

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-1
February 26, 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 Frank Quesada

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Mr. Thompson

Agenda Item G-1 [0:00:00 p.m.]

A discussion regarding illegal activity on 8th Street corridor.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Keon and Commissioner Mena)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We will take now item G...

Commissioner Mena: One.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: 1. G-1, sponsored by Commissioners Keon and Mena.

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Agenda Item G-1 - Discussion regarding illegal activity on 8th Street corridor.

Commissioner Mena: I can give a quick intro. And Commissioner Keon, obviously, if you want to add anything. This was an item -- I'm going to give a little background. Vice Mayor Lago, give or take, two years ago -- maybe a little bit more than that now -- passed an ordinance that essentially prohibited hourly rentals at motels. He also established a joint task force or helped to establish a joint task force with the City of Miami to try to curb prostitution along the 8th Street corridor bordering the City. We recently received several communications from a few residents, particularly, Mr. Thompson who's here today and will have an opportunity to be heard. But I thought it was a good opportunity, A, to get an update on how that's going and how the joint task force is going, how Chief Hudak sort of addressed the issue, and then have a broader discussion about, you know, accessing the status of everything and where we can go from here. So, I think let's start by getting information from everybody and hearing from the key personnel, from the Chief, and then we can go from there. But obviously, Commissioner Keon or Vice Mayor Lago - - I know this was your -- originally your ordinance. If there's something you want to say, please.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. I mean, I have a few points that we can update in regards to the City of Miami leadership and certain things that we've been undertaking recently.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Chief, you want to say a few words, or would you like to listen to -- yeah, okay. Mr. Thompson, you have the floor. And I'm going to give you a time limit of five minutes. We've received 27 emails from you in the last four days, so we are fully, fully cognizant of the issues, the problems. And having lived in Coral Gables for many, many years, the floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Thompson: Thanks.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: You don't have your glasses on.

Mr. Thompson: Oh. I'm old enough that I need two pair.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We all are.

Mr. Thompson: Sunday night, the final Oscar for Best Picture was presented by Julia Roberts, who became an A-list actress with her role in *Pretty Woman*. Only Hollywood could make prostitution cool. Rebuttal is from Donna Gavin, a lieutenant in the Boston Human Trafficking Unit. “Prostitution is not a fairytale. *Pretty Woman* normalizes something that destroys lives. It glamorizes prostitution and creates an illusion that prostitution is a voluntary, desirable occupation.” The film suggests that prostituted people are knowledgeable and have other options they might have chosen. The reality is that prostitution and sex trafficking make up a harmful, pervasive, illegal and violent criminal industry involving pimps, traffickers, who are tied to gangs, drugs and street violence. Lieutenant Gavin continues, “Now is the time to act. We need men and women to speak up for those who can’t speak for themselves. We need to attack this harmful sex industry from all sides by targeting the pimps and the traffickers providing services and exit strategies for those being prostituted and educating and dissuading would-be buyers. We need to dissuade buyers from fueling this industry and hold them accountable when they do.” The best thing Patriots’ owner Bob Kraft has ever done is elevate this issue. The no-tell motels on Calle Ocho have been there for decades. In April 2017, the City of Miami and the City of Coral Gables -- and they’re to be commended -- entered into an anti-prostitution agreement that has resulted -- according to the Chief, with whom I’ve spoken -- in 77 prostitution arrests on 8th Street. But dozens of arrests are not enough. The NFL knows this. That is why it has designated the Women’s Fund of Miami to lead the local effort against sex trafficking during and around the time of the 2020 Super Bowl in Miami. This is a sports league that has a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to the abuse of women. And apparently, Mr. Kraft never got the memo. In his autobiography, Secretary of State Colin Powell addressed the deepening moral depravity of our age writing that “a sense of shame is not a bad moral compass.” Israel’s King David engaged in history’s most famous and consequential sexual immorality. It led to murder. King David, when confronted by Nathan, was ashamed and he repented. Ruth Graham, the wife of Reverend Billy Graham once said, “If God does not deal with American sexual immorality then he owes an apology to Sodom

and Gomorrah.” Experts estimate that worldwide 40 million people are slaves, millions of them enslaved by the sex trafficking industry, a third of whom are children. There are more slaves today on this planet than any time in world history. America’s bloodiest war was over slavery. What then must the City do which it is not doing? It must address the demand side of this tragedy by arresting johns like Bob Kraft and then publishing their names. Kraft was so brazen that he was pulled over, according to this article in today’s Miami Herald, which is accurate that he was pulled over on January 19 upon leaving the spa by the police. He gave them his driver’s license and he returned the next day for more sex, unafraid of the consequences. As to the supply side, the managers of these properties must be arrested, just as the on-site spa managers in the Bob Kraft sting have been arrested. And the owners of these brothels must be arrested. We cannot allow them the ridiculous dodge uttered by the character played by Claude Rains in Casablanca who says, “I’m shocked to learn that there’s gambling going on in this establishment.” The massage parlor spas up the coast have been shuttered by the police. And ladies and gentlemen, if you go to the Florida Secretary of State corporations website, you can find the names of the owners of these brothels on 8th Street. Coral Gables must take more seriously, third, the mutual 2017 agreement, which authorizes not just arrests, but the closing, seizure and forfeiture of these brothel properties. Just give me 30 more seconds.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, sir. Finish up.

