

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C
February 13, 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, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Eloy Garcia
Maria Cruz
Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item C [9:45 a.m.]
Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Moving to Public Comment.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker today, Mr. Mayor, is Eloy Garcia.

Mayor Lago: May I ask you a quick question? Would you prefer to wait to speak during the item or speak in Public Comment so you could leave.

Mr. Garcia: Yes. Public Comment would be fine. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

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Mr. Garcia: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Honorable Commission, City Administration. My name is Eloy Garcia and I'll probably be the most objective individual you'll hear from today in regard to my support for your City Manager Peter Iglesias. I don't live in the city. Unfortunately, I moved out of the city from the Craft Section many years ago and I regret it to this day, because you have a beautiful city. I don't work for the city. I don't conduct business with the city, unless you count when I come with my family to eat at your lovely restaurants which are amazing, but I met Mr. Iglesias in 2014. At that point, the City of Miami was going through the largest building boom ever. I became the City Fire Marshall. I inherited a fire prevention bureau in which more than half of them, over 40 individual divisions were retiring due to the end of their DROP. I needed to find someone I can rely on, someone with the knowledge, with the experience, and the trustworthiness that I needed at the time. And at that time, Mr. Iglesias was the Building Director and the Building Official, and we immediately bonded. We worked together; we accomplished many things. I was always able to reach out to him for assistance, and we worked together. There wasn't one time that a developer would not go to Mr. Iglesias and request something, he said, what did Fire say. Or not one time that they would come to me and say, what did Building say? And I would reply the same thing. So, that was important because Mr. Iglesias was able to navigate what I call the three legs of this tripod. One is live safety, number one. Not only from the discipline of Fire, but from the discipline of Building that's structural, electrical, mechanical, elevator, but he also knew the other leg which was the business community and how important it is for the revenues of the city; and lastly, politics. Yes, politics. And why do I say politics, because as they asked once, Collin Powell said is there politics in the military? He said, there's politics in all endeavors. So, I will conclude today by telling you one story, because that's what you do when you get older and you have gray hair, like I do, it's called experience. We were in a meeting with an elected official and Mr. Iglesias said to that elected official, Mr. so and so, I'm going to work with you. I'll work with you, this is like a football field, from sideline to sideline, but what I won't do is go out of bounds. When we left and I said, Peter, that was great, I'm going to steal that from you, and he goes to me, Eloy, after 30 years in this business whether in the public or in the private sector, I'm not going to end my career with egg on my face. That's the individual you have. So, I support Mr. Iglesias. I hope you do too. However, and this is the most important statement, always after the however or but, if they choose not to support you, you're always welcomed back. Thank you very much for your time and thank you very much for your service.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Maria Cruz.

Ms. Cruz: Good morning, Maria Cruz, Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I guess some people are going to be surprised, because I think we have to wait for the right time....is very clear, there's a time for everything, and this is not the time for what people expect me to say today. Actually, I'm here to bring back an item that I discussed and was told by Mr. Iglesias that the plans were already in. I'm talking about the sidewalks around Doctor's Hospital. As you all know, and I'm not going to go into details, I had the sad opportunity to be sitting at Doctor's Hospital for ten days till my husband passed away, but we had a lot of people that came, and they all brought about, what a shame that we have to walk on the street, because there is no sidewalks to get to this

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building. And I know that we discussed it. I know that that was one of the things that Doctor's Hospital/Baptist was supposed to do, we were so nice and allowed them to buy the parking lot across the street. I know like I said, last time I brought it up, the plans were in. Well, the plans may be getting a lot of dust, maybe wetness if they are in the right part of the building where the water comes in, but the plans haven't happened yet, and people need to be able to get to Doctor's Hospital. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, before we go onto the next person, I'd like to address that. So, when we were in the process of negotiating the sale of the surface parking lot across the street to Doctor's Hospital, I made the request at the eleventh hour before we voted that Doctor's Hospital, I will vote no on the item unless Doctor's Hospital fully funded the sidewalks around the entire facility and helped us connect to University, which is probably about, I would say 80 to 85 percent completed over the last six months. Being in construction and having an understanding of what it takes, not only did we have to get it funded, not only was it funded, but we also had to do surveys, we had to do plans. This is a process that takes time. Mr. Manager, can you give us a quick update in regard to where we are right now, because this is a project that is, again, three blocks from my house, if anybody has an interest in regard to seeing this project completed is myself.

