

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items F-4, F-5, F-11 & F-12
March 12, 2024
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Police Chief, Ed Hudak
Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Jessica Keller

Agenda Items F-4, F-5, F-11 and F-12 [12:34 p.m.]

F-4: Discussion regarding Vision Zero and Pedestrian Safety (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

F-5: Discussion regarding electric scooters (Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

F-11: A Resolution of the City Commission directing City Staff to fund and deploy school crossing guards at Coral Gables Senior High School and directing City Staff to conduct a review of current traffic patterns and conditions near Coral Gables Senior High School. (Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

F-12: A Resolution of the City Commission in support of County Commissioner Regalado's efforts to allow cities additional oversight and regulations of e-bikes, motorized scooters, and micromobility devices on County roads within incorporated areas of Miami-Dade County. (Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

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Mayor Lago: Before you leave, we'll do F-11, since you're here.

City Attorney Suarez: F-11 is a Resolution of the City Commission directing City Staff to fund and deploy school crossing guards at Coral Gables Senior High School and directing City Staff to conduct a review of current traffic patterns and conditions near Coral Gables Senior High School.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor there are a number of items that are talking about similar issues F-11, F-12, as well as F-7 and F-8, I think we can knock them all out.

Mayor Lago: You want to do them all – F-11, F-12.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, no, F-4 and F-5, I misspoke. Vision Zero, electric scooters, crossing guards and e-bikes.

City Attorney Suarez: So, I'll read F-12, if you want to hear them altogether, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: That's fine. You said also F-4.

Vice Mayor Anderson: 4 and 5. It's an overlapping discussion about public safety.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Attorney Suarez: So, I'll read in F-12, which is the other resolution. I know there are two other discussion items, but the other resolution is F-12, A Resolution of the City Commission in support of County Commissioner Regalado's efforts to allow cities additional oversight and regulations of e-bikes, motorized scooters, and micromobility devices on County roads within incorporated areas of Miami-Dade County.

Commissioner Castro: Before you begin. Can you tell me what it was that happened today. There was a traffic accident regarding one of our employees.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes. One of our employees was hit while crossing the street on their way to work at the station. Subsequently the individual driver that struck the employee also struck three or four police, I'm sorry, fire vehicles. Again, the charges are still pending. The employee, thank God, was taken to Ryder Trauma and my understanding is in good condition at this point. The driver of the vehicle was also transported to a nearby hospital and that's under investigation, so I don't have any idea of the charges that have been filed since.

Commissioner Menendez: Was that in front of the station.

Police Chief Hudak: Right in front of the police station. Yes sir.

Commissioner Menendez: The reason I ask, we talked about this last year, I think it was, that intersection right where the entrance of police. It's chaotic. It should be a four-way. It's two-way,

and people either think it's a four-way or think it's a zero-way. I don't know if there's any update on.