Mr. Thompson: You have this power under Florida’s nuisance laws and under the anti-racketeering statutes. And this would be just as these forfeitures of real properties worth millions of dollars on 8th Street would rightly help fund the Coral Gables Police Department.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

Mr. Thompson: That’s it?

Commissioner Mena: I would like to hear...

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: From Chief Hudak...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: As well, to...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Police Chief Hudak: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good morning.

Police Chief Hudak: The Southwest 8th Street Corridor, for as long as I've been here, has always had the same situational components of a criminal element, no different than it is today. As is everything in our statistical analysis of what it is, everything is going in the downward trend. The interlocal agreement that we entered in 2017 gave us the ability to not only do these proactive work, but also patrol both sides of the street. Something that was a common occurrence on the midnight shift was that the people that were either looking for or providing an illegal service was on the north side of 8th Street, out of our jurisdiction. Part of the interlocal agreement also gives us the ability to not only go and make arrests and encounter not just these criminals, but other criminals out there to help before it gets in our city. We have continued to focus on the north end. We try and do it with consistency and the concerns for the residents who live there, not necessarily the ones that have contacted us to complain about what they've seen, which we see on a regular basis. But you know, if we put signs up -- and we put them up from time to time all the time -- you're entering into a high-crime area. The criminal element doesn't live in this city, never really has for the historical parts of it. So, we do a lot of proactive undercover work that has not changed.

We continue to do that. I am not going to go into detail about what we do. The (INAUDIBLE) ordinance that Mr. Thompson has referred to as well was this Commission body gave us an additional tool to actually cite the one hotel that is within our jurisdiction. Now, depending on what you all decide and what the voters decide, you know my position in talking with the Manager that I want to square off the city. I understand that if we square off the city at annexation, we bring in additional hotels. We will be prepared to do that. We work -- and Mr. Thompson referred to the 77 arrests. We participated in 55 of those arrests, not all for prostitution. In following what the State Attorney, Katherine Rundle's initiative, this is kind of like our homeless situation, where homeless people are not a problem. I've always said they're people with problems. Prostitutes, people that are doing that, both male and female, aren't necessarily out there for the money. They're out there because, as we're seeing now, the disturbing trend, as referenced today, was the human trafficking, which is why, when personnel allowed, I have assigned, in 2018, we've assigned a detective part-time to the countywide human trafficking taskforce. That not only gives us the ability to participate outside of our jurisdiction -- the person's cross-designated as the state attorneys, but it also gives us those resources to find out what it is. Our focus from the criminal element is obviously to stop the supply and the demand, which would be the johns, but further, to use our assistance in the economic crimes statewide -- excuse me, countywide taskforce to go after the people that are funding it because we are finding cases throughout where the people that are providing these illicit services to these buyers are not necessarily there because they have no other option. The streets, a lot of the times -- and it's very cyclical on paydays. You will see an uptick. And the growing pains of the department have been I need time to train some of our younger officers in the art of undercover work. And you can take that for what it's worth. I mean, that's what we're strategizing on, but we do have a system going forward. We do work well with the City of Miami. They can't run back and forth. And I've been out there myself. We have been proactively working with the City Attorney's Office, with Code Enforcement, with our undercovers. I have been resolutely quiet on responding to emails because I did not want to converse with you all in a public forum of what our tactics are for officer safety and also, just not to let everybody know when we're going to be out there. So, overall, I'm -- I'll open up for questions, the last "prostitution" arrests for prostitution that we made were college students that

