City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-2
September 14, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

<u>**City Commission**</u>
Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Michael Mena
Commissioner Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Jorge Fors
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

<u>**City Staff**</u>
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
IT Director, Raimundo Rodulfo

<u>**Public Speaker(s)**</u>

Agenda Item G-2 [Start: 1:42 p.m.]
Discussion and review of City website.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fors)

Mayor Lago: Let's get onto the G items, City Commission items. We have G-2, discussion and review of the city website, sponsored by Commissioner Fors. This is a long overdue discussion and I'm very happy that the Commissioner has tackled this and really pushed to get this revamped. For a long time, we've been hearing the city website is a little bit convoluted and it has a lot of information, but that its not to the point, so I commend you on that. Commissioner.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you. And to be fair, the city was already doing it, or staff had already…

Mayor Lago: Take the credit for it, man.

Commissioner Fors: Alright. I'll take the credit for it.

[Laughter]

Commissioner Fors: A lot of work had gone in, I've just been complaining about it, the squeakiest tire gets the oil, or the squeakiest wheel gets the oil, however you want to say it. My family is famous, me and my mother are famous for misstating idioms. So, with that being said, I'm not sure we are ready to do it. Is Raimundo here?

Mayor Lago: He was outside.

City Clerk Urquia: He was outside.

Commissioner Fors: Really the purpose of this was to just give an update for the benefit of the public. I think some Commissioners have already received an update.

City Clerk Urquia: So, Commissioner Fors, we've already met with all of the Commission. We've actually fixed a couple of your suggestions and just to give you an update, we've selected the vendor who is going to be implementing the new city website. We've began working with all of the departments by primarily, its going to be IT and Communications who is going to be overseeing this.

Commissioner Fors: Okay. If we're not ready to show some examples – okay.

IT Director Rodulfo: Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. So, we have been working together with the City Clerk and Communications Department and we have selected the best platform outside that we found in the industry, it's called Drupal. Drupal is indeed an experience platform that is used by fortune 500 companies and by innovative governments throughout the world; and this platform has a lot of attributes, and one of the most important ones is that it is open source and its being developed constantly and improved by thousands of developers worldwide, and at the same time it has governments. It's governed by the creator of this platform in Massachusetts in Boston, and they recommended to us a partner that is helping us to design our city website to address all the current issues that we are having. Improve the search function with state-of-the-art search capabilities, having flexibility so we are not talking about something that is difficult to change when we need to add something new, when we need to increase the capabilities or add functions. So, I'm going to show you some examples. City of Boston – they have an award-winning ____ website. So, you can see they have this kind of element that constantly change when you have a new need, you need to add new information, when you need to add public health, public safety or any new agenda item that is important to highlight. Its very easy to…plug and play. Its very simple to maintain. Another example in the private sector….a winning website Drupal the same platform we are implementing. In this case, different purpose, different design, different functionalities. Its market-driven in this case. And our winning Drupal website, NASA, is considered one of the most content reach in terms of multi-media. So, they have thousands of video and high-definition graphics from space missions and they constantly maintain this website in Drupal. You see how it looks totally different, same platform, different uses, different applications.

Mayor Lago: So, what you are saying is that we are in good company.

IT Director Rodulfo: Huh?

Mayor Lago: So, what you are saying is we are in good company.

IT Director Rodulfo: We are in good company with this platform Drupal that is why we collectively with the City Clerk and Communications, we selected this one, also advised by experts in the industry. We searched out to Garner, top experts in the XP, and this is something that is called____ Magic Quadrant and the developers of Drupal is at the top is considered the best. That's why fortune 500 companies they use it. The State of Georgia has a very good one. See how prominent is the search function, so its up in front and its very robust and very intuitive.

Commissioner Fors: Which for me is big, because as we all know the majority of search fields in websites simply don't work. If they did work, it would be amazing. So, this company is supposed to deliver a search field that really works where you can type something in, and it really will take you either to or very close to what you are trying to get to.

