



City of Miami Springs, Florida

The Miami Springs City Council held a **WORKSHOP MEETING** in the Council Chambers at City Hall on Tuesday, June 2, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:54 p.m.

The following were present:

- Mayor Billy Bain
- Vice Mayor Bob Best
- Councilwoman Jennifer Ator*
- Councilman Daniel Espino
- Councilman George V. Lob

* Arrived at 8:01 p.m.

Also Present:

- City Manager James R. Borgmann
- Assistant City Manager Ronald K. Gorland
- City Attorney Jan K. Seiden
- Chief of Police Peter G. Baan
- City Planner Richard E. Ventura
- City Clerk Magalí Valls

2. Goals and Objectives:

2a. Commercial Revitalization – Review of Past Studies and Concepts

2b. Parking and Signage

2c. Technology Improvements: Wireless City and Improving the City's Website

City Manager Borgmann distributed copies of correspondence received from Councilman Espino regarding the workshop meeting which included a suggested flow chart for breaking the topics to be discussed into categories as follows:

1. To establish an express community identity
2. New thematic signage
3. Parking solutions
4. Traffic Flow
5. Pedestrian Movement
6. Downtown Events
7. Appropriate Business Climate
8. Residential Involvement

Mayor Bain suggested following the format and invited participation.

Community Identity

Councilman Espino felt that is important to market the City as a whole to residents, business owners and entrepreneurs. He noted that research shows that the cities that are doing well are the ones that have engaged in marketing strategies, citing Coral Gables and Delray Beach as examples.

Mayor Bain asked if Councilman Espino was referring to the business area or the City as a whole; most people consider Miami Springs a “bedroom community” within the metropolis of Miami-Dade County. Trying to encourage people to come for the businesses requires a different strategy.

Councilman Espino responded that some communities have developed a sub-marketing strategy for revitalization efforts, and created a downtown authority similar to the “changing the face, not the pace” effort that was tried here several years ago. He explained that many communities have adopted an entire marking strategy that implements the identity that already exists. Whatever that identity is, it is carried through to the street signs and throughout the city as a whole wherever possible.

Councilman Espino said that a number of ideas were discussed at the forum for commercial enhancement held on May 13, 2009, and his goal is to get the ball rolling tonight, and then proceed to the next item.

Mayor Bain noted that Councilwoman Ator had also expressed the desire for a “mission statement”, and wanted to hear her thoughts on the matter when arrives.

City Manager Borgmann said that of all the studies that have been done for the City in the past, a common theme was the “quaintness” of Miami Springs, which other communities spend millions of dollars to try and capture. He felt they have a superior base from which to start at for this concept, and could move on from there.

Mayor Bain felt that promoting the community as a good place to raise a family was important, but it would not work to bring in new businesses or promote the businesses that were already here. If the workshop is focusing on revitalization, he would like to promote the commercial potential of the N. W. 36th Street corridor and enhancing the downtown area.

Councilwoman Ator arrived at this time (8:01 p.m.).

Vice Mayor Best said that all of the studies they have reviewed over the last week have similarities and differences. The Dover Kohl study is more of a grand façade and a philosophy of what the City should be. The Lambert study is more statistical, citing traffic studies, demographics, etc. The Post Buckley report focuses on how to address traffic issues, and the University of Miami façade report is more conceptual in nature. He pointed out that when these studies were done, annexation was not in the picture. The numbers in the studies are ten years out of date, but he felt that the money was well spent and the information is still relevant.

Vice Mayor Best pointed out that there had been much controversy over the years about the desire to keep the community ‘quiet’ and ‘a secret’ and the Dover Kohl study speaks out against that idea. He thought that might be a good place to start with regards to the marketing. He also felt that the property and building owners need to get involved and be on the same page. All the studies are meaningless if the owners do not participate and there must be a process to approach this even if the property owners are approached on a block by block basis.

Vice Mayor Best added that resident input is also very important. The Lambert study compiled statistics from a survey sent to the residents in 2001. He suggested that the survey could be resurrected and sent out again to determine if the information is still relevant.

City Manager Borgmann stated that the survey went to 300 ‘heads of households’ so it was more of a sampling than a complete City-wide mailing.

