations on different segments.

Commissioner Keon: Yeah.

Mr. Trowbridge: So, when I presented yesterday, the focus was on millennials.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Mr. Trowbridge: The focus was on the business community, and the focus was on students and student groups. And then the previous one was all on special populations. And so, the next round I know we'll be hearing from some of the other entities where people gather, and I think we have to take those moments to say, by the way, while you're here, it's important that people understand what the census is, but also, why it is, but when is it. And so, this thing rolls out in early 2020 with those initial notifications, and then driving folks to either fill out the form when it arrives or do it early and do it online.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.