Police Chief Hudak: Last week in light of the other accident, I was in touch with Miami-Dade Traffic Control and Streets. The decision that we couldn't actually have the assessment of that intersection done until the parking garage was finished. The parking garage is finished. So last week I had a meeting with them for a couple of different issues. The tragic accident that we addressed at Altera and LeJeune Road was also on my agenda. I spoke with the director, as well as the Chief Operating Officer of Miami-Dade County. One, we're checking those lights on that intersection; second, we are redoing the evaluation to look at the intersection at Minorca and Salzedo as a four-way intersection and looking at adjusting the one at Navarre. This morning's accident was not anything to do with any kind of design. From what we've seen through the investigation, the employee waited, had the cross the street sign, crossed the street. Again, as we are seeing more and more every year, it appears the vehicle did not yield the right-of-way to the pedestrian when making a left-hand turn. This is about the third accident that we have seen in the last week. This one, again, struck down one of our employees, one of my employees. Previously as you all are aware that we had a fatality. Again, without getting into the details of the investigation, charges are pending with the State Attorney's Office, but a similar situation where the person on the scooter actually waited, we actually know that they waited, used the signalization. Whether somebody was or was not paying attention, we don't know that yet. As I said, it's still under investigation by the Traffic-Homicide Unit, and that will come from the State Attorney's Office, but we're seeing an increase. I mean, just from last year, in our reports and we just updated it. Our pedestrian bicycle fatalities in 2022, we had none; 2023 we had one; and year-to-date 2024, we've had one. Pedestrian accidents – with the information in 2023, we had 55 involving pedestrians, of which 65 percent were the vehicles' fault; pedestrian's fault was about 18 percent; 16 percent could not be determined. This year, 2024, we've had six pedestrians involved in accidents; 17 percent of those, which is one was a vehicle at fault, and five we were unable to determine exactly who was at fault. Approximately 25 percent of all our accidents involving pedestrians were due to the vehicles failing to yield to the pedestrian on or in a crosswalk while turning left to right or travelling straight. Approximately 18 percent of the accidents involving pedestrians were caused by pedestrians crossing or walking in front of moving vehicles and not crossing at designated crosswalks. So again, I think this is something that we have been trying to address every year, there's an uptick again. We have state projects that we participate in, as far as bicycle/pedestrian safety and initiatives. We've continued to rank very highly on that. In 2023, the police department received first place in the State of Florida for our traffic challenge category number five, which is exactly what we're here to talk about. Our vehicle/pedestrian safety, we received a \$16,000 grant or award specifically just to deal with bicycles as pedestrian accidents and to try to bring those down. Unfortunately, some of those are, or I should say unfortunately, but some of those are bicyclists' fault, very rarely, that we've seen, there has been a decrease in that. A lot of it, approximately 13 percent of our crashes involving bicyclists, are due to the bicyclists not following the rules of the road, i.e., failure to yield the right-of-way, failure to obey stop signs, driving with or against the flow of traffic. Approximately 46 percent of our accidents involving bicyclists are due to vehicle failure to right-of-way, i.e., the crosswalk intersections. Exactly what we've seen today and what we continue to address one on Miracle Mile, because bicycles are restricted on Miracle Mile. To the Vice Mayor's point about how we can restrict and better kind

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of educate people on both scooters and bicyclists. The ongoing issue that we see is some distraction, whether it be a device in the hand and some pedestrian crosswalks. This body is understood, and I did this last time we were up here a few years ago. When we start writing the pedestrian tickets on Miracle Mile, your phone ring as do mine; it's an \$83.00 ticket, but a lot of these issues, and I see it every day, the Assistant Chief and I, if we walk to lunch, we can be standing there in uniform and people will walk right by us and start crossing the street. So that is an ongoing problem. Specifically, about the crossing guards, the fatality accident that we're discussing, took place at 11 o'clock in the morning. The school zone enhancement laws, if you will, were not in effect. We have had an ongoing cooperation with the School Board Police. As this body knows, I have always kept the addition School Resource Officer at Gables High, even after the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Act where we have now one School Board Officer, one Coral Gables Officer that's assigned to Gables High. We have worked with the Principal and I spoke with him again last night or last week, I should say, and the School District Superintendent's Office that we have worked with them, because it's a little bit easier for us to get the children or the attendees, the students at Gables High to listen to an internal discipline issue than it is to have us out there writing tickets. It is difficult and this might be why we don't have school crossing guards on a street that big. There is a reluctance for certain aged children to listen to a school crossing guard, because we have seen that there's a certain reluctance from the same children to listen to a police officer in uniform on the street corner. So, I believe our attack, if you will, on this is to deal the three sides, because we're really talking about three sides of the school campus, Riviera, Bird, and LeJeune Road. Last year alone and writing the citations in that area as far as the enforcement is concerned is, regular school zone citations near Coral Gables High School in 2022, all around and this is Segovia to Bird, Bird to Almenar, LeJeune to Riviera, we wrote 2,658 citations. In 2023, we wrote 1,864, and the school zone violations for 2023 were 747. Today, up till March 8th, we've written all citations 154; 38 for school zone violations. Part of this body that we will have an item coming up on the next agenda will be to introduce school, I'm sorry, speed zone cameras in school zones. We have done the statutory requirement of our evaluation of where that would be. We will probably be asking to put those on LeJeune Road, and on Bird Road as well. We will look at what Riviera does. Our biggest violators within the school zone around Gables High are parents dropping off. That's probably the most tickets we write. As far as speed, we very rarely do we get speed zone tickets when the officers are there. We still regularly do that. So, I understand, right now I have three part-time and that's two hours in the morning, two hours in the afternoon crossing guards. That funding comes from the issuance of tickets through Miami-Dade County. As of right now, I've had one person that's been with us a very long time. I have one person that's since retired and passed from St. Teresa's. I don't know how St. Teresa's got that. It was, believe it or not, well before my 37 years being here, but I will have to look at those public-school areas. So, the one that gets addressed every day is on Ponce, at Ponce Elementary, along with the School Board, as well as our officers if we have too as well. Is it taxing? – Yes. I think there's a routine that we have to stay in front of. Again, this accident, this tragedy all the way around until the investigation is complete, but we nearly had another one in a totally different area of the city where there's police trucks, police cars, fire trucks around. It is a full-time operation of the Specialized Enforcement Division and the Downtown Unit to try and bring all this together. You all have seen it. I've seen it. We have people on scooters. We have people that do some pretty idiotic things on scooters and bikes. Not to say there's a lot of other people that are on their phones; the patients are less and less downtown. As we push some people off of Miracle Mile and parts of Ponce, it puts them into the