Councilman Lob said that signage was one of the biggest problems the business people brought up in the forum at the Country Club. He suggested that the City could work on projects that could be completed in a short period of time like the signage, but a theme is necessary. Many cities incorporate their theme in everything they do. Revitalization has been talked about for years and it is time to progress and get the process going. By selecting an area and getting involved, it will show the business owners that Council is committed to the effort.

Vice Mayor Best noted that the Dover Kohl vision statement ends with, “The City continues its tradition of working with private property owners and business leaders in a collaborative way to ensure the standard of living remains at high quality, yet affordable to its citizens.”

Councilwoman Ator said that creating a slogan or theme was a topic of discussion and she spoke with the City Attorney about forming a committee that could make some suggestions because there are so many people in the community that are interested in public relations. The City Attorney informed her that it would be as simple as making a motion and she suggested scheduling an agenda item for the next meeting for Council to consider forming an ad hoc committee. Each Council member would have an appointment to the committee.

Councilman Espino stated that he studied Delray Beach's revitalization process; they worked block by block and overall it is a benchmark for success. He agrees with Councilman Lob that setting goals for projects that can be achieved in a short time frame, like signage or parking resolutions would be smaller victories, yet they would build faith with the business owners and residents.

Councilman Espino mentioned that the residents and business owners offered some suggestions at the forum for identities and themes. Their ideas were that it is a historic community near the airport and some said it is "The Brink of Civilization", "A Sanctuary from the Outside", "The Best Kept Secret in Miami-Dade County", "Tree City", "Bird Sanctuary", "Residential Oasis", "Mayberry or Myberry", "A Green Jewel", "The Home of Glenn Curtiss", "Escape from the Hustle and Bustle" and "A Place Where Families Go".

Councilman Espino said that a list could be derived of one hundred descriptive phrases, but ultimately it would behoove Council to create the committee and begin the process. The City's identity is known and there needs to be a descriptive phrase and a slogan to explain it. The consensus at the forum was that whatever the theme or slogan is that it should somehow capture the history and small town nature of the community and willingness to move forward.

City Manager Borgmann pointed out that the Post, Buckley traffic study includes ideas for traffic and parking signage that read "Historic Downtown Miami Springs".

Mayor Bain commented that he would rather focus on the City being progressive. He did not feel that the historic feature would help to promote restaurants or businesses. He stated that the Downtown area had grown with new businesses and the property owners were responsible for their buildings. The past studies were made when the Circle was basically run down and this is not the case any longer.

Mayor Bain felt that the number one priority is the product or service that the businesses offer to attract the people and the quality of that product or service. The mission statement is number two, which is very important and it should satisfy the business owners.

Councilman Espino agreed with Mayor Bain that simply saying "Historic Downtown Miami Springs" would not achieve the goal and the potential customers should be identified, whether they patronize the hotels or the local businesses. Coral Gables is very historic and they have been very successful calling it "The City Beautiful" with a rich history and vibrant business area. History is only one element and an entire marketing strategy should be implemented. Dania Beach has a slogan that says it is established in history and marching for the future. A slogan could be "Small Town Feel; Modern State of Mind."

City Attorney Seiden stated that the former Downtown Ad Hoc Committee felt that the business owners had to be involved or no progress would be made. The committee was larger and the members were Downtown property owners or representatives. When considering the members for a new committee to make recommendations for a slogan or marketing theme, they should be oriented in public relations or advertising.

Mayor Bain asked if there was any information about the Downtown clientele and whether they are people from Miami Springs or outside cities.

Councilman Espino explained that people from Hialeah stop at Starbucks every day before they go to work and there are business owners in the audience who might be able to comment.

Councilman Lob said that many of the businesses had received feedback from hotel customers who did not know how to get Downtown or what bus or shuttle to take. There should be information to inform the people and a means of transportation.

Mayor Bain commented that the business owners should be responsible to market their business by placing an ad in a dining guide or providing flyers to the hotels.

Councilman Lob explained that was a topic of discussion at the forum and even the City should distribute a map or guide.

Councilman Espino mentioned that Coconut Grove has signs that include a map and directory of points of interest. He felt it would be a good idea to tie in the thematic signs with a map.

Councilman Lob reiterated that people had inquired about places to eat and shop in the City and they wanted to know how to get to those places. He thought that it would be beneficial for the City to install thematic signs with a directory or map, which is a goal that is easy to achieve. He agreed that an ad hoc committee should be formed.