were working not necessarily on 8th Street. It was a proactive undercover operation. We will continue to work those with our Special Investigations Section. Major Molina and Lieutenant Lemon -- Lieutenant Lemon is the commander of the Special Investigations Section. Major Molina is the over -- (INAUDIBLE). That's who handles it. We have started training some of our newer officers, both male and female. I will tell you some of the issues is they may be renting for an entire day. But what we realize and when we saw the slight uptick in 2018 was when the Backpage app was taken down, people stopped trying to meet like that. So, in a technology-laden society, that's how they're meeting. So, if I rent a room for an entire day, I can provide services and have people meet there. And we know that has happened within the last three weeks, and that's what we continue to see. When they venture into our neighborhoods, I can tell you from both the midnight shift officers, the neighborhood safety aide security guard that we have, they are quick to encounter our police officers. So, even if you look at some of the other issues that have happened, they may go north if they want to go away. They don't like coming into Coral Gables because they realize that we are going to be over them. We are deploying technology. We have cameras; we have partnerships. The neighborhood team leader has entered into a partnership with Kindred Hospital for parking spaces and also kind of like a little substation. I don't want to say it's a substation per se, but it's an area where the officers can go for that visibility. It will have signage up from time to time. When I tell you that we have deployed a motorcycle unit on 8th Street and Le Jeune to work those areas as well, as well as our license plate reading technology that we have is coming along. So, I believe the holistic approach has been ongoing. We haven't really made much modifications to that other than the fact that because we were so young as a department, we kind of had to turn to the City of Miami in doing these joint prostitution sting details. We have a different tactic of how to deal with our hotel and we will continue to do that and work with the state -- with the City Attorney, the State Attorney's Office and our Justice Advocate Program who handles all of our seizures. So, with that, I'll answer any questions.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Chief. Are there questions from the Chief?

Commissioner Mena: I had a question for him, yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Go ahead.

Commissioner Mena: So, you know, as sort of the macro level issues and the micro, right, so I think Mr. Thompson, I think, raises, I think, fair questions about what more can we be doing from a high level and from our position to help improve this. On the micro level, we're talking about your operations and your arrests and what you're doing everyday on the street. So, I wanted to ask you -- and I don't mean this as a criticism, but 77 arrests, it doesn't seem like a lot. If you operate from the perspective of -- or the assumption this is going on every night in this area, right...

Police Chief Hudak: Right, so...

Commissioner Mena: And then my question -- I guess my question for you is, how do we improve that? How do -- you know, what can you -- what resources can we provide you to try to address this a little more aggressively?

Police Chief Hudak: Well, I think...

Commissioner Mena: Or do you think that that...

Police Chief Hudak: I think this is...

Commissioner Mena: What's your interpretation of that number, I guess, is my question.

Police Chief Hudak: So, here's the interpretation of that number. And this is kind of how a sting operation works.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Police Chief Hudak: We go out first as predominant males, okay. Once we are solicited or once the officers are solicited, that arrest takes place. We then replace the females or males that are walking the streets with our people and then we continue as it comes up to make those arrests. I'm going to be very honest with you. It is not something that is very flippantly done because, from an officer safety standpoint and having been on these, the takedown of an individual person whose life flashes in front of them when they're doing that, very desperate things can happen and I've seen it firsthand over the years. So, that number is reflective of the 77 arrests that we see. There is not a lot of street walking, so to speak, that you've seen in the past.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Police Chief Hudak: I think some of the prostitution issues that we have seen, because of the influx of apps as they meet each other on Backpage or the old -- not the old Backpage -- Sellit, which is like Craigslist, things like that, or Meet Me Here, I will tell you, last Sunday night from Monday, the holiday, I was literally in front of Wishes Motel on a traffic stop and a woman and a man pulled up in an Uber, got out, walked past us and went into the Wishes Motel. I can't think of any legal reason that I or my officers would have had to stop that -- those two...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Police Chief Hudak: Individuals and go in there. So, the issue of how we, as the police department, attacks that, I don't see anything other than what we're doing right now. So, the numbers are really, you know, congruent on what we're doing at the time, but it's not the walking that I saw 15, 20 years ago. How we get into the hotel rooms, if you will, to see what's going on is a whole -- you know, our hands are so tied at that situation. I believe our current course of conduct that this body laid out through the ordinance is exactly what we need to do. And I won't go into too much detail, but I will tell you I'm very confident that that process is playing itself out.

Commissioner Mena: Are we -- without asking you to disclose anything that you wouldn't want to...

Police Chief Hudak: Right.

Commissioner Mena: Disclose, but to try to address the issue that, you know, perhaps a given hotel or motel is still operating in violation of the ordinance, how do you contend with that? I mean, is that like a matter of calling in or...

Police Chief Hudak: Well, again, I think there is obviously surveillances of what we can do.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Police Chief Hudak: We have a business owner, Mr. (INAUDIBLE), who is there across the street. When people know they're being watched, they kind of understand. But then again, if I had a video camera on what I saw the other night, there's nothing...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. There's nothing you can do on that.

Police Chief Hudak: That we can do if they have a legal contract, attacking these issues like that. Now, short of us -- which is a possibility is to set up our own brothel, which is expensive. You know, that's not something that I'm in favor of. The second part that has been...

