

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item E-8**  
**May 7, 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**

**Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item E-8 [3:22 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission approving the vacation of a public right-of-way pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-211, “Abandonment and Vacations” and City Code Chapter 62, Article 8 “Vacation, abandonment and closure of streets, easements and alleys by private owners and the city; application process, ” providing for the vacation of the seventy (70) foot wide Biltmore Drive between Lots 1 and 2 in Block 25 and Lot 1 in Block 27, Riviera Section Part 1 (757 Blue Road), Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date. (Legal description on file). (04 10 24 PZB recommended approval, Vote: 6-0)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item E-8.

City Attorney Suarez: E-8 is an Ordinance of the City Commission approving the vacation of a public right-of-way pursuant to Zoning Code Article 14, “Process,” Section 14-211, “Abandonment and Vacations” and City Code Chapter 62, Article 8 “Vacation, abandonment and

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closure of streets, easements and alleys by private owners and the city; application process, ” providing for the vacation of the seventy (70) foot wide Biltmore Drive between Lots 1 and 2 in Block 25 and Lot 1 in Block 27, Riviera Section Part 1 (757 Blue Road), Coral Gables, Florida; providing for a repealer provision, severability clause, and providing for an effective date. This is a quasi-judicial item. So, everyone who should be speaking on this item should be sworn in.

City Clerk Urquia: Please stand and raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm the testimony you’ll provide today will be the truth and nothing but the truth.

All: I do.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Director how are you sir.

Public Works Director Diaz: Good afternoon, Hermes Diaz, Public Works Director. So, the reason we’re here is for the closure of the unimproved portion of the Biltmore Drive right-of-way. The section of Biltmore Way was created by the Riviera Section 1, Plat Book 28-31. It was originally intended to close the waterway; however, this connectivity is no longer feasible. The section of Biltmore Drive between Blue Road and the waterway was left unimproved. So, we’re planning to close approximately 14,500 of the right-of-way; three-quarters of this vacation will be used towards the Blue Road Park. This is an aerial view of the area in question for the park. The green space right next to it, in between the single-family homes, that is the right-of-way that we want to vacate. This side is currently used to provide waterway access for canal maintenance. We had an original design concept that was in October 2021 with the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Grant. We have a matching grant of \$200,000 as part of the park. We had a community meeting on May 2023, and this is a project that we’re planning to have completed by June of 2025, in accordance with the grant requirement. So, we ask the Commission to hopefully approve the right-of-way vacation.

Mayor Lago: So, this is a project that I’ve been working on with the team for some time.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Its right next to my house. Can you go back. I want to show the picture of the overhead of the park. This would feed into the area where we now have the approvals for the sidewalks. We’d just be missing the sidewalks across Granada, and we keep moving forward to where this bridge is; and if you get the bridge done here, there are no sidewalks in that area.

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mayor Lago: So, I think it would be a good opportunity to start having a dialogue with the residents in that area who have significant space in front of Blue Road to see how we can show them, look, the sidewalk has been built in front of the park and it will take you to the bridge and then you go over the bridge and then we have a side yard there, which will continue adding the sidewalks that go all the way to Riviera Country Club, all that connectivity, while hopefully get buy-in from the residents, as we said, down Granada, down Blue Road, and just continue to add more and more connectivity in regards to sidewalks.

Public Works Director Diaz: Something to note. When you vacate a right-of-way the abutting property owners have their rights reversal, so generally speaking this will mean that that right-of-way will be divided by the city who owns the partial park on one side and the property owner on the other one. But the owner has agreed to give us half of the half, so I guess that's how we're getting three-quarters of the full right-of-way instead of just half.

Mayor Lago: This is expanding – this will expand the park, make it look larger and I think that one of the big things that we need to work on here is, once we're done with everything here, we've done this for some time, is to get the sidewalks installed so we can start working with the neighborhoods so they can say, look, here it is, here's a testament that sidewalks are being installed, especially for example, down Biltmore Way, Biltmore Drive, excuse me. It's a major issue there and Blue Road is a major issue, there's no sidewalks. So, every day when I come home and I drive down that street, you see people walking on the street and it's difficult, difficult to navigate that area. There's a lot of traffic. That's a cut-through street and that's why just a little bit more background. If you look at Biltmore Drive, you can see the roundabout there. Biltmore Drive was the first place that I remember that when we were talking about doing traffic calming, we installed the plastic humps, remember.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Plastic traffic calming – and we tested it out at Biltmore Drive with the residents there, probably like six or seven years ago.

Public Works Director Diaz: Right.

Mayor Lago: And then that bear fruit, we tested it out and now they have a permanent traffic calming, but that was one of the first places that we got county approval to just put something temporary to test it out to see what the impacts would be. But there is no sidewalk, so the people there walk in the middle of the street.

Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, it is dangerous. Hope we have any public comment. I'm ready to move it.

Mayor Lago: I make a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Public Works Director Diaz: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. When do you think we will start? Hermes, Mr. Diaz, when do you think we will start?

Public Works Director Diaz: I think we're getting the final plans probably this week and it's just a matter of putting out to Procurement, so probably in about four months we'll have a contractor on board, maybe a little less.

Mayor Lago: You think we can do all the sidewalks down Blue Road by then or no?

Public Works Director Diaz: It will be close.

Mayor Lago: If we can connect those three bridges it would be amazing.

Public Works Director Diaz: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Great work.