City Attorney Seiden said that the goal of the committee would be to recommend advertising and marketing strategies and Council must select people with expertise in that field.

Mayor Bain suggested that the Chamber of Commerce could come up with a slogan and this would eliminate the need for appointing individual ad hoc committee members.

Councilman Espino would like to have a committee that is comprised of residents and business owners.

Council **agreed** to schedule an agenda item for the June 8, 2009 meeting to consider forming an ad hoc committee.

Thematic Signage

Councilman Espino heard complaints about the existing signs because they are not attractive or practical. He would like to install attractive thematic signs.

Councilman Lob stated that thematic signage lets people know that they are still in the same City within the area that they want to be and they would assist people in getting to their destination.

Councilwoman Ator agreed with Councilman Lob. She cited the signs along the interstate that point out the different gas stations or restaurants at each exit as an example. She suggested that similar signage could be placed along major streets within the City directing people to the Downtown area. City Manager Borgmann commented that Coconut Grove is within the City of Miami and South Beach is part of Miami Beach, yet they both have their own identities and different identities could be established for parts of Miami Springs.

Councilman Espino cited Delray Beach as an example because they have different districts in addition to their Downtown and they have different color signs for each one, which makes a big impression. He emphasized the power of marketing.

Councilman Lob reiterated that area maps should go along with the signage and they should be placed at key points in the City. Major shopping malls have a directory map of the shops and the names can be easily changed. The hotels should be provided with a pamphlet map in the same design.

Eileen Montello of 241 Pocatella Street said that many good ideas were raised; the problem is that most businesses are not open after banking hours, which is frustrating to her. She likes the small town feeling, but the amenities and the access to them is lacking.

Councilwoman Ator explained that she had the same discussion with someone a few days ago. She was never able to eat dinner at Treats Café because they close at 7:00 p.m. and she did not get home from work before that time.

Mayor Bain questioned whether or not there is enough business for the businesses to stay open on Sundays. He said that is why he asked about the clientele and whether they live inside or outside the City.

Councilman Espino said that Holleman's, Starbucks, Burritoville and the CrepeMaker are open longer hours because people frequent that area and go from one business to the other. The remaining portion of the Downtown is not the same, even during the day, and the proper conditions can be created to allow the businesses to operate.

Lily Saborit of 117 Palmetto Drive, President of the Miami Springs Airport Chamber of Commerce, said that in order to revitalize a downtown business community, there must be a "buy in" of all the businesses and they must all have the same or similar hours. Sunday is a family day in Miami Springs and no one frequents the businesses. Gaining the momentum of all the businesses to open on Sunday would draw the customers, but restaurant owners work hard six days a week and seven days would be extra hard. She knows of people who have lived in the City for twenty-five years and never ate at the Thai Restaurant. Part of the responsibility is the business owner's and part of it is the community.

Mayor Bain would like a survey of the businesses to find out where the customers live. He feels that the local residents do not support the Downtown businesses.

Ms. Saborit agreed with Mayor Bain because the City has 14,000 residents and the Downtown area only sees 5% of that amount. Most businesses are closed after 6:00 p.m., which means people have to go outside the City for products or services.

Ms. Saborit explained that the other part of revitalization is the tourist industry along N. W. 36th Street and the City is not tapping into that market. There could be a cohesive transportation plan to move people around town and people who do use the shuttle have no way of finding their destination without signage. She added that the hotel managers would love to be a part of the ad hoc committee who could help send business to Miami Springs.

Mayor Bain felt that the signage and maps would be the City's responsibility in order to draw people to the area. The business owners should be responsible for promoting their businesses and offering transportation from the hotels.

Councilman Lob stated that the City already has a transit shuttle that could move people from the hotels to the Downtown area.

To answer the Mayor's question, City Manager Borgmann clarified that the transit shuttle cannot be taken off its route and used for a specific purpose. The route was moved from N. W. 36th Street to Oakwood Drive so that people can access the bus easier. He is meeting with the provider of the shuttle bus to go over the route map so that it can be produced and distributed. There is federal stimulus money that will become available for signage and shelters for the shuttle.

Councilwoman Ator asked if it would be possible to set up a different route on the weekend or in the evenings to move people from the hotels to the Downtown.