Vice Mayor Lago: I think -- let me just interrupt you. And I apologize. I think what Commissioner Mena is stating is do we continue to follow up on Wishes Hotel in reference to our ordinance of hourly versus daily?

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: I know the answer to that question.

Police Chief Hudak: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, we are. We're doing our part. And I'm going to expand a little bit more after Commissioner Keon gets her comments in reference...

Police Chief Hudak: Now, the...

Vice Mayor Lago: To where we are.

Police Chief Hudak: One thing I will say and I want to be very clear and I've had a conversation with the Manager and the City Attorney. I am not in favor of the police department publishing any names outside of what we make for public record. If another entity wants to do a public records request for who we arrest and why we arrest, I don't want to -- I don't believe the police department should be putting any names out there other than what is asked of us.

Vice Mayor Lago: Can I ask you a quick question?

Commissioner Mena: Hmm?

Vice Mayor Lago: Commissioner, I don't want to interrupt.

Commissioner Mena: No, no.

Vice Mayor Lago: Because I -- maybe it feeds into what everybody -- why not? Because, as the father two young girls and what I've seen on the street -- I'm not saying it's the correct thing to do, I just want to know the answer. Maybe it's because our City Attorney says that we may be violating some...

City Attorney Ramos: Legal concerns.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah, I know. That's what I'm saying.

Police Chief Hudak: I'm saying -- yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm wondering what is -- is it because you have...

Police Chief Hudak: No, that...

Vice Mayor Lago: You've seen that that hasn't worked in other cities. Our City Attorney is always advising us in reference to what our legal, you know, bookends are.

Police Chief Hudak: If we are going to be a fair and impartial gatherers of fact and we are going to apply the rules of law, which is what govern us by the Constitution, we should not be giving out anything subjective as a police department, besides the fact that it's just not legal for us to do that under...

City Attorney Ramos: In addition, when you are arrested, you are only accused of a crime. You have not been convicted...

Vice Mayor Lago: Not guilty until proven.

City Attorney Ramos: Of that crime.

Vice Mayor Lago: Alright. So, I just wanted to put that on the record for -- because this gentleman before us.

Police Chief Hudak: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: We appreciate all your emails. I just want to give you a reason why maybe we're not headed in that direction.

Mr. Thompson: Mayor, a point of order. I got an email from you saying I could have as much time as I wanted, obviously not.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Sir, you can have -- yeah, but sir, we've received 27 emails from you in the last four days.

Mr. Thompson: Good.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Which is extremely explanatory and go ahead. Go ahead with -- instead of complaining, go ahead.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Could -- at some point, I'd like the City Attorney to be able to respond to why we can't do some of the things that Mr. Thompson has suggested...

Mr. Thompson: Okay, if I could...

Commissioner Keon: Should be done, please.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you. I'd love to hear that. Nobody did a public records request as to Robert Kraft. The police up there put in the public domain his arrest. Is he innocent until guilty? Yes. Is there some illegal act engaged in when you public a probable cause affidavit as they have with Kraft and also tell the media and the public that he's been arrested? No. Everyone

understands he has a constitutional right in a court of law to be presumed innocent. The bottom line in this -- and I don't think I'll have anything to say beyond this -- is that at this rate, Chief, these facilities are never going to be shut down and the people who are the prostitutes in them will not be liberated from the violence and the disease and the fear that they must put up with on an hourly basis. On average, they have about a thousand sexual trysts per year. In a situation in which now sexually transmitted diseases are increasing to 2.5 million new cases a year, this at least constitutes a public health crisis. So, categorically, there is nothing illegal, Madam City Attorney, about publishing this information. And finally, I'd say, you know, the spa, this Orchid Spa that Bob Kraft visited, it's been shut down. You're not on that trajectory. These people are going to deal with the arrests and the occupational license problems and so forth as simply the cost of doing business.

Commissioner Keon: I think, to that, I'd like the City Attorney to...

City Attorney Ramos: I'll let the Chief...

Commissioner Keon: Respond.

