

MINUTES
2nd Budget Hearing
September 26, 2024
6:30 p.m.
Government Center
6601 Main Street
Miami Lakes, Florida 33014

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The Town Clerk, Gina M. Inguanzo, called the roll at 6:43pm. Councilmember Dieguez, Councilmember Collazo, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Morera, Councilmember Ruano, Vice Mayor Fernandez and Mayor Cid were present.

2. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Budget Officer, Ms. Melissa Hernandez, led the prayer.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Town Clerk, Ms. Gina M. Inguanzo, led the Pledge of the Allegiance.

4. ORDER OF BUSINESS (DEFERRALS/ADDITIONS/DELETIONS):

Councilmember Morera motioned to move the agenda, and it was seconded by Councilmember Collazo. The motion passed unanimously.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS: (4:25)

(Phonetic spelling of each speaker's name will be used throughout the minutes unless correct spelling is known.)

The Town Clerk, Gina M. Inguanzo, welcomed everyone to the Second Budget Hearing.

Ms. Rosario Navarro came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She expressed her concerns regarding the allocation funds to the intended to the Senior Community Center. She explained that, if possible, the funds should stay at Mary Collins Community Center. She stated that if the funds are taken out, they might never come back. She mentioned that if the Town Council knew that there were going to run short on money, then the Town Council should have set the Millage Rate at a higher rate. She urged the Town Council to keep the seniors in mind as they are making budgetary decisions.

Ms. Dorothy “Dottie” Wix came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She explained that this past summer Vice Mayor Fernandez hosted a bingo event for the seniors at Town Hall that very successful. She urged the Town Council to consider the possibility of hosting more events for the Seniors at Town Hall.

Mr. Maurits Acosta came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. He explained that although the Youth Activities Task Force Committee budget has remained constant, the prices for hosting events have increased. He further explained that it has been difficult for the committees to get sponsorships. He urged the Town Council to take these issues into consideration when making their decisions.

Ms. Soto Gonzalez came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She explained that the Youth Activities Task Force is requesting an increase in funds. She further explained that this increase in funds would support community engagement initiatives, like the proposed Town of Miami Lakes Spelling Bee. She urged the Town Council to consider their request for additional funding with the vision of a brighter future for the Miami Lakes community.

Ms. Esther Colon came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She first thanked Ms. Grant and Ms. Inguanzo for emailing her the financials as she had requested them via public records. She stated that she has reviewed all the documents and explained that with the flat tax that is being proposed, which is not a tax increase, you are generating a 1.3 extra property tax ad valorem property income. So, she stated that we are getting \$1.3 million more in property taxes without even increasing the taxes. She stated that the Building Department has over \$2 million dollars in reserves. She explained that based on these numbers the Town Council should consider lowering permit prices. She also mentioned that there is \$170,000 allocated for speed humps and she mentioned that she is upset with the fact that in May, her neighbors asked for speed humps on Palmetto Palm, and within 90 days, the speed humps were installed. She stated that is being selective and she mentioned that Councilmember Ruano had specifically requested for the speed humps on Palmetto Palm to be included on the bottom of the list. She also mentioned that incident of the pressure cleaning of a sidewalk that was done by a senior resident because allegedly it was not cleaned properly by the town vendor, and she urged the Town Council to restore \$250,000 dollars back to the Senior Center Fund.

The Town Clerk, Gina M. Inguanzo, stated for the record that there was only one participant for public comments on-line.

There being no further public comments, Mayor Cid then closed Public Comments.

6. ORDINANCES – FIRST READING:

- A. AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE MILLAGE RATE OF THE TOWN FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2024, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, PURSUANT TO SECTION 200.065, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR DIRECTIONS TO TAX COLLECTOR; PROVIDING FOR NOTICE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The Deputy Town Attorney Lorenzo Cobiella read the title of the ordinance into the record. He reminded everyone that the discussion needs to be only on the millage rate exclusively. He explained that after this item, the discussion will be on the budget.

Councilmember Morera made a motion to move the ordinance in second hearing and the motion was seconded by Councilmember Collazo.