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roadway traffic, so I mean, obviously the police department is fully in support of marking up some more of our bike lanes and making it even more distinguishable. This isn't the first time in my career that we haven't had pedestrians hit for no fault of their own and trying to get cars, scooters, bicyclists, and pedestrians on the same page in our streets is something that's always going to be a challenge, but in today's day and age, we have to do even more and more. So, Commissioner, I don't want to say that I can deliver a school crossing guard, at our line budget is \$77,000. My recommendation and again, I would go through the Manager to talk about, maybe we look at what has been successful has been our part-time traffic officers. These are police officers that are working four hours in the afternoon. We might want to have a bigger discussion to see if we want to expand that from six. Now obviously, there's a fiscal impact to our budget even doing part-time officers, but it does give us the teeth that we would need for school crossing issues at Gables High School. I'm confident in our partnership with the District, as well as with the Principal that we can probably work even stronger for those crossing times, but we don't see the tragic accidents as we have in this one. This one was, again, the person on the scooter, I can tell from the preliminary investigation did everything required by law.

Commissioner Castro: I think safety should be number one no matter what, whether we have a crossing guard or we have a police officer there, whatever the case is. Mari Tere Rojas from the School Board reached out to the Commission regarding her concerns and most of the resolution was really drafted upon her recommendations. Friends of Gables High is really showing a lot of support. They sent me a letter of support for this resolution. The main thing here is safety, right, and how do we obtain that. I would hate for something – preventative strategies. I would hate for something to happen around Coral Gables High School and have spoken about this subject. These are children. These are our children. So, I think this is very important to me and Key Biscayne and LeJeune and Altara and then an employee of the police. It doesn't even matter if it was their fault or not their fault, it's happening, it's happening. Let's find a solution. I would still like to move forward. Maybe we could change the resolution to police officers or crossing guards, either or, just have somebody there, right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. I'll just like to add on, because this is a comprehensive and cohesive issue throughout our city. I do favor having a police officer there because you also have the law enforcement aspect to it, not just because you are more likely to listen to you, but you can radio in and say, hey, listen, we have a lot of speeding going on and you can have ticketing going on which helps deter. You can help identify the hot spots throughout our city that we have issues that might put Vision Zero on. Before Ms. Rojas letter came in and I did speak with her on Friday at the Sanctuary event about this idea, safety. The reality is though, in addition to having your presence there, police presence there, and infrastructure changes that we need to have our staff look at from our traffic engineer look at to see if we can improve intersection safety there going forward is we also need to educate. Okay. And reasons I say that is because I never ride my bicycle with music playing, and even then, I have those headsets that don't block my ears so that if I have to pick up a call real quick and I can pull off somewhere, I can hear, but you go on campus anywhere, whether it's a college or elsewhere and I was trying to look for Senator ___ office and I'm going like this trying to get the attention of a student, they can't hear you because they have the ear pods in. There are things like wearing lights, this is the Vision Zero thing that makes yourself a little more visible. Things I've learned from other folks when bike riding. Thank God,

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I've never been hit. I've come close a few times of being hit, but wearing white even more so than the florescent colors pay off. Making sure that the driver has their eyes on you before you proceed into that intersection, because if they don't see you, just like a truck driver, you can't see, they can't see you in the mirror they are not going to be able to see you at all. So, I have reached out to University of Miami to be part of this conversation and to make a cohesive plan for getting students to the university. We need to drive forward on issues that have reached some resistance in our community, whether it's safer bike lanes, sidewalks, things of that nature. When I plan a long ride or something, I get on a map, but new students coming into that university don't take a map, and I try to find the safest route. We can provide these students with some guidance going forward. I'm all for having an officer present at the school and they can gather observations to provide input to our traffic engineers where we have some more issues, how we can slow down traffic more, whether it has a ribbed section to slow down people more, to wake them up before they get into some of these dangerous zones, because we have three critical intersections there. We have Riviera, we have LeJeune and Bird, and we have the one on Altera and LeJeune. All involve cooperation from the state and the county for us to do anything.