City Attorney Ramos: Respond about what happened in the Broward case in the releasing of that name. But with regard to the idea of forfeiture and the nuisance theory, you know, all legal claims are great until you have to prove them. And so, again, we have one motel in the City of Coral Gables, Wishes. The others are not in our jurisdiction. If there was -- if as part of the State Attorney's taskforce, one of those motels were to be targeted because they had enough credible information that that illegal activity, not just an illicit affair, not -- you know, other type -- but that true prostitution or human trafficking or drug dealing is happening at one of those motels and they have enough to go in there and create an entire case around that motel, which is what happened in the spa in Broward, then we could look at other legal alternatives, but we're not there. We don't have that proof. With regard to forfeiture, our job has now been made even more difficult. Forfeitures have always been hard. They have gotten harder. The Supreme Court just came down

with a case that talks about proportionality. And the reality is that unless we're able to build some sort of RICO case out of the Wishes Motel, we cannot -- the proportionality of a million-dollar property -- and that's what the Property Appraiser's Office lists it at -- to a prostitution misdemeanor crime is just not there. If we had the proof that there was RICO, if we had, you know -- if we had a billion dollars, we'd be rich. We need the evidence in order to be able to make a case and we just don't have it right now. We haven't seen it for the reasons the Chief is explaining. Two people get out of an Uber and they walk in. It's very difficult to prove.

Mr. Thompson: Madam City Attorney, you're referring to the Supreme Court case of (INAUDIBLE) versus Indiana, in which the court said you can't confiscate a \$40,000 Range Rover...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Right.

Mr. Thompson: To satisfy a \$400 fine.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: A \$10,000...

Mr. Thompson: These...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: If possible, fine. Ten thousand.

Mr. Thompson: Four hundred. And the -- that aside, whether you're right or I'm wrong, point is these establishments are making hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years that they've been operating from this slave trade, so the proportionality is there.

Police Chief Hudak: So, just three points from the police department. So, massage parlors in Coral Gables are regularly checked by undercover officers to make sure that they are playing

within the rules. We also do, from time to time, get complaints, allegations of inappropriate touching by the masseuse. They are fully investigated.

Commissioner Mena: How many of those are there? How many (INAUDIBLE)?

Police Chief Hudak: We have two -- two, right? We guarantee two Massage Envys. I haven't been there.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Good.

Police Chief Hudak: Good? Thank you, sir. And again, to Mr. Thompson's point, I mean, I would not put people in the human trafficking unit if I didn't realize the victims are two-fold. Now, as the Manager -- as the City Attorney stated, at the same time that the two individuals got out of the Uber, went inside around three police cars, there was a person inside who had met -- who had scheduled a meeting with someone in the parking lot. When we pulled the traffic stop, the one person, the john, left the area. The other john was hiding and eventually came out and asked us if we would take him back to Broward County, but fully disclosed that he was going there to meet. So, my point to you is, undercover operations work, reverse stings work, our Code works, but our presence, which I can't quantify for you how many we're going to be able to dissuade, definitely works. I can't use the presence factor if I'm dealing with an illicit business, so that's why this is a multi-pronged approach, as far as releasing the names. Every arrest that we make is legally discoverable, is available through P2C if somebody wants to look at it. When this joint task force took down all these massage parlors, the media asked for all of those issues. They only released the fact that they closed them down because I believe it was a RICO-type case where they were looking at the same type, but they were working undercover and started to flip some of those people. So, my point is, I'm not -- unless you direct me to -- going to start putting out, today, we've arrested so and so for this because I don't know where to draw the line. I don't, and I don't believe that's what you want your police department to do.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Chief. Any other questions from the Chief?

Commissioner Keon: No. I agree with you. I don't want people names...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No.

Commissioner Keon: Publicly.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Questions from the Chief?

Vice Mayor Lago: I have a few statements.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just to give you kind of a little background since this was put on the agenda. I put this legislation about two years ago and it was passed unanimously by this Commission in a previous Commission because I was notified by certain residents in North Gables that they were - - that they had -- when they had stepped onto 8th Street, they could see the prostitutes across the street. I have done up to this moment well over half a dozen ride-alongs with City of Miami, State Attorney Kathy Fernandez-Rundle's Human Traffic Division and the City of Coral Gables -- as of last night, I was there to over midnight. I have never seen one prostitute on the Coral Gables side. What I recommend is that everybody get into a police car and ride. Ride past midnight. Sometimes we've gone 3, 4 in the morning, 5 in the morning. My wife's calling me, get home, and we've seen certain things on the other side that need to be addressed that are being addressed. So, the issue here is not the joint enforcement piece of legislation which was unanimously passed by this Commission, which the City of Miami and the City of Coral Gables have been working diligently well together and our officers are doing an incredible job. That has an effect, that has an ability, that tool and that mechanism works. Now, the issue that we're having here and Mr. Thompson is shaking his head, but I'll tell you what -- the big issue that we have here. I had a meeting yesterday