City Manager Borgmann explained that the shuttle operator is paid by the hour and there would be no problem with expanding the route.

Councilman Espino felt that the shuttle route, signage, edification of residents and tourists and the map theme all come together. Once you establish an identity, the signage is created and parking and pedestrian movement will fall into place. He would love to have the signage and the map station in the same style as the shuttle stops throughout the entire City. Even if the bus cannot stop at a specific hotel, it can stop on a certain corner with a sign so that residents and tourists will know that it is a Miami Springs' bus stop.

Councilwoman Ator said that it could be uncomfortable getting on a Miami Springs bus that does not have a lot of passengers and is going on a very long route. Someone could take the bus to Downtown and on the return trip it would go around the entire City. She reiterated that the route in the evenings and on the weekends could focus more on moving people from the hotels to the business areas.

Councilman Espino said that the discussion at the forum sparked a controversial conversation about the shuttle because people feel it is not being used to the best of its ability.

City Manager Borgmann explained that the basic premise of the shuttle is to move people to other forms of public transportation that will take them to other parts of the County.

Alan Ora of 369 Azure Way said that many great ideas had been raised. He said to remember that outsiders do not know what exit to take off the expressways in order to get to Miami Springs and perhaps signage could be installed to direct people to the City. He asked why signs could not be placed on N. W. 36th Street to direct people that are going to the airport to Miami Springs.

Mr. Ora mentioned that there is a great resource on the internet called www.metromix.com, which is used by several cities in South Florida and it lists several restaurants and special events. This is a resource to take advantage of because it could attract more people that would spend money in the City.

Councilman Espino stated that a marketing campaign and the website would pay a big role in attracting people. The Coral Gables' website has a business directory and everything they do is part of the overall marketing strategy. The problem in Miami Springs has been that various groups have worked in isolation, making a little progress and then it stops because there is no support.

Councilman Lob asked to consider what should be done about the signage and whether the Architectural Review Board could assist by offering the recommendations. He said that the Board is willing to work if Council gives them direction.

Council agreed that the Architectural Review Board could meet to make recommendations regarding the style of signage.

Vice Mayor Best felt that the City Planner could assist with the process and offer his recommendations as to the sign locations.

Chris Montello of 241 Pocatella Street encouraged Council to keep working on the right path. He sat on the Board for the Coral Gables Business Improvement District, the Downtown Development Authority for Miami and he currently sits on the Board for the University City District for Philadelphia. He felt that forming a committee is a priority because it is a full-time job to promote the City and redevelop Downtown.

Mr. Montello stated that building momentum could be achieved by easy tasks such as signage, uniformity in Downtown or fresh paint on the businesses. He said that revitalization is a long process and from his experience he has learned that the residents are an important part, as well as the Chamber of Commerce. Coral Gables worked very hard with the business owners to get them to buy into the concept of staying open later and on the weekends.

To answer Councilman Espino's question, Mr. Montello explained that Coral Gables developed a Business Improvement District and the owners are taxed and pay for it separately. The Board would help to bring businesses into the Downtown.

Parking Solutions

Councilwoman Ator has noticed that the City parking lots are not in very good shape. She felt that they should be maintained in the best possible condition, which can be done immediately before even considering additional parking. She agrees with the statistics regarding the under utilization of the parking areas, which is attributed to the lack of signage. The lot behind Starbucks should be properly identified as a City lot and maintained so that people will use it.

Councilman Espino mentioned the parking lot behind the Woman's Club is another example and he had no idea until recently that it extends for the length of the entire block because there is no signage.

City Manager Borgmann pointed out that there are 500 public and private parking spaces around the Circle and within one block of the Circle.

Councilwoman Ator stated that some of the parking around the Circle is not practical for people like herself with small children that could run into the traffic. She said that traffic flow is important and the County is considering a plan for the Circle.

City Manager Borgmann said that the question is which comes first, the parking or the businesses that place the demand on parking.

Councilman Espino agreed with Councilwoman Ator that parking is available, but the people are not aware of the spaces or they do not want to park in those locations. He would take the approach of creating the demand for parking until the existing parking is full.