Police Chief Hudak: Correct. Both those roads, to your point Vice Mayor is, those are state roads, so we will obviously have to partner with them about what that is. To you, Vice Mayor, we are giving out all the information, including the lights. We have been downtown dealing with basic laws, we give out the lights that you just mentioned that people can wear on their clothes. I'm not going to lie, we use it at night as a tool since you have to have a light on your bike when someone's not riding, it gives our officers reasonable suspicion to stop somebody in a neighborhood, so we also address that, and if they are our residents and we have those lights we'll give them a set. So, it is our multi-prong and the department convinced or committed, I should say, to actually part of working with the University to find which ways we can go. As sidewalks get added, I think that's going to help us a little bit on these issues, but again, I don't think, and again, Commissioner Castro, I don't want to thwart the idea, I think we need someone that could stop children or teenagers from crossing the street and also make sure that tickets can be issued down the road if the motorcycle unit is there. So, I don't want to pooh pooh the idea of not having somebody there. We have done this in the past. The principal has been committed to having the security from the school so if children or students don't listen, then they suffer discipline consequences which is probably a little bit bigger of an issue than getting a citation, because I just don't think citing a 16-year-old non-driver a ticket for walking against the crosswalk lights is going to work. And really the only thing a crossing guard can do is and if you've seen it is walk out with the traffic, stop it, put up the two stop signs, and then wait till everybody goes. So, those kinds of streets, and again, I think the speed cameras are going to help, because once we put those in, then I can realign some of my resources to deal with the actual people that are stopping, dropping off. I think talking to the state about seeing if there's something we can do ADA compliant with making sure people are crossing at the intersections and not the middle, because that's another issue that we have seen when pedestrians have been struck and I'm not saying specifically around Gables High, they are walking in the middle of the street. They are not well lit, but really, the only place that we can really write those is on Miracle Mile because there's a crosswalk, so it's not necessarily illegal to cross the middle of a block, unless there's a center crosswalk. So that's why we write them there. But overall, I'll take each one of you to lunch one day and we can walk down Miracle Mile and

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they think this is a Halloween costume, because they just right in front of me and I have had people argue with me in uniform about, do something else.

Commissioner Menendez: I was at Miracle Mile Saturday driving through and going north on Ponce trying to make a left onto Miracle Mile, cutting in front of Houston's, and the arrow turned green, the car in front of me made a turn and all of a sudden had to stop, because half of the 30 people that were there decided just to cross even though it said, don't cross, because there's cars turning.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It is a problem. I had a couple other anecdotes to add, since you're talking about the Mile. We have cars that actually U-turn right in the mid-block crosswalk.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, the other thing and I'm going to dovetail into your item as well for the e-bikes and lights. On the bike, I have a flashing light going daytime or nighttime, because you're going past intersections and you need that driver to realize that you're there and they are not always doing the head turn in both directions, but if you have a flashing light its more likely to catch their peripheral vision and they'll be able to see you. So, on the e-bikes itself, I mean I stay away from kids anytime I bike because they drive erratically. There's a reason why we don't give children license is to drive powered vehicles and that's because they don't understand the capacity and the dangerousness of what they're doing with that speed, and they can't manage the power behind it, and they end up hurting someone. So, I'm in favor of Regalado's proposal to give cities additional oversight and regulation on e-bikes. There are e-bikes that are capped out at 20 miles per hour, you know, saying that you're going to ban e-bikes is not the answer. Controlling the age of who can drive the e-bike can. Controlling the speed, the maximum speed that they can go is a reasonable thing to do. Not to say that I can't go pretty fast downhill on a regular bike.