The Town Manager, Edward Pidermann, read into the record the following statement: the proposed millage rate for Fiscal year 2024-25 is 2.0732 and this rate is the same as the current year. The gross taxable value for operating purposes is four billion, eight hundred and ninety-one million, nine hundred and thirty-one thousand and one hundred and six dollars (\$4,891,931,106). The proposed millage rate will generate nine million, six hundred and thirty-four thousand eight hundred and fifty-four dollars (\$9,634,854) in Ad Valorem revenue budgeted at 95% collection rate. The proposed millage rate of 2.0732 is 7.9% above the rollback rate 1.9208.

Mayor Cid asked the Budget Officer, Ms. Melissa Hernandez, if the Town Council votes tonight for a 1.5% reduction in the millage rate, what would that be? Shortly thereafter, Vice Mayor Fernandez asked the Budget Officer, if the Town Council were to reduce the millage rate by 2.6%, what would that be?

The Budget Officer, Ms. Melissa Hernandez, answered questions posed by the Town Council. She stated that a 1.5% reduction in the millage rate, would reduce the millage rate to 2.0421, and it would be about \$144,532 less in Ad Valorem revenues. The Budget Officer then stated that a 2.6% reduction in the millage rate, would reduce the millage rate to 2.0193, and it would be about \$250,491 less in Ad Valorem revenues.

Vice Mayor Fernandez made a motion to set the millage rate at 2.0193, to do a 2.6% cut in the millage rate. Councilmember Garcia seconded the motion.

Vice Mayor Fernandez explained his thought process for him requesting the 2.6% reduction in the millage rate. He stated that by Town Charter, the mayor's salary is set at a certain amount and that it increases yearly by CPI. The CPI number that was used in the Proposed Budget calculation was 2.6%, and he stated that the Town Manager is contemplating a 3.0% COLA increase for Town Staff. So, Vice Mayor Fernandez stated that his idea is -across the border- to match everything. He explained that he would like to give the employees a 2.6% COLA and to give the residents a 2.6% worth of relief, by reducing the millage rate by 2.6%. He added that a 2.6% reduction means \$250,491 reduction and that he has some ideas on the where in the budget to find that. During this discussion, Vice Mayor Fernandez stated that reducing the COLA from 3% to 2.6%, would result in somewhat a substantial reduction and he also stated that instead of transferring \$250,000 from the Senior Center to the Sinking Fund, he stated that the Sinking Fund should be funded from another source and from the carryforward.

The Town Clerk called the roll on the amendment from Vice Mayor Fernandez to set the millage rate at 2.0193, which is a reduction of 2.6% of the millage rate. The motion failed 3-4; Councilmember Collazo, Councilmember Dieguez, Councilmember Morera and Councilmember Ruano voted in opposition.

Then, Mayor Cid made a motion to lower the millage rate to 2.0421, which is a reduction of 1.5% of the millage rate. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garcia.

During the discussion of his amendment, Mayor Cid explained that after listening to Vice Mayor Fernandez' thought process and explanation, he thinks it's doable. The Budget Officer was asked to provide what would be the .4% COLA decrease in total salaries (from 3% COLA reduced to 2.6%), because that would generate a surplus. The Budget Officer stated that reducing the COLA by .4%, amounts to \$15,491.

Vice Mayor Fernandez then added that the second funding source he identified was the sinking fund -he would like the sinking fund to be funded at a lower level. He stated that traditionally it has been funded at \$150,000 or \$250,000, but that this current year its being funded at \$316,000. Councilmember Collazo stated that he does not want to underfund the sinking fund. Vice Mayor Fernandez then stated that he was able to identify with the Town Manager and with the Budget Officer, a line item to make the Senior Center whole.

Councilmember Garcia then asked the Town Manager to look at existing open positions and to see the total salaries that could be saved if those positions are not filled. Town Manager Pidermann mentioned the 4 positions that are currently opened and an average of what the positions make. Councilmember Garcia then asked the Budget Officer if they lower the millage rate by 1%, what would that be? The Budget Officer stated it would be \$96,200 less in ad valorem revenues and that would be setting the millage rate at 2.0525.

Councilmember Collazo then asked the Vice Mayor if lining up the CPI and the COLA is what he wants to do moving forward. Vice Mayor Fernandez responded in the affirmative and stated that he thinks that its good policy. Then, Councilmember Collazo mentioned that last year, the CPI for the mayor's salary was 7.8%, which was a high CPI, and he stated that he doubts that the Town Council would have voted for a 7.8% across the board.