Mayor Bain said that there was an idea brought up by the last Council that was never pursued. One was a parking program for business employees who would be issued stickers to park along Canal Street. The second idea is to properly maintain the existing parking and make it presentable. He felt that there could be some exceptions to the rule for employee parking to allow parking close to the business. Mayor Bain felt that maintaining the existing parking, signage and an employee parking program are the three main points.

Councilman Lob suggested that the City could have an agreement to utilize parking in places that are not open at night, such as the churches.

City Manager Borgmann said that there were negotiations with the Baptist Church to utilize their parking, but their lot has a tremendous drainage problem and the question is whether or not the City would be willing to assist with the drainage problem or add lighting. The need for parking might be better satisfied by using the Lutheran Church's parking lot since it is closer to the Circle.

Councilwoman Ator agreed that an immediate answer would be parking and signage and the City to take the business owner's feelings into consideration as well.

Councilman Lob felt that the first step would be to take steps to improve the existing parking and install signage to see if it helps the problem.

Councilman Espino stated that it is almost impossible for a business owner to construct a three-story building and meet Code requirements in terms of parking and in order to further expand Westward Drive. Some of the available parking spaces could count toward a particular business, although they might be off-site.

City Manager Borgmann said that the owner of the new restaurant would have liked to build a brand new building rather than bring the existing building up to Code. The main reason he could not do that was because he could not build new parking. There is also a concept called shared parking that applies to the new commercial/residential building at 357 North Royal Poinciana Boulevard.

Mayor Bain stated that new development could pay into a fund for additional municipal parking.

City Manager Borgmann explained that it would be a parking impact fee and the developer would buy the spaces out of the parking structure. He said that this particular program is effective on Miami Beach, but it was after the fact. When South Beach became the hottest tourist spot, more people wanted to be in on the action and that is when they began the impact fee in order to handle the parking.

Councilman Lob felt that developers in need of parking spaces in order to build a structure would like to have the option to trade for parking.

Councilman Espino stated that parking could be evaluated on a yearly basis on the onset of commercial revitalization. For the first few years, the required parking spots could be free and at some point, there could be a charge of \$15,000 per space that would go into a parking fund. He suggested that charging for parking could be considered in increments as required.

City Manager Borgmann explained that there were parking meters on Westward Drive many years ago. Metered parking is not only a revenue generator; it is a way to control the flow of parking when there is a limited quantity. He is not proposing paid parking, although this is one method to control parking.

Councilman Espino said that in some cities the parking for the first hour is free and anyone staying for a longer period of time would have to pay at a kiosk in a central location.

Councilman Lob felt that paid parking would be a last resort, but it is something to consider.

Councilwoman Ator wanted to know if granting the flexibility for parking could be done by passing an ordinance or through the variance process. The parking impact fee could be considered in the future when parking becomes an issue.

Mayor Bain commented that people must be motivated to develop in the City and there is not sufficient parking due to the way the lots are situated. The money that is paid for parking will go toward a parking lot that already has been designed and approved for construction. He said that parking is an important issue and he does not want to make the same mistakes that were made in the past.

Councilman Espino was of the opinion that development should not be stifled by imposing parking requirements. He would want to attract development first.

Mayor Bain emphasized that parking is very important to have in order to have easy access to the businesses and it should be considered before development.

City Attorney Seiden stated that it is important to recognize that the City is built-out and anyone who wanted to start a new restaurant would be required to provide more parking, but they would not be able to do that with the current situation. There was a former program that businesses required them to pay a certain amount per parking space that was placed into a trust fund that would eventually be used to build a parking garage. This impacted Holleman's and Joe Lowe's Chinese Restaurant and then the new Council decided the program was not appropriate for existing buildings. The Code was changed to address new construction.

Attorney Seiden explained that the properties are narrow and the standards for height are limited, so if one of three stories is required for parking, this becomes detraction from development. He said that the Code must be drafted to provide incentives for development, especially along the N. W. 36th Street corridor. Paying into a parking trust fund is a good idea to build a municipal parking facility at some location.

Councilman Espino stated that the modern approach of land use and zoning is to engage the business owners and the Code must be flexible to allow this. The variance process would involve making decisions on a case by case basis.

City Attorney Seiden said that variances must be eliminated if a plan or process for parking is put into place. Businesses that cannot provide the required parking would have to pay into the fund. He has been saying for ten years that an expert is needed to modernize the Code. The nature of the community has not changed and the Code is okay, but changes must be made to provide incentives and trade offs to encourage development.

