

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
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

Asset Manager, Zeida Sardinas

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-1 [3:05 p.m.]

Update on Le Parc Café
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item F-1. Thank you so much.

Commissioner Fernandez: Le Parc. I've asked, I've spoken to the Manager and the ACM about a few of the issues that residents have been having with Le Parc. I know conversations have already taken place and some of those issues have been addressed. Ms. Sardinas.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Good afternoon, Mayor, Commissioners, Zeida Sardinas, Asset Manager. Commissioner, we prepared a small presentation if you want to provide an update. So, Bonjour LLC took over operations at the café on November 27, 2023, when it entered into a three-month license agreement with the city. That agreement was from 11-27 to 2-27. The agreement included a three-month renewal between 2-27 and 5-27, at the City Manager's discretion. The Interim City Manager granted that renewal and Bonjour will continue operating the café until May 27th. Regarding Bonjour's performance, since taking over the operation of the café, from 11-27, *City Commission Meeting*
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Bonjour expanded the café operating hours to seven days per week, Monday through Saturday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., and on Sunday from 8 to 5. Bonjour has also provided additional varieties of baked goods, cakes and specialty menu items that have met with positive feedback from the community. In coordination with the city's Communication Department, combined marketing initiatives were implemented to develop content and increase followers on the Le Parc Instagram page. Bonjour LLC has also promoted the Le Parc location on its established Instagram pages. Bonjour LLC has also taken responsibility for some of the city's expenses and operating costs. With respect to customer satisfaction, the customer feedback results on the Toast system showed that out of 33 respondents, the café received 29 positive and 4 negative readings. Toast positive and negative readings were attributed to atmosphere, wait time, service and food quality categories, and the Google reviews for Le Parc are almost at four and-a-half stars. So, we also wanted to update you regarding sales. So, as you can see from this graph, Le Parc sales, since Bonjour took over on 11-27, increased substantially. This slide compares sales year-over-year between November 27 and February 28 for Bonjour and the former operator. It's important to note that the sales that you see here from the former operator include beer and wine sales, but Bonjour only started selling beer and wine on February 14th. In this next slide, we compared the total overall sales. As you can see during the first 90 days, Le Parc overall sales have increased by 37 percent year-over-year. And for the month of February, the increase in year-over-year sales was even more impressive, which is an increase of 51 percent. Going forward, the city expects that revenues will continue to increase, and Le Parc implements additional revenue generating initiatives. These include the beer and wine sales has started February 14th, Sunday brunch, corporate catering, community recreation, special event catering. In addition, menu items which include three different types of burgers. So, in response to the city's request and in an effort to improve customer service and customer experience, this past weekend Bonjour increased its service personnel by 50 percent for weekends. Also starting tomorrow, Bonjour is increasing its personnel during weekday peak hours of operation to provide Le Parc customers with additional and faster service. As such, during the next 30 days, the City Manager's office will be coordinating individual meetings with each of you to discuss the next steps for Le Parc operations after the current agreement expires on May 27th.

Commissioner Menendez: Question regarding the presentation. Have we been able to pinpoint what has triggered the numbers to increase the revenue? I know that they have a lot more small items, like when you go in there are things that go in the fridge or whatever that you can grab and pick which wasn't there before. I know when you go shopping at Publix, when you go to pay, there's all the chocolate bars and the National Inquire and you just grab what you can, and you throw it, and you pay for it. I would imagine that helps in the process. Do we know if more people are going or if it's just that you're buying more?

Asset Manager Sardinas: I think it has a lot to do with supply. I think before we had limited amounts of supply per day that was out there. I think they had to do a lot more different types of items. So, if you noticed there's a lot of like, the desserts and other things that are there. People can order cakes; they can do things. So, I think that that has a lot to do with it. I just think they have a lot of efficiencies and ability to be able to promote those sales, but they are doing substantially better.

Commissioner Menendez: My only other question was, just out of curiosity and if we don't have the information, we don't have the information. It's wonderful that whatever negative rating was like seven percent or some number, do we have a sense as to what it was that we're doing that perhaps was not to the liking of some people. I mean it's always good to figure out is there something we can do better.

Asset Manager Sardinas: I read the responses on Google. I took the time and I also read the ones that Carolina, I didn't want to like list them here to be able to...

Commissioner Menendez: Just a general idea.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes, and we have had conversations with them. I think the staffing will help a lot to offset some of the wait time and things like that which are really what irks people the most. I think also, it's a process, right. So, we've been at this for 90 days. They have to kind of look at the numbers, see when their sales are at their peak, and make sure that they're staffed appropriately. So, we're kind of providing them with a little bit of time to be able to do that, right, to be able to adjust, given the data that they're getting from Toast of when the most sales are, and seeing the way time is, and seeing the responses. Just because we have the majority of good reviews, doesn't mean we don't pay attention to the ones that are not so great.