with Commissioner Manolo Reyes, the new Commissioner that represents that area of the City of Miami, along with a portion of 37th Avenue and 8th Street. He's a gentleman. He's a person who knows the City of Miami very well, and we started talking about the other piece of legislation that I've proffered that was passed by this Commission, which was the hourly versus daily rate. Now, that is effective. That is significantly effective and it's working in Wishes Hotel. And that gives us a tool to step into that hotel, which is routinely checked and hammer them with a violation, and it's broken down as per Miriam Ramos' email at 5:44 pm on Wednesday, February 20, how we conduct ourselves. I'm not at liberty to speak about it and neither is the Chief. I was present last night when City of Miami police officers were there and City of Coral Gables officers also. There are plans for the future for joint task force initiatives that will be forthcoming. They're continuing to happen. I'm not at liberty to speak about it. And I don't think we should speak about it, obviously, because it defeats the purpose of it. Now, let's get back to the hourly versus daily rate, which I think is critical. When I spoke to Mr. Reyes yesterday about this issue, I explained to him, I go you want to take an initial step, massive step towards eradicating this type of behavior and giving real teeth to the joint enforcement taskforce, pass a daily rate.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yep.

Vice Mayor Lago: Move forward.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: That works.

Vice Mayor Lago: Because that will cripple those hotels. That will cripple them. On the other side of 8th Street, I've seen prostitution. I've seen drug dealing. I've seen pimps. I've seen it all on that side, and it's been very, very difficult to combat if you continue to allow for the daily. Am I correct...

Police Chief Hudak: Yes, sir.

Vice Mayor Lago: Or am I wrong? If you continue to allow for the daily, there's nothing you can do. There is a massive amount of lobbying effort that is happening there. I've met with those owners. I know all of the owners that are on 8th Street. It's outside of, obviously, our control as a body in the City of Coral Gables. But I've explained it to Commissioner Reyes that we need to sit down and we need to find a way to address this issue. Incentivize the motels and hotels to move in a different direction, either through zoning incentives. I mean...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Can I give you an anecdote...

Vice Mayor Lago: Of course, please.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: On that?

Vice Mayor Lago: Please.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: In our annexation efforts for Little Gables, the vote in the County's Planning Board -- Planning Advisory Board was 4-3 to allow the annexation because we were going to put the Executive Motel out of business with this hourly versus daily rate.

Vice Mayor Lago: We lobbied.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: So, even in the County...

Vice Mayor Lago: They were lobbying.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: In the County, they were lobbying and three out of those members listened to them and voted against our annexation. That is obscene.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, let me tell you what the issue is. So, yesterday, when we were driving up and down -- we spent four or five hours driving through that area, through the area that we're potentially going to annex, City of Coral Gables, Little Gables, and it's a major, major issue of concern. And we, as a body, are going to have to deal with that when it comes, if the City does annex those. We're going to be lobbied heavily by those owners. Obviously, we already have legislation. They're going to push to be grandfathered...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: And we're going to do what's right.

Vice Mayor Lago: They're going to be pushed to be grandfathered in, which I've told them straight to their face that I will not stand for that.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We're not going to do that.

Vice Mayor Lago: And that I think that this Commission will not stand for that. But the issue here is that we need to do everything in our power to stand shoulder to shoulder with the City of Miami and ask them to adopt this daily rate. And then once that daily rate is put into effect, let's step up our efforts in regards to the joint enforcement taskforce. That, I think, will pay significant dividends. But to me, after spending several hours on 8th Street yesterday and having done it four months ago, I did not see any prostitutes. I've yet to see a prostitute, a drug dealer or a pimp walking on the Coral Gables side. I'm not saying it hasn't happened, but I've been there over half a dozen times, probably eight or nine times. I can't...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Thompson, you wanted to...

Mr. Thompson: Yeah.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes, sir.

Mr. Thompson: Just quickly.

Vice Mayor Lago: They know -- excuse me. And I just want to say one last thing and I apologize. And this is something that I mentioned to the Chief yesterday. He goes, they know better than to step on the Coral Gables side. Does that mean it's right? Does that mean it's -- it's wrong. It's still wrong that it's occurring on the other side.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Vice Mayor Lago: But we also have certain limitations as elected officials. What we have to do is try to work with our colleagues on the other side because what's good for the City of Miami, in my opinion, is great for the City of Coral Gables.

Mr. Thompson: Okay. With all respect, fundamental misconception on your part.

Vice Mayor Lago: Okay.

Mr. Thompson: You, as a citizen, and the City of Coral Gables as an entity in Miami-Dade County has legal standing to shut down these establishments on either side of 8th Street under the public nuisance statutes of this state.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mr. Thompson: You do not have to be a resident of Miami to do this. And as to whether or not the Wishes Hotel is obeying the law, I called a week and a half ago -- and as I submitted -- I'm sorry I bothered you with an email about it.

Vice Mayor Lago: Never a bother.