The Deputy Town Attorney, Lorenzo Cobiella, mentioned that it is important for the discussion be on the millage rate and for the Town Council to stay on point.

The Town Clerk called the roll on the amendment by Mayor Cid, to reduce the millage rate to 2.0421, which is a reduction of 1.5% of the millage rate. The motion failed 3-4; Councilmember Collazo, Councilmember Dieguez, Councilmember Morera and Councilmember Ruano voted in opposition.

Councilmember Garcia then motioned to reduce the millage rate by 1%, and it would be \$96,200 less in ad valorem revenues and the millage rate would be at 2.0525. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Fernandez.

During discussion of Councilmember Garcia's amendment, Mayor Cid asked the Deputy Town Attorney if it's possible to pass the millage rate ordinance, then pass the budget and then come back to the millage rate ordinance? Deputy Town Attorney Cobiella stated that procedurally speaking, you can take the millage rate ordinance table it, then go to the budget and then go back to the millage rate, but you can't vote on the budget first. He insisted that the millage ordinance needs to be voted first, then the budget ordinance.

Councilmember Dieguez then stated that typically, he has always been sympathetic to reducing the millage rate. He stated that he voted for the 2% reduction a while back, voted for the roll back rate last year and historically, joined Councilmember Collazo in reducing the NSD Budgets - to reduce assessments. He stated that he learned that residents never felt anything from the 2% reduction, and he emphasized that especially, a proposed 1%

reduction of the millage rate will not do anything. He stated that he believes in either providing meaningful tax relief or providing services that residents deserve.

The Town Clerk called the roll in the amendment by Councilmember Garcia, setting the millage rate to 2.0525, which is a reduction of 1% of the millage rate. The motion failed 3-4; Councilmember Collazo, Councilmember Dieguez, Councilmember Morera and Councilmember Ruano voted in opposition.

Mayor Cid then made a motion to table the discussion of the millage rate, then to take the budget and then to table the budget after that. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garcia. The Deputy Town Attorney stated that a motion to table is not debatable, that procedurally, under Robert's Rules of Order, you have to vote on this motion. The Town Clerk called the roll, and the motion failed 3-4; Councilmember Dieguez, Councilmember Collazo, Councilmember Morera and Councilmember Ruano voted in opposition.

Then, there being no further discussion, Town Clerk called the roll on the main motion, Ordinance in 2nd Reading, Item 6A, motion to adopt the Millage Rate at 2.0732 mills. The motion passed 4-3; Councilmember Garcia, Vice Mayor Fernandez and Mayor Cid voted in opposition.

- B. AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES, FLORIDA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE BUDGET FOR THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025; PROVIDING FOR EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS; PROVIDING FOR AMENDMENTS; PROVIDING FOR CARRYOVER OF FUNDS; PROVIDING FOR THE INCORPORATION OF THE ADOPTED CAPITAL BUDGET AS THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ELEMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Cid opened the public hearing.

Ms. Esther Colon came before the Town Council to participate in public comments. She expressed that the Town Council should have sat with the Town Manager a month prior to the budget hearings, to identify problems. She stated that the Town Council prior to Councilmember Morera, was 4-3 and now this Town Council is 4-3, the opposite way. She stated that the Town Council is not being effective.

There being no one else for public comments, Mayor Cid closed the public hearing.

The Deputy Town Attorney, Lorenzo Cobiella read the title of the ordinance into the record.

Councilmember Dieguez made a motion to move the ordinance in second reading. Councilmember Collazo seconded the motion.

Town Manager Pidermann presented the item and stated that the only difference between this proposed budget and the one presented in first reading is the item to fund the LPR's out of the General Fund and not out of the Neighborhood Service Districts. He explained that the \$32,500 is being funded from salaries savings.

Mayor Cid asked if the proposed budget includes a rebate for the low-income seniors, for the disabled community or disabled veterans. Town Manager Pidermann responded that the proposed budget does not offer any rebate.

Councilmember Collazo asked what was the cumulative asked of all the Town Committee Budgets. The Budget Officer, Ms. Melissa Hernandez, answered questions posed by the Town Council. She stated that the Town Committees received the same total budget as the prior year, and that they could allocate within whatever line items they find fit.

