

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
February 12, 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
Deputy City Attorney, Cristina Suarez
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Assistant Public Works Director, Al Zamora

Public Speaker(s)

Enrique Bernal

Agenda Item F-2 [0:00:00 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida, amending Section 54-86, Chapter 54, Article III of the City of Coral Gables Code to move “cardboard” from the definition of “household refuse” to the definition of “recyclable material” so that cardboard must be segregated as a recyclable material pursuant to Section 54-149; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date.

(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Lago)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Alright, next is -ordinance on first reading, F-2.

City Commission Meeting

February 12, 2019

Agenda Item F-2 - Ordinance of the City Commission of Coral Gables, Florida, amending Section 54-86, Chapter 54, Article III of the City of Coral Gables Code to move “cardboard” from the definition of “household refuse” to the definition of “recyclable material” so that cardboard must be segregated as a recyclable material pursuant to Section 54-149.

City Attorney Ramos: F-2...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Vice Mayor Lago.

City Attorney Ramos: An ordinance of the City of Coral Gables, Florida, amending Section 54-86, Chapter 54, Article III of the City of Coral Gables Code to move “cardboard” from the definition of “household refuse” to the definition of “recyclable material” so that cardboard must be segregated as a recyclable material pursuant to Section 54-149; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. Ms. Suarez can give you an update on what’s changing legally, and I believe Mr. Zamora is present as well.

Deputy City Attorney Suarez: Good morning.

Vice Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Deputy City Attorney Suarez: What this ordinance does is it takes cardboard from the definition of household refuse and it moves it into the definition of recyclable materials so that cardboard can no longer be placed in trash piles. The ordinance will not be effective for a period of six months to allow for an education campaign to educate the residents of their responsibilities. After that, there would be a six-month period where only warnings would be issued while the education campaign continues.

Vice Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you.

Commissioner Quesada: So moved.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just wanted to just really quickly...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Oh, yeah, wait, wait. We have Mr. Enrique Bernal.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. That's what I was going to say.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Oh, okay, yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: I invited Mr. Bernal, who's a very distinguished gentleman who lives in the City of Coral Gables. His background is rather extensive. If you haven't met with him yet, I highly recommend it. He's -- he is a gentleman who we meet on a regular basis and he gives me a lot of advice, and he happens to be a guru when it comes to sustainability. And I asked him to just come and give his perspective.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Welcome.

Enrique Bernal: Thank you. Good morning. I come here really to sponsor, you know, this proposal because cardboard is really the most successful of all the recyclable materials that we have. And the -- I wanted to take this opportunity to go beyond that and to say I would like the Commission just to remind you how your decisions impact the viability of this type of activity. As we make more and more multifamily homes, we have to look at the question of how viable is recyclability in multifamily homes. I just moved into a brand-new building, Biltmore Park Condominium here that just opened in 2018. Now, for me to take cardboard from my home to the recycle bin, I have to walk one block. There is no provision whatsoever for a chute of recyclables, okay. And as you go from the living area through the parking garage, there is no access to the bins. The bins are on a -- an alley behind the building. You have to walk around the building to be able to get to it. So, you know, I urge you, you know -- it's too late when we try to just catch the thing in the back end where all the damage has been done and recycle. You know, make a provision so that these materials really -- you know, so it's very clear in a home, you know, that people -- you throw the cardboard in the trash pile or they put it in recycling. But

you know, we have this, perhaps, hidden risk to our city which is multifamily, you know, there is no provision really for making recyclable -- or recycling easy.

Vice Mayor Lago: You bring up a very good point. And Mayor, what I'd like to see if we can, through the City Manager, if my colleagues approve, is that what Mr. Bernal brought up right now, I'd like to see staff kind of flush it out a little bit so that when we approve projects or projects that are currently in the design phase that are not under construction yet, maybe we can incentivize them somehow, some way so that they can make recycling as easy as possible. I mean, I don't know. He mentioned a chute. He mentioned a dedicated chute or if we can have a location for that. We need to make it as easy as possible because I've heard from a lot of residents in this community saying, hey, listen, the business community, you don't -- we don't have the ability to recycle or some of the buildings are -- they're just not retrofitted to allow us or fitted to allow us to recycle.