Mr. Thompson: But the person at the desk said, yes, we're renting on an hourly basis. And your ordinance, which is supposed to prohibit them from doing that, was being flagrantly violated. So -- but the main takeaway is you don't have to wait on Kathy Rundle. You don't have to wait on the City of Miami to do what you would like them to do. It's a nuisance and public nuisance law pertains to the area -- the general area in which it constitutes a nuisance. So, the width of 8th Street does not wall them off like some Trump border wall from accountability for what they're doing to create a nuisance that spills over into Coral Gables. I'm sorry. That's the law.

City Attorney Ramos: Agreed. And it works...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Ramos: Very well when you have the evidence to prove the case.

Commissioner Keon: Do we have any evidence that you could prove...

Police Chief Hudak: No. To that...

Commissioner Keon: To do that...

Police Chief Hudak: To that point...

Commissioner Keon: To take that action. Could we do that?

Police Chief Hudak: There is no open sexual conduct that we are seeing in the Wishes Motel parking lot or...

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Police Chief Hudak: Anything else like that.

Commissioner Keon: So...

Police Chief Hudak: I am not saying we don't believe it happens.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, what we need to do is...

Police Chief Hudak: So...

Vice Mayor Lago: What we need to do is, Chief -- and if -- what we need to do right now is, if that's truly happening and you can call and it's doing the hourly, then we need to step up and enforce it.

Mr. Thompson: Forgive me.

Vice Mayor Lago: It's that simple.

Mr. Thompson: It takes a little prosecutorial and law enforcement will to get the evidence. There were no sex acts being performed, Chief, in the parking lot at the Orchid Asia Spa that Bob Kraft visited. But they were ingenious enough and terrier-like enough to get the evidence with cameras and doing other things. So, you can't say, oh, I don't see it on the street. They're going in there and he paid on camera \$100 two days in a row and received sex acts.

Police Chief Hudak: I'm not...

Mr. Thompson: So, if you aren't going to do -- if you aren't going to get the evidence, of course, you don't have it.

Commissioner Mena: But you're presuming...

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Commissioner Mena: But you're presuming that we're not working to try to get the evidence.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. And I...

Commissioner Mena: I think that's...

Vice Mayor Lago: Like I told you, I'm not at liberty to speak about the issue, but you know, there are stings that are going to be occurring in the next...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there...

Commissioner Keon: We're able to do that after...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Madam City Attorney, you have anything to say?

City Attorney Ramos: The only thing I can say, sir, again, is that the operation in Broward was an operation that took months and months. It was a taskforce. Of course, you can compile the evidence if it's there, but you have to have enough to start. The only reason they got a search warrant was because they had gotten enough information to be able to go into the place and get the stuff that they needed.

Commissioner Mena: Alright.

City Attorney Ramos: (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Wait, wait, wait. Is there anything else to discuss? We've gone through this...

Mr. Thompson: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Anything else?

Mr. Thompson: On that issue, the probable cause is found in the agreement that the City of Coral Gables and Miami entered into identifying in the agreement the ongoing prostitution in this corridor.

Vice Mayor Lago: And the sex trafficking that's going on.

Mr. Thompson: It is. That's why we're here.

Commissioner Mena: Sure. I don't think anybody's -- I'm certainly not disagreeing with you. But again, I think...

Police Chief Hudak: I'm not disagreeing...

Commissioner Mena: Yeah.

Police Chief Hudak: With you either.

Commissioner Mena: I think, to your point, I think -- and to our City Attorney's point, we do need the evidence. I have to have a certain amount of faith in Chief Hudak and the operations that he's implementing and that the great officers on his team are implementing, that they are doing their part to try to get what evidence they can. But again, if we don't have it to -- because you're talking about two different things.

Mr. Thompson: No.

Commissioner Mena: One thing is bringing a public nuisance claim and taking that sort of affirmative action as a body, but again, if we don't have that evidence, how do you purport that we do that?

Mr. Thompson: There's not a duty judge in Dade County that would not give you a search warrant and find probable cause that there was a basis to secure this evidence, particularly since all these hotels on the other side -- Chief, correct me if I'm wrong -- they're charging by the hour.

Police Chief Hudak: I believe so.

Mr. Thompson: Okay. So, why are they doing that? That's the reason why the Commissioner...

Commissioner Mena: They're legally doing so.

Mr. Thompson: Pardon?

Commissioner Mena: They're operating within the law that's applicable to those motels.

Mr. Thompson: I understand that, but they're using it as a means of doing something illegal. This is your point. You would cripple these people who you have standing to enjoin by virtue of being in -- we're in Miami-Dade County here.

Vice Mayor Lago: May I interject? I'm not an attorney.