To answer Councilwoman Ator's question, City Attorney Seiden explained there are large land use firms like Bilzin Sumberg who are professionals in code revisions. He said that it might be helpful to find out who did the code work for Aventura or Sunny Isles Beach.

Mayor Bain said that there is a consensus for signage, improving the existing parking lots and an employee parking program.

Vice Mayor Best asked the City Manager if the County was responsible for the lane striping around the Circle. Several people had complained that the lines were no longer visible.

City Manager Borgmann replied that the striping falls under the auspices of the County and they had met with the City at least twice recently to discuss the issue. The Administration and the Chief of Police expressed their concerns and asked the County to review the study done by Post, Buckley in 2001. Some of their suggestions were similar; the intent is to pick the best solutions to traffic flow. The County agreed to look at that study but has not met with the City since.

Traffic Flow

Mayor Bain said that traffic flow and pedestrian movement could be discussed, but he felt it would be prudent to wait until the County comes back with their proposal, which might provide solutions to those items.

Councilman Lob suggested that if Council were to reach a consensus regarding traffic flow and pedestrian movement their ideas could be presented to the County to make sure they are included in the plan.

Vice Mayor Best noted that Ludlam Drive, Curtiss Parkway, South Drive, East Drive and North and South Royal Poinciana Boulevard are all controlled by the County. The City is interested in slowing the traffic down and the County wants to expedite it.

Councilman Lob, Councilwoman Ator and City Manager Borgmann disagreed with Vice Mayor Best.

In response to Vice Mayor Best's question, City Manager Borgmann replied that the County was trying to create a plan that made the traffic flow from Hialeah to N. W. 36th Street safer, not necessarily faster. The intent was to move people into the correct lanes early and prevent the last minute lane changes that cause accidents.

Councilman Espino pointed out that there are areas of the Circle that have four lanes and the Post, Buckley report recommended lane reduction and bump outs for traffic calming and pedestrian islands, which he felt were good ideas. He also liked the idea of creating a detour from eastbound to westbound Westward Drive, similar to what is done during events; it allows more exposure to the businesses that are at the entrance to the Circle while reducing the traffic around the Circle itself.

Councilman Espino said that the Mayor brought up the suggestion of rumble strips during the candidate forum, which he thought was another good idea. He felt they were especially needed in between the Parkway shops because that area is dangerous to pedestrians from speeders trying to beat the light.

Chief Baan stated that the City had applied for, but did not receive, grants to install rumble strips. The plan was to add more signage off the incoming bridge, rumble strips and planters in front of Starbucks to enhance the area. He feels that the traffic around the Circle is more of a perceived problem than an actual one. An internal study produced a total of 13 accidents around the Circle and the outlying block in a one-year period, which is a very low percentage considering the amount of traffic that goes through that area. The other fear is a pedestrian getting hit by a speeder in the “ten” block of Curtiss Parkway and that has not happened in a long time.

Chief Baan said that he disagreed with the County’s plan to reduce the lanes because it could result in greater traffic tie-ups. There needs to be space to hold cars waiting for the lights to change, otherwise they back way up and cause gridlock; the matter of lane reduction needs to be explored in detail to come up with a reasonable solution.

In response to Mayor Bain’s question, City Manager Borgmann said he thought rumble strips could be paid for from CITT or Local Option Gas Tax funds. He suggested the installation could be similar to what was done along the North Royal Poinciana Boulevard bike path.

Mayor Bain agreed, and said he would like to **add the item to the next agenda** so it could be discussed and put out for a bid; he has been trying to get that done for the past two years.

Councilwoman Ator liked the idea of diverting one lane of traffic off of the incoming bridge down Canal Street because it would keep the people who specifically intended to drive into town out of the Circle. She thought that it used to be that way years ago, and asked if the City had done any studies recently to establish the traffic patterns.

City Manager Borgmann said that the City still directs the traffic in that pattern when there are events scheduled on the Circle. He asked the City Planner if the proposed Linear Park on Canal Street would prohibit traffic from proceeding down Canal Street from the incoming bridge.

City Planner Ventura replied that the plan called for removable barriers that can be used at the City’s discretion or need, depending on the pedestrian load.