Town Manager Pidermann explained that during the last year's budget, the millage rate was rolled back and to balance that budget, half a million dollars were taken from the Miami Lakes Optimist Park -just to balance the budget. He emphasized that he knew that this year, they were starting half a million on the hole. In addition, he stated that there is the extra allocation of the settlement of the legal Pizzi case. The Town Manager stated that he did not foresee the Town Council considering a millage increase to make up for some of the changes that we have had in the last few years. He explained that is why the Town Committees stayed with the same budget as the previous budget year. The Town Manager emphasized that at the beginning of the budget season, during the workshops, he told the Town Council that by leaving the millage rate flat, series of cuts would have to be made.

Councilmember Morera asked why is it that the Senior Exemption was funded as zero in last year's budget but then it was funded with \$77,000 in the carryforward amendment. He asked why we are funding it in the amendments and not in the budget. Vice Mayor Fernandez explained that he first proposed it like that and that it's been happening like that ever since, that it has been funded with the carryforward rather than during the general budget.

Councilmember Morera also objected to the fact that \$250,000 is being taken away from the Senior Center Build Out Fund. He does not agree, with funding ongoing operating expenses with capital funds. He stated that he does not like the Town is being comfortable with the idea of borrowing from capital funds to artificially keep the millage rate low.

Vice Mayor Fernandez stated that he had conversations with the Town Manager and with the Budget Officer today, prior to the 2nd Budget hearing, and he mentioned that if we are still talking about having a Senior Center in the Graham property, to be developed in Lakeside, that the facility would be a town park -in addition to be being a senior center- and he stated that we would be able to use park impact fees, to make the senior center build out whole. Town Manager Pidermann confirmed this information and stated that he confirmed said information with the County.

Town Manager Pidermann then explained that park impact fees have two pots: one for improvements of existing facilities and one for open space, which means to acquire or develop new spaces. Town Manager Pidermann stated that the Town does not have their own impact fee ordinance, but that Deputy Town Attorney is working on developing their own impact fee ordinance because it will bring benefits and flexibility. He stated that the Town has \$1.5 million available for acquisition of new open space.

The Town Manager stated that after reading the ordinance, Town Staff believes that because it is going to be a property that we do not have, but we are going to acquire, that it is a partial development and that it is an applicable use. The Town Manager shared that he has asked

the County for their interpretation, to make sure that is ok. He then stated that the Town Council could make a motion tonight to make a transfer of Park Open Space Monies into the Senior Center Capital Fund, to replace the \$250,000 that is being considered to being removed, subject to the approval of the Miami-Dade County.

Vice Mayor Fernandez agreed with the explanation given by the Town Manager and then motion to make a transfer of Park Open Space Monies into the Senior Center Capital Fund. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Garcia.

Town Manager Pidermann stated that if this motion passes, it means that the Senior Center will still be whole funded at \$500,000 – it will just be funded from a different source. He also explained that if in the end, this can't be done, then the Town Council will work on finding the money to go into that pot; that the Town Council will work to identify other funding sources to make the Senior Center whole. Vice Mayor Fernandez then stated that this Town Council is making the statement of committing to making the Senior Center whole. The Town Clerk called the roll, and the motion passed 7-0.

Councilmember Morera spoke about the special revenue funds under the transportation section and asked why the Town is having issues with speedbumps if we are not using all the funds in the budget. The Public Works Director, Mr. Omar Santos answered questions posed by the Town Council. He explained that with the new criteria in place, Town Staff anticipates that they are going to be accelerating the installations. He stated that Town Staff has approximately 20 speed bumps projects in place. Director Santos also stated that they follow the order of the list – that nobody gets bumped down the line.

Councilmember Garcia then spoke about adding an additional officer, for \$164,000. He spoke about positions that may not be needed to be filled in the budget - he specifically spoke about not funding the part-time receptionist and the arborist. During discussion, the Town Manager stated that he has been working with Major Gonzalez on developing a staff model that will enhance staffing and distribution of the days off for the police officers, so it could end up with the addition of two officers. He committed that if there is no rolling back the millage rate in the future, he will bring back that model to the Town Council in the next year budget, for their consideration.