Police Chief Hudak: You'll go faster than me Vice Mayor, I can promise you that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: But I've been riding for a really long, long time, so Commissioner, sorry, I kind of stole some of your thunder, but you can dovetail in on that and I'd like to see if we can do what we can both infrastructure-wise and educational-wise to make things safer for pedestrians and teach people on both ends of the spectrum that you can't have these in hand and be looking at them while you're crossing the street.

Commissioner Fernandez: And it's not just here in the downtown. I was down in Coco Plum about a resident, I know the Vice Mayor is also working with them and with the county, the crosswalk at the entrance of Coco Plum. The issue you have there is, the folks that are driving north on Old Cutler are coming through and the folks that are trying to make a left turn around the circle are just focused on the vehicle that's coming and they are trying to make that cut across and they don't have enough time to stop if somebody is in the crosswalk and they haven't seen them, because they are too focused on the vehicle. So, I think citywide we do have issues with that. That may be a topic for larger discussion on our crosswalks and it will be a conversation with the county as well, whether in some places we need elevated crosswalks, which will force people to slow down.

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I don't know that that's the situation here, but this situation you and I have spoken about for years because in the SCRC this would come up every year, beginning of the school year the issues, like you said, the biggest issue is the parents dropping their kids off in the center lane and having them cross, they literally open the door on the left hand lane and have them run into the school.

Police Chief Hudak: I've seen it at Carver when somebody is walking hand-in-hand in the middle of Grand Avenue and we have written, I mean last year when we did this, it wasn't just warnings, we wrote 186 bicycle violations last year, which average about 37 citations a month for bicyclists. Commissioner Castro, I would just like to kind of put together something a little bit more comprehensive to say, this is something we can do with the policing side of it and work together a little more comprehensively to address the resolution instead of just – I don't know if I can find somebody to work two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, because I would need four people and, I mean, the only thing we're budgeted for now from the city or from the county government is \$77,000 for the whole year.

Commissioner Fernandez: If I could provide some context to that. I know that has also been an issue that's been discussed for a while because we do have two vacant positions.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: ...that we have not been able to fill for a couple of years now. So having somebody there who can ticket is probably an option that will give this more teeth. Do you have resources right now to be able to move somebody there?

Police Chief Hudak: We would have to do it on a rotational basis. As of today, one of our longtime members who has been the part-time neighborhood traffic officer is retiring, so we need to push forward on finding those. I would recommend, and again, through the Manager, we would have to talk with Finance to see what those numbers are, because the parttime officers don't count toward our headcount, so to speak, but they are officers and that's something that we would do, because I can't take away from the cut-through traffic in the morning to put them there. I do believe once we get through the red-light or the speed cameras, that's going to reduce some of the officers, the motorcycle officers that are working speed in a zone where we can focus on some of the crossings. So, I do believe within the next month or so, we're going to have a much better, clearer vision of what you and board member Rojas want to get to. We've dealt with this before and I think in the meantime our partnership with the Principal and having two School Board police officers and a Coral Gables officer on campus, which is already being done since the accident should be a step in the right direction.

Commissioner Castro: First, I would want to thank Jessica Keller, she reached out to me several times, provided me with a lot of information that we worked with in the past and currently. I understand that we're having difficulties with the crossing guards. We have funding, I believe the \$77,000. However, of those \$77,000, we've only spent, I think, \$25,000. So maybe Communications can help with advertising for this position, besides Coral Gables High School, we're missing more schools.

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Police Chief Hudak: Right. We're only budgeted for three crossing guards in the entire city. Again, even though it is not a, we're not commensurate with the Dade County School Crossing Guards that everybody sees, a much bigger program than that. We have been focused on public schools, a majority of the private schools hire off-duty officers from this department or others, and that's pretty much how we control that in and out. The \$77,000 that we get, I believe, and I'll have to defer to legal eventually to see if those are earmarked, because of the way it's collected from the county. So, it goes specifically for crossing guards, and I don't know if we could move that to someplace else in our budget.

Commissioner Castro: I've already spoken to them. We cannot, but I'm just emphasizing the importance of covering those other schools that we don't have.

Police Chief Hudak: Those are covered by police officers. No school that we've already done. St. Teresa, and again, I don't know how St. Teresa's pulled it off, but they had a crossing guard, they have police officers. At Ponce Elementary, they have police officers there every day, making sure they're working the crosswalks.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. I did speak to Finance, Paula. We had to find the money, the \$18,000 extra dollars, extra, I think that's what we were talking about. I think we would be able to find that money.