City Manager Borgmann noted that the City may be limited as to what suggestions can be implemented by the County. Traffic flow on Okeechobee Road cannot be compromised, so any plans the City has that might impact that will not be approved.

Councilman Espino felt that a good portion of the traffic coming over the bridge ultimately heads down Royal Poinciana, Westward or Curtiss Parkway and out of the City. He thought that redirecting the left lane down Canal Street, around Hook Square and back to the Circle will mean more exposure for the businesses on Curtiss Parkway. He suggested that a concrete triangle or the installation of flexible traffic poles to redirect traffic as an idea for consideration.

Pedestrian Movement

Councilman Lob pointed out that more events are being held on the Circle, and pedestrian crossing to the Circle is becoming more of an issue. He felt that pedestrian crosswalks were needed.

Councilman Espino said that all the studies suggested stamped concrete or pavers for crosswalks to stand out from the roadway, and combining them with rumble strips would make it safer for pedestrians. He would like to see crosswalks and curb outs on Westward Drive so that the gap for pedestrians to cross is significantly narrowed. He said that there is a large area of asphalt off Westward Drive that is not marked or delineated for traffic lanes, which creates a “no-man’s land” for pedestrians. He suggested crosswalks on Westward Drive and north and south Curtiss Parkway.

Mayor Bain thought that the crosswalks were more decorative than functional because any time an event is held at the Circle the traffic is shut down completely.

Councilman Lob said that people do not go to the Circle now unless there is a function downtown; the point is to try to encourage its usage. He asked what would happen if someone wanted to hold an event downtown and did not want to pay to shut down the road.

Mayor Bain said it would depend on the type of event and the number of people expected; if the City is responsible it might have to require that the road is shut down or that police presence is provided to escort people across.

Discussion ensued regarding the difficulties crossing to the Circle itself or the surrounding businesses because the area is not pedestrian friendly.

Councilwoman Ator asked if the intention was to expand the sidewalks and beautify the area or to provide pedestrians with a starting point.

Councilman Espino reiterated that the studies cover both recommendations. The pavers or other materials are aesthetically pleasing and they physically separate areas for pedestrians and the motorists.

Councilman Lob clarified that the pedestrian crosswalks would work in conjunction with reducing the number of traffic lanes around the Circle. Drivers would be aware of the change in surfaces, which would add to the safety factor. He wanted to bring these suggestions to the attention of the County to see if they could be included in their proposal.

Councilwoman Ator pointed out that they would still be limited by what the County wants to do, and she has not seen the proposal.

Mayor Bain reiterated that he thought it was better to wait and see the County’s proposal first before they made suggestions as the problems may have already been solved.

City Manager Borgmann said that none of the Council members had seen the proposal and he was waiting for the County's response since the Administration had already expressed their opinions.

Mayor Bain asked that Council consider the next item, downtown events.

Councilman Espino wanted to bring up one more item regarding parking: at the forum it was suggested that the interior lane of the Circle be converted to angle parking to facilitate greater use of the Circle, provide increased parking to the area and also serve as a traffic calming measure. He described a proposal with bump outs, crosswalks and landscape.

City Manager Borgmann advised that during their meeting, the County expressed total opposition to any type of parking on the inner Circle for safety issues. Other alternatives were proposed, such as reducing the size of the Circle. The County said they would consider the options and bring their proposal back to the City.

Chief Baan said that pull-through angle parking was discussed, but the big concern was backing out into oncoming traffic.

Additional discussion ensued regarding parking alternatives around the Circle.

City Manager Borgmann suggested that it would behoove Council to wait until the County comes back with their proposal. He explained that the County's original proposal was based on statistical data that they had gathered over a period of time.

Councilman Lob reiterated that if Council was in agreement that crosswalks were needed, he would like to convey that request to the County now so that they had time to consider it before they finalized their proposal.

Councilman Espino asked for information on the proposed parking lot at the south end of the Circle on Curtiss Parkway.

City Manager Borgmann explained that a Request for Proposal (RFP) was sent out listing all of the conditions that had to be met and of the six contractors that came to the pre-bid meeting, only one bid was received for the 29-space lot at a cost of almost \$386,000 two years ago. The contractors were asked to consider an additional 26-space lot south of the War Memorial to the pump station. The total bid for the whole project was \$656,500, or approximately \$11,900 per space, which is in line with current construction costs.