During discussion, Councilmember Garcia asked how the Town Manager will find two police officers for next year, if he was not able to find one for this year. Town Manager Pidermann responded and emphasized that back in July, the Town Council took a step regarding the millage rate. He stated that next year, the Town Council needs to have a conversation regarding the level of funding and the consideration of adjustments in the millage rate. He stated that you can't talk about extra expenses and no extra revenue. The Town Manager stated that to add an additional police officer this year, means to make additional cuts to the budget. Councilmember Garcia stated that he would like for two positions -the receptionist and arborist to not be filled- to take from the sinking fund, to see what the carryforward brings, and add one officer now and one in the future. Councilmember Collazo stated that there have been multiple opportunities for the Town Council to have these discussions and that it should be done prior to the budget hearings.

Councilmember Garcia then motioned for the two positions (receptionist and arborist) not get filled and to take the rest from the sinking fund, to be able to fund one additional officer. Mayor Cid seconded the motion.

During discussion, Councilmember Ruano stated that they are funding police overtime, the traffic detail, the burglary detail and the holiday detail. She also stated that the Police Major has explained that overtime is more flexible and more effective with regards to putting more bodies on the street, so she stated that with funding overtime, the Police Department has an easier funding source with which to fill those gaps. She stated that there is public safety dollars implemented in the budget.

Mayor Cid stated that the next mayor will be able to negotiate the police contract. Mayor Cid stated that all the Police Majors that he has worked with in the Town, have had one issue, which is that they don't work for the Town Council, that they speak through whatever the Town Manager wants. Mayor Cid stated that augmenting the department with manpower as you grow is better. He stated that come November 2024, there will be more accountability, so he will vote in the affirmative, so they can start moving forward with this.

The Town Clerk called the roll and the motion failed 3-4; Councilmember Collazo, Councilmember Dieguez, Councilmember Morera and Councilmember Ruano voted in opposition.

Then, Mayor Cid asked if anyone had any other motions, before closing words before the vote. Councilmember Dieguez then moved to call the question. Mayor Cid then stated that he wanted to take a moment of personal privilege, without debating, he then stated that he had closing arguments and wanted to use his point of privilege.

Councilmember Dieguez then asked the Deputy Town Attorney, as a point of personal privilege on that. Mayor Cid then spoke about collegiality and stated that he was not making any motions, that all he wanted was to make a closing argument as to how he is voting.

Councilmember Dieguez stated that he had a point of order, and he asked the parliamentarian a question and that he wanted a response to that effect. Deputy Town Attorney Cobiella stated that if you are calling the question, that means to end debate and to ask the question. He stated that a vote needs to be taken.

Vice Mayor Fernandez then stated for the record, "that Mayor Cid asked if there were any other motions to be heard and that we were going to have closing comments". He stated that he did not proffer a motion because he had the impression that he was going to have an opportunity for closing comments. He stated that he wants to make closing comments and that he would like to make a motion to that effect. He asked Councilmember Dieguez to perhaps retract his motion but that he is fine either way, and that he will save his comment for next year.

Councilmember Dieguez then asked the Deputy Town Attorney if calling the question, voting on it and then if people want to take a point of personal privilege before the meeting is adjourned to explain the vote, is all the same. The Deputy Town Attorney agreed. Councilmember Dieguez stated that it does not affect collegiality.

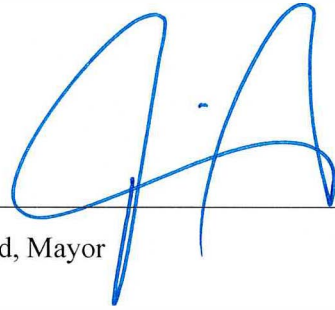
Mayor Cid then asked the Town Clerk to call the roll. The Town Clerk called the roll on the main motion by Councilmember Dieguez, seconded by Councilmember Collazo, to approve Item 6B, Ordinance in second reading. The motion passed 4-3; Councilmember Garcia, Vice Mayor Fernandez and Mayor Cid voted in opposition.

Mayor Cid then stated the reasons why he has voted in opposition of the budget for the last 3 years.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

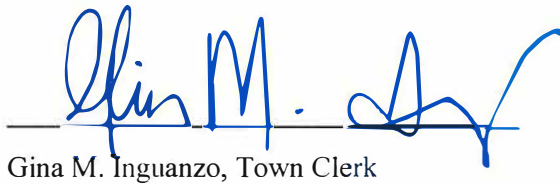
There being no further business to come before the Town Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Approved this 29th of October 2024.



Manny Cid, Mayor

Attest:



Gina M. Inguanzo, Town Clerk