Mr. Bernal: I would be glad to host anybody that wants to come and see our building just to show you how ridiculous the situation is because as I see these huge, new buildings going up, I'm saying, you know, all of these students that supposedly don't drive cars and all these other things, you know, are they going to have a viable recycling mechanism in those buildings.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you, Mr. Bernal.

Mr. Bernal: Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: Can I...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very thoughtful. Yes.

Commissioner Keon: I live in a multistory building, so I can tell you that they -- the building that I live in, the condominium association, you place all of your boxes out by your back door

and someone comes and collects all of them every day and cuts them and breaks them down and puts them in a recycling container. So, you know, a lot of that is the -- there is the ability to do that. It's what the condominium association, what they enact and what they pass. And since all of the multifamily buildings in the City are -- use Waste Management, it is a discussion that staff can have with Waste Management. Now, I know people that live in duplexes around here that have asked for additional bins from Waste Management and they pick them up just as they pick up the garage. They pick up the recyclables too. And I think -- don't we use Waste Management to do -- where do we go?

City Manager Iglesias: We also have -- Commissioner, we also have our LEED silver requirements for the larger building.

Commissioner Keon: Right.

Mr. Bernal: So, can the City require that...

City Manager Iglesias: That's not a...

Commissioner Keon: Well, I don't...

City Manager Iglesias: That's not a Building Code requirement.

Commissioner Keon: Right. But so I think that we can -- I mean, I think that there is a way to do that. But I think what you're talking about are the townhouses, which is a very different...

Mr. Bernal: No, no. This is a...

Commissioner Keon: Than a...

Mr. Bernal: Four-story -- five-story building.

Commissioner Keon: A multi -- oh, that's right.

Mr. Bernal: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: You're in Biltmore Park, okay.

Mr. Bernal: Can the City require...

Commissioner Keon: But you know you have a different...

Mr. Bernal: That the associations provide that service?

Vice Mayor Lago: You know what we could do...

Commissioner Keon: No.

Vice Mayor Lago: I don't have a problem working on that legislation with you and I can bring it before the Commission on next month. But I want to get a little bit more information on it.

Commissioner Keon: Right. I think you need to go to the -- the state has laws that govern condo associations...

City Attorney Ramos: HOAs.

Commissioner Keon: And condominiums and whatever, so I think you need to work with him. But I do think that if you just talk with Waste Management or the staff can sit with Waste

Management, the likelihood is that they can come up with a solution. I mean, I know they have on...

Mr. Bernal: I tried that in my last building unsuccessfully with Waste Management.

Commissioner Keon: Oh. Well, it has to come through your condo association.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, let's do this.

Commissioner Keon: Okay.

Vice Mayor Lago: Let's you and I meet to discuss that. We've gotten this item on the agenda, which I think is important. Let's you and I get together and we'll meet and we'll sit down with Naomi, who's dealing with issues in regards to our state legislature. We can -- like Commissioner Keon mentioned, we can find out a little bit more information about if there's maybe some state statute which prohibits this or requires...

Commissioner Keon: (INAUDIBLE)

Vice Mayor Lago: Let's just flesh it out and see what else -- what are the requirements on behalf to the City and I think it's a great idea. Buildings that are being proposed that are being approved and they're being constructed in the City of Coral Gables should make it as easy as possible for people to recycle. That's it.

City Manager Iglesias: We can also have the Building Department be part of that conversation.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. And I would -- listen, we'll bring them in.