Mr. Thompson: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: There's enough of them here.

Mr. Thompson: Well, congratulations.

Vice Mayor Lago: Everybody can go back and forth about that. I have faith in my City Attorney who can give me, you know, her legal opinion of how to protect ourselves. But what I think is the most, you know, appropriate manner or at least route that we should take is deal with our partners in the City of Miami, crack down. Have them pass a similar ordinance which cripples these motels. Push them to rezone that area and get them out of the business that they're in, which, again, serves no good. We're all very clear about that. And I think that can be done with the new leadership that's there now in the City of Miami. When I had a conversation with him over -- for about 15 minutes yesterday in preparation for this meeting and I explained to him in detail where we have already -- in regards to the joint enforcement taskforce, the efforts that we're making, he seemed very receptive. He was actually appalled about what was going on. So, I don't want to just immediately start throwing lawsuits out there and, you know -- and again, excuse my ignorance when it comes to legal terminology, but I want to deal with our partners in the City of Miami, sit down with him. I'm going to sit down with the Commissioner in about two weeks and deal with this issue. And hopefully, hopefully, he'll go out there and pass this piece of legislation. But remember, he was very clear. If he passes this piece of legislation, it's not like the City of Coral Gables, where we represent the entire city as a whole. We're not in districts. They're in districts in the City of Miami, so if that piece of legislation passes or goes up for a vote in the City of Miami, there is a litany of other areas in the City of Miami that that would also affect. So, some of the other elected officials may not be in favor of that legislation.

Mr. Thompson: Okay. I'll tell you what. I'll be back here in a year after the Super Bowl, and we'll see if any of these...

Police Chief Hudak: Mr. Thompson, I can address your Super Bowl...

Mr. Thompson: We'll see -- Chief.

Police Chief Hudak: Well, sir, I can address your Super Bowl concerns now because I was in Atlanta because the Coral Gables Police Department is actively participating in the security for the Super Bowl. Part of that assignment is that we will have detectives assigned to the human trafficking issues that were identified by the NFL. So, we are kind of ahead of the curve as far as what to expect with a Tier I event of the Super Bowl size. So, I mean -- and again, let me -- we can gather all the information for a Code violation, which is what the police department will do for the Wishes Motel. And as far as the prostitution issues, we can set up our own brothel and videotape johns and madams and make those arrests as we go forward.

Mr. Thompson: And may I finish my sentence, Chief?

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Mr. Thompson: Okay. I'll be back here after the Super Bowl and we'll see if a single one of these establishments has been shut down because on -- with using the tools you're using, particularly since -- and I haven't heard a legal basis -- we're not publishing the names and identities of the johns, there is none, then you are not going to shut any of these things down. And the fines and the inconveniences will simply be treated as a cost of doing business.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright.

Mr. Thompson: You've lost sight that the victims here are the women or the prostitutes of either gender who are caught in this web that -- and you know, may I say this? And God bless you for it, but we -- you know, we're worried about straws and Styrofoam and plastic bags in the city and we spent \$3.5 million on a camera system that spies on law-abiding citizens. And yet, one of the functions of government is to deliver people, such as these prostitutes, from this enslavement. We

fought a war in this country on the premise that government has a role to play and you all aren't willing to go far enough to do what needs to be done.

Commissioner Mena: Mr. Thompson.

Mr. Thompson: It's a Band-Aid on a cancerous tumor.

Commissioner Mena: Mr. Thompson, I appreciate your opinion on it and you taking the time. You know, I'm hoping that -- and I know I've seen some letters you've sent to the State Attorney. I hope you'll take the time to go to a meeting to address the body that governs the other side of the street here to see if they'll pass a similar legislation...

Vice Mayor Lago: I welcome you to join me in two weeks...

Mr. Thompson: Sure.

Vice Mayor Lago: If you'd like to meet with me and the Commissioner.

Commissioner Mena: Yeah. We would love to have...

Mr. Thompson: I don't want to send you an email about it, but if you'd send me an email.

Vice Mayor Lago: No, of course.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: No problem.

Commissioner Mena: No, look, we would love to have your support. I'm getting more cooperation from the other side. I think we do take this issue seriously. You may not feel that we go far enough. You're certainly entitled to that opinion.

Mr. Thompson: That's not a feeling.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Mr. Thompson: They're still open after two years of an agreement.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Mr. Thompson, we have to...

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Get going.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: But wait, wait, wait. Can I ask you a question?

Mr. Thompson: Sure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Are you satisfied that you have had the opportunity of expressing yourself to the fullest of your desire?

Mr. Thompson: Yes, sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Thompson: Because I came back up here and you gave me an opportunity.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Of course.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Police Chief Hudak: Thank you.