City Manager Iglesias: Commissioner, it works on our official intelligence, so it gets smarter as the more you use it, and we haven't just done a small leap, we've done a leap to the best. So, this is coming next year.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

IT Director Rodulfo: So, some of those websites, like the City Manager mentioned, it has the artificial intelligence capabilities with the chat box. I want to show you something we are implementing with MIT experts already in the Smart City Hub. City of LA have won a lot of awards on their website. They have tutorials, like 1, 2, 3, how to apply for a permit? – and they guide you, they hold your hand and tell you 1, 2, 3, or A, B, C, and they have these capabilities. Its something that is very flexibility. It looks like this today, tomorrow it may look different, so it has that flexibility. And the organization that is helping us to develop on the Drupal technology was recommended by the creator of Drupal. They have done a lot of very robust websites. For example, in the U.S. they created this for Silicon Valley. This is created by the same people that are designing our website today, together with the city. So, you see how capable they are in the private sector or in the public sector, U.K., Valencia, Spain, they use this company. They are one of the top designers of Drupal in the European Union. You see this example from one of the boroughs in the London area. Its very robust, its very user-friendly, and you see it here for West Minster also, and the nearby borough in London, and you see Valencia, Spain. We love this one, this is for tourism, so you see how its also good to showcase the beauty of the city and showcase the attractions. This is another implementation. This is not necessarily the number one goal, so we are maybe going more into the functional side of the website, but this is going to be also a component that is going to be important to showcase the beauty of the City Beautiful. Great Britain, also developed by the same company that we are working with, so very robust. And some of the things that we have added recently to the Smart City Hub public platform. This is more into the Smart City side. I want to show you some of the new additions. on the internet of things side, we

have added a platform that is called Aubon Analytics AI. Several years we have to show pedestrian counters, vehicle traffic, environmental, but now we are going a step forward implementing artificial intelligence integrated platform. It's a Smart City horizontal integration of all the sensors. So, we have now the ability to download the data directly for the local businesses. We have a restaurant in the downtown area, you want to download the data of the traffic and use it for your sale strategies, for marketing, so you can do that. Researchers can do the same in the universities, marketing, staff, first responders, urban planners, so it's a lot of data. That's why we are considered an open city, an open data city that we have been receiving all this recognition, because we share that data for civic good. So, its data that is anonymous; its data that is private; its data that follows best practice, but at the same time fosters economic growth, fosters innovation. So, we have been adding more and more of these capabilities over the years like this one. Also, working with FIU, we have been adding more census for water canal data. This is very useful during EOC activations at the CIC, at the EOC. This is recent. We added an environmental station at the rooftop of the Police Safety Building. Now we are measuring wind speed, we are measuring a lot of, more than 20 variables in real time. So, this data is also available the EOC at the Smart City Hub. And finally, talking about artificial intelligence. This is just a prototype, its not working yet, we're in beta, but this is AIDA or artificial intelligence, the use of assistant, and we have been trying to customize the look of AIDA to resemble the city's branding and colors. And this is like a little child that is constantly learning with machine learning, and soon we are going to do a launch. At this time, we are still working with the researchers. This project was funded by NSF, and we did it together with award-winning world renown experts in artificial intelligence from MIT. I wanted to mention that we did this collaboration with Dr. ___ Savage from MIT, and we are going to be launching the assistant; and the goal of AIDA is to help the citizens to navigate the complexities of the Smart City Platform, because this is like a supermarket with too many offerings. So, with the artificial intelligence too, we are going to make it easier and more user-friendly. If you have any questions for me. Thank you.

City Manager Iglesias: Next year we will also be creating a dashboard, which will be for the power users, so we'll have a top website and also a dashboard that will be for, again for power users and would you like to discuss a little bit on that.

IT Director Rodulfo: So, the goal of the dashboard is that using all the elements in the Smart City Hub, having the ability to inter-connect all the different systems, like the new land management system that went live, InterGov, with the financial system that is going live soon, all those different data sets being able to show the data in GIS, in a map. So, you put your finger in a location and you get a lot of information and data that is actionable, that you can correlate traffic data with sensor data, with environmental data. Things that maybe you don't think they are related, but they are, its like a big equation. So, all those things together in a dashboard, the ability to have that actionable information from multiple sources, so that's the other project that we are working on under the vision of the City Manager, because he has always told us that we need to horizontally integrate all the different systems to break the silos, basically, to interconnect the things, so we know what we are doing in different functions in the organization.