Budget Director Rodriguez: Just for the record. So, the funds that we collect from the county, actually we collect just under \$20,000 a year. So, the portion of the tickets that we receive, we receive under \$20,000, however, we budget for three part-time crossing guards. As the Chief and you guys have spoken about, he currently has two vacancies of the three that we have budgeted and so, if the Commission directed staff, directed the City Manager to add an additional crossing guard to our budget, it is a nominal amount that we could probably identify in the fiscal year, it's not something significant. We would work with the Chief's office and the Manager to identify where those funds could come from, and we're halfway through the year, so we're not talking about a full year then we'll have to add that to next year's budget, and it would be part of the budget that's presented to you during the budget process. But given that there are vacancies, and that the Chief has been unable to hire those positions, there are those savings whether the next position hired would go to that school or another would be part of that safety plan that's coordinated through the Manager and the Chief's office.

Commissioner Castro: There's a crossing guard little course, I think required to be a crossing guard.

Police Chief Hudak: I'll put crossing guards on neighborhood streets, you know, and on Ponce with a divided median. I don't believe it's safe to have a crossing guard trying to stop traffic or making sure traffic stays stopped at LeJeune and Bird Road. You have to have the authority to issue a citation and direct a car over. We're budgeted for six part-time traffic officers and my budget shows \$430,000, \$430,600 a year. Those we can move around. So again, that's something I think we should explore, Commissioner, to say listen, during the year we can have them there. In the off years, I can use them in other areas, and they are multi-faceted. It's finding somebody to

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work two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon part-time with very little training and the background that we have to have because they're going to have access to children is almost like having a part-time police officer and those are much easier for me to hire because there's other jurisdictions that officers may want to work part-time and there's ability. If I got the two positions, I would obviously fill Ponce, right, and then possibly Junior High down there. We would keep them in a much more residential area, you know. A school crossing guard on Douglas Road or, I'm sorry, on Coral Way that I see every day. They work the light, they stand out, and they come back and if somebody blows by them, there's no consequences. I really do believe that we have to have consequences and the other issue that we have to have is modify the children's behavior with the School Resource Officers as well as an officer. So, I'm all for pushing to try and find these crossing guards. I just don't think it's safe to have somebody with no jurisdictional authority to stop somebody, pull them over, and work that.

Commissioner Castro: I understand what you're saying. I understand what you're saying. I could agree, that's why I could imagine what's happening out there, especially given the ages that's it's a high school, but I'm talking about the crossing guards and the...I'm really talking about the ones we haven't filled.

Police Chief Hudak: Right.

Commissioner Castro: Right. So, maybe Communications can help us advertise this a little more for those schools that would be priority, I mean, I'd appreciate it very much. And as far as Coral Gables High School, I would love to follow your recommendation, but I would still maybe change the language on the resolution.

City Attorney Suarez: So can I make a suggestion. Something along the lines and Chief chime in please, but perhaps a resolution of the City Commission authorizing the City Manager to address current traffic conditions near Coral Gables Senior High School through policing as determined or as needed, as determined through by the Manager and the Police Chief. We can do something like that.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes. I think if it was, I would say to direct through the Manager, instead of school crossing guards, traffic safety initiatives personnel and that way its kind of widespread. I mean I may have to put regular officers there, but in the meantime, its working in conjunction with them, I think would be an easier lift for us to do that successfully.

Commissioner Castro: Beautiful. I agree with that. I agree to that, and I would move it.

City Attorney Suarez: You can move it, certainly.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second.

City Clerk Urquia: I have members of the public requesting to speak on the item. The first speaker is Maria Cruz.