Mr. Bernal: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Lago: We'll bring in our Building Department. We'll bring our Sustainability team and see how we can make it as easy as possible. I have a feeling that if we sit down with developers, it's just another added amenity. A lot of people, like myself, and people on this Commission, when you have to move into a building, I'm going to make decisions in reference to the building that I go into, make sure that it has accessible electrical charging, make sure it has recycling as an option, you know, that sustainability is a priority. And more and more people, I think, are getting -- are making that a priority.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Thank you...

Vice Mayor Lago: Alright, so let's...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very much, sir. Yeah.

Vice Mayor Lago: Let's talk about this really quick. Thank you...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Lago: Mr. Bernal.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Lago: Please -- I want to have our team come up here and really bring -- you know, talk a little bit about what the purpose of this ordinance is and what they recommend and how important is it to commence mandating that cardboard be removed from the trash pits and what are the -- not only the potential benefits to the environment, but also, the financial benefits to the City.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Good morning, Mayor and Commissioners. Al Zamora, Public Works Assistant Director for Sanitation. What you have before you is a simple change in the definition of cardboard. Right now, it is defined in our Code as household debris. And obviously, to be in sync with state statute, County code, cardboard is a recyclable material. That being said is the first move to get the cardboard out of the trash piles. Right now, due to the market cardboard has no value as far as reselling it. Where the value is, is in the tipping fees where the City pays to get rid of what is collected. Right now, there is no cost to dispose of cardboard versus if it's in a pile. The tipping fee at the County is \$72.36 per ton. The other thing is we want to be good stewards to the environment. Throwing recyclable materials -- one of the materials that we see growth in in our recyclable -- what we pick up is cardboard. And I think it's to our best advantage to regulate that, take that out of the waste stream and not only is it financially prudent, it's also being a good steward to the environment.

Vice Mayor Lago: Just a -- so we can kind of go over the few finer points in reference to garbage and our tipping fees. Right now, the City of Coral Gables, because residents, who say, listen, we pay for our garbage. We have a garbage fee that we pay every single year.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: And, what I want residents to understand is that we as a city subsidize garbage pickup, correct?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Correct.

Vice Mayor Lago: To the tune of how many millions of dollars a year?

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: I've done my numbers. Right now, it's about \$236 per household times 11,000 homes.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, it's pretty significant, a few million dollars.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: It's \$2 million.

Vice Mayor Lago: Two and change. So, the reason why I bring that up is because if we can reduce any garbage going into the waste stream and reduce our tipping fees, these are monies that, again, will save the City significant dollars. And I see cardboard, as we've talked before on multiple conversations -- I mean, everybody here is buying off Amazon. Everybody here is buying off the internet. It's becoming easier every day. You're seeing that that's the business model. They're getting away from brick and mortar and they're moving towards more online platforms because people want simplicity. People are more and more hectic, more and more busy every single day, they want to order online and they want it just delivered to their house. With that, we've seen Amazon become one of the largest companies in the world. We're seeing just a massive growth, you know, just continued growth in Amazon and what they're being able to deliver to homes. So, that's not going to stop. It's only going to be -- get worse in the sense of the production of cardboard. So, we're going to have to pay more and more in regards to our tipping fees because that's only going to grow. If you drive by the City, for example, today, my area was the area that gets picked up on Tuesdays. So, on the way here, I didn't want to bore you with any more pictures, but...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Then don't.

Vice Mayor Lago: But the amounts -- the mountains, the mountains of cardboard is just -- it's unsightly, number one. We can do so much better. Number two, it's costing the City millions of dollars a year. So, I think that we need to find a common -- a way to resolve this issue. And the Mayor brought up a very good point about a year ago, and that was the issue of how could we make it as easy as possible for the elderly. I think that by recycling the cardboard, we make it easier because we force them to not have to go down to the trash pit where, you know, they could trip, they could fall. We allow them just to put it next to the recycling bin. We don't want

them to have to force it -- to break it down. We prefer they break it down, but if they leave it there, we can still recycle it. So, I want to make sure that we're all on the same page and that we're headed in that direction.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Of course, we are. And I mean the timing is perfect. Right now, we're in the middle of a compensation study on how we do things here in the City related to garbage pickup, recycling picking and, you know, trash pickup. So, these are definitely -- this is definitely one thing that we will be focusing on.

