

MINUTES
Special Call Meeting Minutes
September 26, 2024
6:00 p.m.
Government Center
6601 Main Street
Miami Lakes, Florida 33014

1. PROCLAMATIONS, RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS:

None.

2. CALL TO ORDER:

The Town Clerk, Gina M. Inguanzo called the roll at 6:03pm with the following Councilmembers being present: Luis E. Collazo, Josh Dieguez, Ray Garcia, Marilyn Ruano and Mayor Manny Cid. Vice Mayor Fernandez joined the meeting at 6:17 pm.

3. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Mayor Cid led the prayer.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Police Officer Robin Amador.

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

Councilmember Collazo moved to adopt the order of business, and it was seconded by Councilmember Dieguez. All were in favor.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS: (YouTube 44:05)

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

The Town Clerk, Gina M. Inguanzo, read the instructions of proper decorum that are to be respected and followed during public meetings.

Ms. Dorothy "Dottie" Wix came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She stated that she has been a resident for over 30 years, and she explained that many seniors felt disregarded, as they have been discussing funding a potential Senior Center for years and nothing has been done. She stated that seniors vote on every election, and she asked for their help. She urged the Town Council to consider making room in the budget to fund the potential Senior Center.

Ms. Rosario Navarro came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She explained that Mary Collins Community Center would be the ideal location for the Town's proposed Senior Center. She urged the Town Council to consider making room in the budget for funds for a potential Senior Center.

Ms. Esther Colon came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She explained that the budget for the Town's proposed Senior Center should be \$500,000. She further explained that the facility at Mary Collins Community Center needs to be renovated. She urged the Town Council to consider the elderly residents when voting on the proposed budget.

Ms. Omaid Bomboust came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She stated that seniors vote in every election, and she urged the Town Council to consider them during the proposed budget.

Ms. Magaly Rubio came before the Town Council to participate in Public Comments. She stated she has lived in Miami Lakes for 54 years. She asked the Town Council to preserve the legacy that former Councilmember Mary Collins fought for many years. She urged the Town Council to make room in the budget for the proposed Senior Center at Mary Collins Community Center.

There being no further public comments, public comments were closed.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS- ORDINANCES- SECOND HEARING:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES, FLORIDA, AMENDING DIVISION 2, SECTION 2-102, TITLE GENERAL FUND RESERVES, PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION TO THE CODE; PROVIDING FOR REPEAL OF LAWS IN CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Cid opened the public hearing.

There being no one wishing to speak, the public hearing was closed.

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 and the motion was seconded by Councilmember Collazo.

During discussion, Councilmember Dieguez stated that this is an undoing an item that he had worked on a few years ago, to increase the amount of money that is on reserves. He stated that he wants to draw attention to the fact that he does have concerns long term, that the Town is not

doing enough to put itself in a fiscally sound footing. Councilmember Dieguez emphasized that he fears that the Town is too reliant on the line of credit that we have, in the event of having a financial emergency. He stated that we need to be putting away more money into the sinking fund, to ensure that the residents do not have a bigger tax bill waiting for them down the line. He stated he is voting for this primarily to fully fund the police services, but that as a Town Council, we need to be aware of this moving forward.

Councilmember Collazo first thanked all the seniors that attended the meeting and that they know that he has always advocated for senior issues. He brought up the recent assessment of the Celebration Point community and he explained that Celebration Point had kept their premiums low and at the end, they had to pay roof assessments with reserves the community did not have. He emphasized that what the Town is doing is reducing their piggybank to cover bills. He stated that every time we artificially keep taxes low, eventually that tax will be paid. He stated that we are having to dip from the Fund Balance Reserve to cover our expenses this year. He stated that we have to do this because we can't raise the millage rate now.

Vice Mayor Fernandez stated that this is a difficult conversation to have because having fully funded reserves is very important. He stated that although he was not a councilmember at the time, he fully supported Councilmember Dieguez' item when he introduced it. He stated that it's a shame that it has to be rolled back. He pointed out that to single out last year's reduction in taxes as the reason why this is necessary, is irresponsible because in his opinion, the reason why this is necessary is the million dollars that came out of this years and next year's budget, for the Pizzi Settlement. He emphasized that the biggest difference budget-wise from last year to this year is that settlement. He emphasized that this ordinance would not be necessary if the Town would not have entered that settlement.

Councilmember Ruano stated that at the end of every budget cycle, figures are reconciled and that 9 out of 10, there are excess funds. She stated that for the future Town Council, it is important to consider they plea from the community, which is to replace this money -there are options and moments in time where this money can go back into that account. She stated that this has happened in the past, like money from the Optimist Park, which has been used and then replenished. She also explained that the Senior Center is a project regarding a property that does not belong to the Town, so it's a project that is not in our control right now, and that it why the money is being used, but she e She stated that when the discussion happens in the future, she urges the residents to come back so that the Town Council can be reminded of the money that was utilized and the money that should be replaced. She emphasized that there will be a moment when this money can be put back into its place.

Councilmember Morera stated that this ordinance proposes the Fund Balance to be 15%, so the Town is not going under 2-months of reserves; he stated that it is not good budgeting, but he understands why we need it and he is supporting the item, in order to further prevent slashing some necessary items, or having a tax increase, which they are not considering at this point.

Councilmember Garcia stated that seniors deserve a place of their own and that the Town Council will fight for it. He stated that the majority of the Town Council -not him- decided to reward Pizzi, money that he does not deserve. He stated that reserves are important for him and that the seniors deserve a Senior Center.

Mayor Cid stated that in Miami-Dade County, we are the richest and the most valuable city in the United States and that's why he thinks the roll back was the correct thing to do last year and

based on how fast it continues to grow, he stated that even a 3% this year would have been good for low-income seniors and for our elderly citizens.

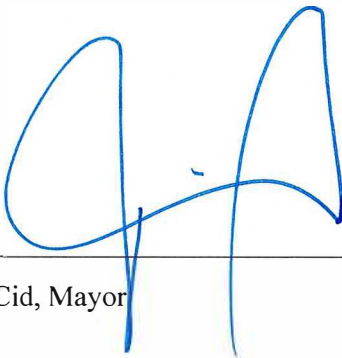
Councilmember Dieguez added some thoughts to the discussion and mentioned that although the Pizzi settlement is an added expense, the Town has also seen the cost of services going up - because the Town is not resistant to inflation. He mentioned that the Police contract went up faster than the property values did, so he added that the Town is working from a deficit to start with. Regarding the Pizzi Settlement, Councilmember Dieguez stated that 2 courts ruled that the Town of Miami Lakes is liable, and in addition to that, the prejudgment interest that they requested -on top of the 2.1 original claim in the complaint, the Town was facing a potential liability of over \$4 million. IF we were going to appeal it, it would mean to go back to relitigate the case -more Attorney's Fees on a case that started 11 years ago. He voted for the bleeding to stop, just like the Town Attorneys in this case, also made a judgment call in the best interest of the taxpayers. He stated that he made a judgment call in the best interest of the taxpayers and emphasized that after two different courts had ruled against the Town, he thought this was not a fight worth having to relitigate past battles. He stated it is time to move on. He asked for the politics to be kept out of the discussion and asked to speak truthfully to the residents.

The Town Clerk called the roll and the motion, Ordinance in second reading passed, 4-3; Councilmember Garcia, Vice Mayor Fernandez and Mayor Cid voted in opposition.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Town Council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:31pm.

Approved this 29th of October 2024.



Manny Cid, Mayor

Attest:



Gina M. Inguanzo, Town Clerk