Vice Mayor Mena: I have kind of a random question, it's a criticism of the current website, and I'm curious how it will – the search functionality of our current website is very, the results you get

are really bad for some reason. I don't know how else to explain it. And I think its partly because we have so much information, right. So, you get more hits when you search for something. I'm wondering what you can do if the new website – I know usually search engines are integrated, it could either be with like Google or whatever, but for some reason the current website that's something that I've always found really difficult to navigate. I was just kind of like testing out right now, because I know it's happened to me a hundred times. I'll show you an example. I just did a search on our website for Parks Director, right. So, let's say a resident, I want to reach out to the Parks Director of the city and who's that, and I've got to look it up. And nothing comes up, its like, sign up to receive ENEWS, green space management, Smart City Tech, management, budget and compliance, Commissioner Kirk Menendez, little free libraries, there's all kinds of information, but you don't get to like – If I'm a resident and I'm trying to find some basic information, sometimes for some reason our navigation and search function on our current website isn't very effective.

IT Director Rodulfo: Because that website is simply using Google, so they don't have a built-in, so that platform is leveraging Google, like going to Google and searching for something and getting a lot of results that are not relevant. So that is the problem with this site that its not like Drupal has its own web search capability internally in all the data bases and has intelligence to know that if you are looking for something, you want to get the most relevant result. So that's why you find – so look at those examples if you made the Boston and City of LA and those British cities, and you will see how Drupal doesn't have that shortfall, because it's searching internally with intelligence. It has algorithms that will know in natural language what you're looking for and we try to find the best solution.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is that at the end of the day from a resident perspective, that to me is the most important thing, because we're always going to have probably too much information, right, it's the kind of nature of a city government, right, there is just a lot of information, a lot of notices, a lot of meetings, so much information on a given website that what you want is for a resident who is trying to just find basic information to be able to find it easily, and they don't know as we know who everybody in the city is or what to look for, the name to look for all the time, they are just kind of using regular lay persons search terms, and its important that that be an effective way to find information on our website for a user.

IT Director Rodulfo: We have a multi-disciplinary project team. We are at this moment we've finished the first phase, we are going to the second phase, and this multi-disciplinary team, so its not technology, so we have a multi-disciplinary team with rapid design with the City Clerk's office, with Martha's team and we have brought a lot of people that also are bringing the user focus research, basically, to make sure that everything that we do is tested by real users. So, they can give us their feedback and we know that we are going into the right direction. And we are going to work on the input from different stakeholders throughout the way.

City Clerk Urquia: Vice Mayor also, what you are seeing is results of years and years of accumulation and data, that's what it is. We've continued to upload documents to the website, we never remove anything, but we are starting from scratch on this. We are starting from zero. We are building a brand-new website. We've selected a platform that can make everything talk to each

other, however, if you search for parks, it's a third-party system, if you search for agendas, it's a different system, if you search for permits it's a different system. So, we've selected a platform that is really good and really robust, but at the end of the day, these are all third-party systems that we are not going to be able to change the way they look in the field. Hopefully we'll point you to the right direction, but it's still going to be a system that we can't implement.

Vice Mayor Mena: But there's got to be a better way to hone in on – in other words, again to check. I just went to Google, and I just typed in Coral Gables Parks Director, literally the first line is Fred Couceyro. Fred Couceyro is the Director of Community Recreation, but if I looked for Coral Gables Parks Director on the Coral Gables website, Fred Couceyro doesn't come up.

City Clerk Urquia: And that will change.

Vice Mayor Mena: That's what I'm talking about. I don't know enough about technology to tell you how to get there, but that's the issue as far as I'm concerned, because that again is what the average lay person who doesn't know who all of us are, doesn't know our names, doesn't know how to navigate the city that well, they are looking for a quick easy answer so that they can contact somebody. That needs to work.

City Manager Iglesias: Vice Mayor, one of the big things that we're doing is to horizontally integrate everything and that horizontal integration is something that we've been working on for some time now, so that everything we get now can horizontally integrate so that you don't have that problem.