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Ms. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, that's Mrs. Maria Cruz. I've been lucky, I guess, to take my oldest granddaughter to Coral Gables High every morning, between 6:45 and 7:15, and I've seen something, I've seen a change from the last three or four. From the beginning of the school year, we had at least one motorman and a unit on the corner of Riviera and Bird in the morning, stopping parents that were dropping kids in the middle of the road. They were doing wonderfully there. Then on LeJeune right in the middle between Merrick Park, I guess around that area, and the school, there were several motormen. I remember Officer Willard, because I happen to know him and some units, they've disappeared. The last three or four weeks we haven't had anybody there. I am telling you, you take your life in your hands, because I'm going to tell you, the kids, when they were there, you could see them, a mod waiting for the light to change. They wouldn't dare step on the street. Now it's like three or four, they don't care about the light, and they keep going and that's the same on Bird and LeJeune, and the same across the parking lot. It's horrible. And I'm telling you, because I drive it every morning. What has happened is that we do not have any police presence there. I would say for sure, for sure, at least three weeks, maybe four. I've been telling my daughter; I don't know what's going on. I don't know what's going on. But they are not there. They are not there. The parents are back to the beginning of the year. You know they stop, they drop the kids, the kids get in the middle of the road, the kids get, I mean the traffic has become a nightmare, because there is no presence there.

Commissioner Castro: If I could say something. We're having vacancies.

Police Chief Hudak: As of today, we have 33 police officer vacancies, also light duties, so we have Officer Rosario, who is still recovering, another officer who is on light duty from the motor unit specifically. We continue to have 11 in backgrounds, 4 are in the academy right now. We're using two academies. We had 27 people, I think showed up for the orientation on Thursday, so we are continuing to move forward with hiring those individuals. Some of those people have just been on light duty. I mean Officer Wheeler who is a stalwart as far as working for years has retired, and Officer Smith retired, so these are people that have gone on. We've put in new motorcycle officers as well. We're also focusing on the downtown issue, so we are moving people around. People are working overtime to work those positions, whether they are on calls or not, I don't know, I would have to look at whatever days we're talking about. Again, because traffic accidents aren't just around Gables High. I understand we're focused on Gables High. Miracle Mile, we've had a motorcycle fatality at the foot of George Merrick, and we've seen it happen here. I understand, Vice Mayor, your thing, as far as people not paying attention, but I challenge any of you to ride in a rescue unit or a police car with our lights and siren on, and people don't get out of the way, they're just not paying attention. It's alarming. It is. Again, we continue to work those areas, Major Boblitz actually has the specialize enforcement division and when we have these issues come up, and again, I have to go back to this tragic accident on Altera was at 11 o'clock and everything seemed to have worked right. We are checking with Dade County, who controls all the traffic lights. It seems to be cycling correctly and if we can change that, we can change that, monitoring or managing parents' actions and children's actions, or students, not even children's, is something that as police we have to do. But I do believe that when the speed cameras get in place around there, and part of that speed camera law is also, if you go 20 miles an hour over the speed limit during school, not even during a school zone, its another ticket. So, I believe that is going to help allocate some more positions so that we can actually repurpose those officers that are there. Some

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officers have been transferred out of the motor unit and I've had one or two put in. So, I think focusing on the part-time traffic officers could be a quick fix for officers who like to do traffic, and some of ours have been with us a very long time.

Commissioner Castro: With all the vacancies we have, it only puts a lot more pressure on the officers we do have, and I want to say how appreciative I am and how much it means of all the overtime they are working and all the hard work they're putting in.

Police Chief Hudak: Listen, I can't say enough about the officers that are here and that continue to come in every day, and there's a lot of young officers because of our contract we have to start with the young when we have to hold people over, and I think that takes a toll on them as well. So, I can assure you that our background unit in the police department and HR, under the director are pushing ahead and we've had probably more people apply to us recently and we're going to continue and when negotiations are done, I think we're going to have another hold different attack for certified officers that I think are going to help fill some of those vacancies. The ripple effect of the vacancies is what I think we're seeing. But there's always going to be boots on the ground. I think everybody needs to know that. That's my job to make sure, no matter how many people leave, we are going to have people on the ground, and I want to get those back.

Mayor Lago: Chief, thank you sir. Mr. Clerk, do you have anyone.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes. Mr. Mayor, I have one more speaker, it's going to be on Zoom and it's Jessica Keller.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Keller, good afternoon.

Ms. Keller: Good afternoon, this is Jessica Keller. I wanted to start by saying, I wish there was a little bit more enthusiasm about transportation, traffic safety as there is pickleball and we wouldn't be having these conversations. Initially, I wanted to speak in opposition to F-11 in its previous form. Chief Hudak did a good job articulating some of the reasons why I opposed it in its original form. And we've also spent a lot of time talking about enforcement and education in these matters, but we're not talking quite enough about the engineering component of addressing safety. I really would like to see the Florida Department of Transportation brought into the discussion. I'm aware of a project that is planned for the corridor, which includes lowering the speed limit along that portion of LeJeune Road. So coupled with lowering the speed limit on LeJeune Road and the speed cameras that the Chief mentioned, I think it will improve the situation, but engineering needs to be considered in the discussion as well. That's all. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Is there any further discussion in regard to this matter? Okay. So, there's a motion and a second, correct.

