

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-1
September 22, 2020
Virtual Meeting
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
ACA, Naomi Levi Garcia

Public Speaker(s)

Brian Seigel

Agenda Item G-1 [9:45 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission amending Resolution 2019-117, to adopt definitions of Anti-Semitism and bigotry. (Sponsored by Commissioner Keon)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: City Commission Items – G-1, a Resolution of the City Commission amending Resolution 2019-117, to adopt definitions of Anti-Semitism and bigotry. Commissioner Keon.

Commissioner Keon: Good morning. This came – I’m glad Naomi is here to talk, as we’ve been working on this together. I know that you had a conversation about defining Anti-Semitism and ensuring that there was legislation in our city that spoke to this issue. So in working with Naomi, I knew we had passed this resolution sometime ago, but in looking back at it, we didn’t necessarily define Anti-Semitism or bigotry as well as we should have, and I think at that time it should have been defined and wasn’t, and so, this is just an effort to amend this to actually define both Anti-Semitism and bigotry. Naomi.

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Naomi Levi Garcia: You summed it up exactly. This resolution amends resolution 2019-117, to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of Anti-Semitism. The definition reads in full, Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jew, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews, rhetorical and physical manifestations of Anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. It also adopts a definition for bigotry that reads, obstinate or unreasonable attachment to a belief, opinion, or faction, in particular prejudice against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular group. I believe Mr. Brian Seigel may want to say a few words. He is from the American Jewish Committee and he was going to join today to speak on behalf of this resolution.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Perfect.

City Clerk Urquia: He's on Zoom.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Okay. Good morning.

Vice Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Mr. Seigel: Good morning. Thank you. First of all, I want to thank you Mayor and City Commission, in particular, Commissioner Keon for her leadership on this effort. It's great to see so many of my friends. Congratulations to Mark Trowbridge on his new office, and also, thank you for featuring one of my Rabies, Rabbi Fisch, giving the Invocation today. The other Rabbi of Temple Judea in Coral Gables is my wife, Rabbi Judith Seigel, and I can't tell you how much we appreciate really the efforts that Coral Gables undertakes to keep Temple Judea safe and make it such a wonderful place to be. Thank you to Chief Hudak and to all the amazing people in Coral Gables. This particular amendment to the resolution that you had already passed, once again showing your leadership on these issues, is really an important one to clarify, because as you know, we've seen even before the pandemic a surge in violent Anti-Semitism and it's only grown in terms of conspiracy theories, and of course, not just directed at the Jewish community, but directed at the Asian-American community, at the African-American community, many others. So, I think it's nice that you are defining both Anti-Semitism and bigotry. In terms of Anti-Semitism, what's important about adopting this particular definition, the working definition of Anti-Semitism promulgated by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, is that it's an internationally accepted definition and in order to combat Anti-Semitism, it really is important to understand what it is. I think that most everyone recognizes that hatred directed at Jews is Anti-Semitism, but a lesser number may be aware that stereotypes about Jews or conspiracy theories about Jews are also forms of Anti-Semitism. Fewer still may realize that Holocaust denial or distortion is not a historical debate, but an attack on Jewish memory. We've also seen attacks against the State of Israel that really are tantamount to Anti-Semitism, and that's not just criticism, which of course like any country, Israel is subjected to and should be subjected to, but its demonization and

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distortion of facts that cross the line. So, we believe that this problem is one that education and smart policy can help to address, so by adopting this definition, law enforcement, educators, people who monitor these types of hate crimes and attacks, really have a tool they can use to determine when something crosses the line, when something is Anti-Semitism, and when its not. So again, thank you for being leaders on this issue and on so many others, and we at AJC, the American Jewish Committee, stand ready to be your partners in combatting all forms of hatred and discrimination. Thank you again.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you very, very much for your words, your very inspirational words. Thank you.

Commissioner Keon: I'd like to thank him for reminding us.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: What?

Commissioner Keon: I'd like to thank him personally for reminding us of what we need to do.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Would you like to make a motion?

Commissioner Keon: Yes, I'll make the motion and I'd also like to thank Naomi for her work, she's always diligent and what a pleasure.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Is there a second?

Vice Mayor Lago: Second.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Thank you Naomi.

Vice Mayor Lago: Thank you Naomi.