Vice Mayor Mena: We get complaints from residents all the time, I've been trying to find the agenda for X or the notice for this meeting, or this or that, and its impossible. It shouldn't feel that way, and I get that it's a lot of information. I understand why but that should be, I think a primary, if not the primary goal of the new.

City Manager Iglesias: It's a lot of information, but if we work on that horizontal integration that we are working currently working on now, the more you horizontally integrate something the easier that website is going to work and the easier that website can capture that information, and that's one of the big issues that we brought in is, not just software, but everything horizontally integrated, everything has to talk to each other. Its not something that's easy to do, because we have to take care of a lot of software that is existing now, but I do think that once we get to where we want to be by the end of next year, I think this will be a new way of doing business.

Commissioner Menendez: I want to comment, and I agree completely with Vice Mayor Mena. Folks who have communicated with me the frustration with trying to find their way navigate, not only navigate on our website, just navigate the city. We have the advantage of being sort of in this building, so we sort of know which doors to knock and a lot of folks don't. So my question with regards to the technology one is, regarding Google, I don't know if it's a laptop or computer that remembers it, but some of these platforms if you frequently use them, it sort of remembers your searches, and when they remember your searches, if its artificial intelligence maybe, I don't know if its up to that point where it can anticipate where you're headed with your search, which would

make the task a lot easier for the user, that's one thought. If it can create sort of a memory of what you normally look for. Second is, sometimes I think we've all encountered, you go on to pay a bill or whatever you want to check, and a pop-up comes up, how can I help you? I don't know if there is a person on the other side or there is some little robot person responding artificial intelligence, but that's useful too, because some people just aren't used to using the internet, so if they have an interaction, I think it's the butterfly symbol, AIDA, that would be very helpful for a lot of folks. And then finally, the third thing is, and maybe it's a discussion for another day. Do we have a go-to number, do we have a go-to place that people can reach, I guess it will be the website, where their questions or answers and pointed in the right direction quickly, instead of – even I sometimes, I have to make five phone calls to get to the department that the person that I need to talk to regarding a resident's concern. So, if we can find a way to streamline the process of getting the resident's answer they are looking for or point them in the right direction, hopefully this platform provides that simplicity and streamlines things.

IT Director Rodulfo: So those two features that you mentioned, the ability of the search engine to optimize itself and to learn and exist in the system that we are implementing. So those frequently asked questions they bubble up, is what is called automatic indexing of the results. That's new technology and yes, it does some algorithms of artificial intelligence and machine learning. The other function that you mentioned of the system to have those preferences. We are not doing a site where you sign in and you enter your credentials or your – so we are not doing it this way, its public, its open. However, the system has the capability for users, and we can think about that later for users to register. So, they can register, they can have like a user I.D. in the system, and some users would like to do it, some users would prefer to navigate anonymously. So, we can think about it in the future and implement something like that where users can register when want to save their preferences. They can do it now with the customer relationship management system, with GovQA, and that's something that we can maybe look into integrating in the future.

Commissioner Menendez: And the pop-up chat you said that's already.

IT Director Rodulfo: So, the chat box is a capability that exists in Drupal in the platform that we are using. We have talked to the developer to incorporate that as well. The other one that we are doing is for the Smart City Hub and it was done specifically for that platform with MIT, but we were looking to integrate that tool into the city's website as well.

Mayor Lago: I think this is a great step forward and I'm happy to see it finally come to fruition. When can we see this come online?

IT Director Rodulfo: February.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Are there any other questions or anything else you'd like to inquire?

Commissioner Anderson: I was really pleased with staff's presentation. They fixed the "Bill Pay" feature while they were talking to me, so done.

Mayor Lago: Its good.

City Manager Iglesias: We will have the Infor platform which is our financial programming in the fourth quarter of next year. So, I think by the end of next year we will be fully integrated.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Good. Thank you Raimundo. I appreciate it as always. Thank you to your staff and I look forward to the rollout and thank you to Commissioner Fors for putting this on the agenda and seeing it come to fruition.

IT Director Rodulfo: Thank you Mayor.