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City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir. Just to confirm, I have a motion and a second on agenda item F-11.

City Attorney Suarez: As modified.

Vice Mayor Anderson: As modified, yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes – F-11.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item F-12. We had a discussion item on that. We've already talked about that or we're going to continue moving forward on that.

City Attorney Suarez: F-12 – I read it into the record and so you all, I don't know if there's any action by the Commission.

Mayor Lago: Before we take action, unless there's more commentary, I just wanted to add one last thing to it before. Do we know what we're actually voting on? Is there an actual piece of legislation that the County Commissioner has proffered?

City Attorney Suarez: So, I'm going to ask the Deputy City Attorney to explain what the resolution as drafted provides and what we know about Commissioner Regalado's efforts.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone, Stephanie Throckmorton, Deputy City Attorney. The item before you today is a resolution in support of the County Commissioner's efforts to allow cities additional oversight and regulation of e-bikes, scooters, and micro-mobility devices. We have heard word that an item is coming, we do not have the item in front of us at the moment. It's my understanding it should be published with the next BCC agenda, but we do not have a draft item in front of us. My understanding is that it will be an effort to allow some sort of additional oversight over county roads, but again, I don't have the full story on what that legislation would be.

Mayor Lago: Just two points really quickly, and again, we can move on. I'm in support of more oversight. There are two main points here; number one, we have preemption by the state, which I think is critically important and we don't even know if we don't have actual legislation being presented to us. I'm of the belief that I think that we should wait to see what is going to be presented before us, before we make a resolution taking action on legislation that doesn't exist at the present. While I agree wholeheartedly there should be regulations on e-bikes, again, speed control, micromobility devices, I agree, but I'm of the belief that we should wait till the next Commission meeting with her legislation and do a resolution of support, this is just a resolution of support, but

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at least we know what we're supporting because right now I have not seen any legislation. I looked for legislation and I asked both City Attorneys at our meeting at my pre-agenda yesterday and they said we don't have any actual legislation.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: That's correct.

Mayor Lago: Unless we want to move forward, we can support.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor, I do agree, but I do think we can share our thoughts with the Commissioner directly.

Mayor Lago: I agree.

Vice Mayor Anderson:...Each one of us. I did express some thoughts as well when you're talking about age limits on powerful machinery, depending on its needs.

City Attorney Suarez: If I may Mayor. On that point though, please address the state pre-exemption, because we are very limited, even if the county were to let us have some oversight, we are very limited as to what we would be able to do on those county roads, nonetheless.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Sure. Given a fair number of preemptions adopted by the state with sort of an all or nothing situation when it comes to e-bikes and scooters, there's some limits. We have speed limits set for scooters within our city on our sidewalks. We allow scooters on our sidewalks. We allow bikes on our sidewalks unless its posted, and we have postings in certain areas, mainly on Miracle Mile and up and down Ponce and a few blocks. E-bikes under state law need to be treated exactly like bicycles, so whatever regulations you have in place for bicycles also apply to e-bikes. There used to be the ability to regulate the age of e-bike riders, that was taken away in recent legislation and attempts to bring that back this legislative session did not succeed. So, while we welcome the opportunity always to have more additional oversight in our county, in our city from county roads, I'm not sure how much we will be limited and what we're able to do by the state preemptions. So again, we would have to see what the county would give us and then in accordance with state law what we could or could not do.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. So, what I'm thinking is, let's go ahead and defer this item to the next Commission meeting till we have some clear idea of what she really is presenting.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Of course. And we'll work with Fernando in the Manager's office to make sure to keep you all updated on whatever Bills or whatever legislation gets proposed at the county in the next few weeks.

Mayor Lago: My recommendation, if I may again, call Mr. Escada and he can give real oversight in regard to and a real understanding in regard to what the proposal is, even potentially before it even hits the BCC.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: We have reached out already, and we will continue to do so.
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Mayor Lago: I know. I reached out too.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.