Commissioner Menendez: No, of course.

Asset Manager Sardinas: And that we ask them not to address them. The Deputy City Manager has been very adamant about having us have that conversation and through the Manager, to be able to talk to them and to say, hey, they're here, and they have access to the data too. They don't control Toast in the sense of where the money goes and everything else, because we pay them out, but they do have access to see all of that.

Commissioner Menendez: I appreciate it. Those are my only two questions. Thank you.

Commissioner Fernandez: As far as, right now there is counter ordering. Are they going to bring back table ordering?

Asset Manager Sardinas: I've not discussed that with them. They have got the system set across all of their different locations and they handle it that way. I mean if it's a conversation that you want us to have with them, we're more than happy to have it.

Commissioner Fernandez: The only reason I say that is, there's about, in the restaurant industry is about 20-25 percent of sales that take place at the table after you consume your meal, whether its coffee or desserts that could be a trigger for additional sales, just putting it out there. Obviously, whatever their model is that's what they are employing and that's what they're good at, and the numbers are heading in the right direction. But just food for thought. Even if it's just coming around the table and see if people want something additional. They can still order at the counter, but if you want something else, they can maybe process that additional order at the table.

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Asset Manager Sardinas: Okay. We'll definitely have that conversation with them.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. What percentage is Bonjour paying the city?

Asset Manager Sardinas: So, we are doing – we did 85/15 of revenue, which is what is working out now. They did take over some of the things that we were doing that were bringing us costs on the other side, like they are taking care of the janitorial, which was a very large expense for us, because it's an outsourced service. So, they have taken over that, that made quite a difference. But yes, we're doing 85/15.

Commissioner Castro: So, my real question here is, how much are we under?

Asset Manager Sardinas: Well, I'm trying to gather the new costs, Commissioner. As a matter of fact, this morning I just got the update from Mitch on some of that. When we go meet with you individually, we'll go through, we can go through the numbers if that's okay with you.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. Because I know we're under. I know that it's not paying for the full expenses that it's supposed to be paying for.

Asset Manager Sardinas: No. No. Now we are meeting expenses. We weren't before, but we are now. So, I need to be able to look before I make statements because I just got the – Mitch was out yesterday, and he was supposed to get me that back. So, I'm going to go through it and then we'll set up individual meetings so you guys can look at it.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Just want to really applaud the changes that have been made. I think the budget speaks loudly that people are liking the positive change and as the word gets out more and more that this is now more hospitable, wider menu, broader menu for people to be able to dine at with better hours and consistency. I think we're going to be doing very well there. So, thank you for all your hard work, you know. It's important for our residents to be able to have a place to go.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Well, that's great. I think it's not only me. The Parks Department really has a lot. They put a lot of time into being sure that they are directed and that the day-to-day operations works. And again, the Assistant City Manager has been great at directing us to make sure that the relationship is working fine.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And if anybody had had an opportunity to go back-of-house with what that place used to be and compared to now, it's more than night and day. It was incredible that it even operated in the condition it was in before.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Well, that's definitely the Parks Department.

Vice Mayor Anderson: My kudos to them. They did a remarkable job.

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Mayor Lago: So, Zeida, just a few questions. So, when would these changes be made? I saw for example, the 88 percent approval rating. What I'm most interested in is the Google rating, because you can have somebody walk in there and say, hey listen, go and eat and leave me a positive review, correct.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes.

Mayor Lago: On Google, again, you have less control. It's actually people writing there, and they have to leave their information and it's verified, correct.

Asset Manager Sardinas: So, I took a very close look at that, Mayor, and I looked at it because its cumulative, right, so it goes way back, right. It's not just since November, right. So, I took a look at the one since November, and I went to the trouble of doing the number to make sure that it hasn't upset the averages from before.

Mayor Lago: So, what you're saying is that since Le Parc...

Asset Manager Sardinas: Its not that its better or – so the 4.4 was there before. I can't go historically, but at least I took my time to pull out the recent ones. And again, the ones that I pulled out that had issues, had a lot to do with the wait time.

Mayor Lago: So, it's not like we implemented something this week that has gone gangbusters and everything is going perfect. It's something that has been going on for some time now.

Asset Manager Sardinas: Yes. Well, in November, I think when the change happened, Parks took it over for a little bit of time and they were supplying the food, and we were doing that and then they finally took over with their employees. I think that again, the amount of choices that people have and the ability of what we've put out has really made a difference.

Mayor Lago: That's great. I appreciate it. Perfect. Thank you, Zeida.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.