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, of course, Mayor. The Public Works Director is here, and he'll give us an update.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Diaz, will you please provide us with some clarity and provide the actual information in regard to where we are, funding, and also where we are in regard to the design phase and implementation.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes. Good morning, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director. So, we're finalizing the design for basically the remaking of Pisano, which is between UM and the hospital, and we should get probably, we hope its 100 percent drawings by the end of this week, there may be additional comments, the county will review it, very minor things that they want us to do there. My understanding is that the sidewalk on the University, that's when the parking lot gets redeveloped.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Public Works Director Diaz: Because right now there's no space on University to build the sidewalk until the parking gets redone and gets pushed back, but on Pisano, which is the one that we're working on, we should have what we hope is final plans or maybe with some small comments left over towards the end of this week.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, it's a multiple step process.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mayor Lago: We're moving forward. The funding is already in place as a result of a deal that we struck, so that's not an issue that we have to worry about.

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Public Works Director Diaz: The hospital will pay for it.

Mayor Lago: Sidewalks take time. It takes input; you have to do surveys; you have to do plans, but also, let's be very careful with the information that we say here, because this is a project that, as you know, I have a project put on the agenda, I don't know, 7 or 8 times in an effort, along with Blue Road and I have the item again on the agenda today to show you some pictures of Blue Road and trying to get those sidewalks also accomplished.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, in the case of Pisano, we're not just putting a sidewalk, we are basically redoing the entire east side, there's some drainage that goes along with that, there's some corrections to the cross-section of the street that needs to happen. So, it's a little more involved than just the sidewalk itself.

Mayor Lago: Yes. So, I welcome my colleagues who would like to get engaged in this issue. Please join me and help me push this over the hump, because I think its an opportunity to finally connect University of Miami with University and hopefully we can go to Blue Road, we can go down Blue Road and connect to Riviera and then make a left on Granada, and I would love to see us do Granada next, which is something that I think is so sorely needed all the way to the bridge, which will then connect us to Blue Road. I appreciate the update and I look forward to, hopefully, next week when the plans are finally completed, and the county has given their comments, so that we can please send it to the Commission through the Manager. Through the Manager, please provide it to us also so we can review it.

Public Works Director Diaz: One hundred percent.

Commissioner Fernandez: If I may, Mr. Mayor. Mr. Manager, would it be possible to add this to the updates on the city's website similar to Burger Bob's, just so that residents have a place to go just to get an update.

Public Works Director Diaz: Absolutely. Not a problem.

City Manager Iglesias: Of course.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Rip Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Holmes: Thanks. So, I have good news, great news. True or false – in most of our lives mostly we get bad news, but sometimes we hit the jackpot, and we get great news. So, what's the great news for the City of Coral Gables, two different doses. Probably the biggest one, I think, is fighting climate change. Gavin Newsom, the Governor of California is now suing the oil companies. The U.S. Supreme Court has okayed it. So, nobody can stop him, and this is the beginning of the end

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of the oil companies, like with the tobacco companies. So, they've been trying to drown us here in Coral Gables for how many years. We've been planning our deaths, death by drowning to climate change caused by the oil companies. We can even sue them ourselves and now there's life after death, right. We can sink the oil companies before they sink us. That's item number one. The other piece of great news for the City of Coral Gables is, the light at the end of the tunnel, we can take down, we can end Citizens United. Citizens United as we know has, unfortunately corrupted even local elections so that developers can contribute four times more than all voters combined to our elections, corrupting the whole thing, right, but now the federalist society, remember this name, Sheldon Whitehouse, Senator of Rhode Island, he has now proven that the federalist society got Citizens United passed through the bribery, people like Clarence Thomas, we've seen that in the news, Clarence Thomas, and that whole decision is a corrupt decision and the federalist society made the big mistake of supporting President Trump's crimes, opening the door to the FBI investigating them. There is light at the end of the tunnel. We can end Citizens United and its depressing effect on our government. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

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

Mayor Lago: Okay.