Commissioner Mena: I think it would be great if we -- and I don't know if we've done this before -- but if like CGTV put together like an educational video about this. I think bad behavior breeds more bad behavior.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah.

Commissioner Mena: I think people -- a lot of people don't -- a lot of people think they can just put the boxes in the -- and it's fine because they drive around and they see boxes.

Vice Mayor Lago: See everyone.

Commissioner Mena: Right. So, I think if there was some sort of video that said, you know, you shouldn't put it here. This is how you should put it, you know, showing -- folding it, putting it by the recycling bins on the side of the house and explaining some of these things. An educational video of some kind would be terrific, something that we can push out, you know.

City Manager Iglesias: That's a good idea.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yeah. Let me tell...

City Manager Iglesias: We are planning on doing that, Commissioner.

Vice Mayor Lago: And I also wanted to highlight Commissioner Mena. I know you -- he's too modest to mention it, but he recently got rid of his trash pit, like...

Commissioner Mena: Friday.

Vice Mayor Lago: Like I did about a year ago. And let me tell you, it's just paid significant dividends because I don't have anybody illegally dumping on my yard. My swale is in perfect shape. It looks beautiful. Again, we are the City Beautiful. And if I do ever need to dump anything that can't be donated to Goodwill, which is a few blocks away from my house, next to the University of Miami, I just leave it on the curb next to my driveway and our incredible employees here, they pick it up. They know the process. There's no need to have that. So, I think this is a great opportunity. I think it's a step in the right direction. I have a feeling -- and the great part about it is we can quantify the numbers. So, once we stop picking this up in about a year, we can look back and say, okay, how much money are we saving and how beneficial was this piece of legislation. You can see the numbers. And that way, you know, maybe we -- again, we can use that money to expand our recycling efforts. We can use -- we can give that money back to the residents, who are paying about \$800 a month -- a year, excuse me, now in regards to the garbage fees. It's a lot of things that we could do.

Commissioner Mena: And, that's another area where education would go a long way because I didn't realize -- I just learned from...

Vice Mayor Lago: I didn't know either.

Commissioner Mena: From Brook, a week ago or two weeks ago, that when you decommission your trash pit -- I think is the term of art that they use -- the City, if you haven't done it before, will come out and actually plant sod. And I don't think most people realize that.

Vice Mayor Lago: I didn't know that.

Commissioner Mena: And it's actually a great incentive because, you know, it's...

Vice Mayor Lago: When I got rid of mine, I planted ferns and it's pretty...

Commissioner Mena: Right. If you're going to put...

Vice Mayor Lago: It looks beautiful.

Commissioner Mena: No, if you're going to put plants, that's a different issue. But if you put sod, the City will take care of it for you and make it nice, so I think that's something people should know because it might incentivize them to do so.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. We have a time certain item at 11. And you know, this has been a very fruitful discussion, and let's pursue it. And I like the idea of the time, you know, to instruct people and everything. I like it. So, do I hear a motion?

Vice Mayor Lago: So moved.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Second?

Commissioner Mena: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll, please?

City Attorney Ramos: Mr. Clerk, before they vote, I just want to make sure that no one else wished to speak. It is a public hearing item. Were there any other cards?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: No.

Commissioner Quesada: Yes.

Commissioner Keon: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We'll take up...

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Assistant Public Works Director Zamora: Great first step.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: F-3.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just want to say -- thank staff for doing...

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Very good.

Vice Mayor Lago: For doing an incredible job in reference to the Comprehensive Sanitation Plan, and also thank my colleagues for their support. I think this is going to be -- this going to just continue to really hammer what we're known for, being the City Beautiful. So, that's great. Thank you.