Mayor Bain said that the parking lots could be constructed in stages, and **suggested that it be included in the budget meetings.** He pointed out that 29 spaces would be adequate to handle the parking for the Harvest Moon. He also thought that at one time some of the surrounding business owners had expressed a willingness to contribute to the project.

City Manager Borgmann suggested that the first priority should be to make the public aware of the parking areas that are available in the City now, and to make those areas attractive.

Councilman Lob again asked if the City Manager could convey the request for crosswalks to the County.

Councilwoman Ator said she felt it was important for the County to be aware of how important the space was to the City.

City Manager Borgmann advised that the County does not have the funds for the project at this point in time and perhaps funds could be set aside in their budget or they could use stimulus money.

Downtown Events

Councilman Espino said that he felt the City itself should not be launching events downtown, but could certainly assist. He would like to see an objective process in place for residents or businesses who want to request City services, financial assistance, or Police and Public Works services for an event.

Vice Mayor Best said he did not see how that could be regulated.

Councilwoman Ator said it could be accomplished by requiring that the event be open to the public, and the event planners would have to show how they would advertise, etc. She used the recent musical event sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce as an example. She thought there should be a line item in the budget to support these types of events as they benefit the community, including the surrounding businesses.

Councilman Espino explained that if a group asked for a permit to use the Circle and was able to pay for Police and cleanup that was fine. The intent was to create an objective process for those that might request help so the City does not have to make a judgment call.

To answer Councilman Lob's question, City Manager Borgmann explained that a special event permit is reviewed by the Chief of Police, Code Enforcement and Public Works. The event planner has to provide insurance and deposit a check for clean-up; the process is fairly involved, but certain requirements can be waived.

Mayor Bain noted that the All Angels Church asked the City for help when they were planning the "Movie Nights" on the Circle. The City agreed to help with the first few events, with the understanding that local businesses would help with the funding in the future. He was not sure what happened with the other sponsorships, though his company made a contribution.

Councilwoman Ator said that funding continues to be a struggle and it costs about \$500 for three police officers alone.

Mayor Bain expressed concern about the City footing the bill for an event that does not benefit the whole City. He thought that Council was generous in donating money to generate momentum for the business owners and the residents in the community, but those benefiting from the events needed to contribute too.

Councilman Espino said that was the point; as more groups or organizations want to hold events, there will be more requests to the City for assistance. He would like to create a formal process that will allow those people to approach Council by following a set procedure. There will be specific criteria and requirements contained in the application to apply for funds.

City Manager Borgmann said that previous Councils had discussed implementing some sort of criteria and application by which to request City funding for events. There was also discussion about establishing a fund, knowing that a percentage of it would be utilized for the Springs River Festival in April.

Councilwoman Ator suggested putting an event calendar together every year, so they would know early on what events were planned and when.

City Manager Borgmann advised that the “movie night” event cost the City \$500 for police presence. The event Friday night cost \$1,750 because of the number of hours and the fact that the Circle was shut down; there was police presence and Public Works took care of all of the barricades.

Councilwoman Ator commented that these events will start to cost a substantial amount of money, which should be accounted for in the budget. She asked if the Administration could come back to Council with ideas of how to implement such a plan, listing criteria, etc.

Discussion ensued regarding the some of the requests that have come before Council, i.e. the High School band’s request for money to fund a trip, the All Angels movie night and the Springs River Festival.

Mayor Bain expressed reluctance to help fund an event that would benefit a promoter and not the City. He suggested that **the idea of an event fund could be discussed at the budget meetings if Council so desired.**

Vice Mayor Best felt that even if criteria were in place, Council would still be making a judgment call when granting funding assistance to an event.

Mayor Bain agreed, saying that he has been approached several times about putting on a Jazz Festival at the Circle, but the event has never materialized. He was all for helping charity events like the cancer walk, which benefit the whole community. He felt that the City Manager would advise Council of any event that he thought needed to be brought to their attention, but was not certain about putting money into the budget for these occurrences.

City Manager Borgmann said that the only way he could approve assistance money would be if there was a specific budget for it. He explained that money for the Festival comes out of non-departmental funds; the Fourth of July festivities come out of the Recreation Department or non-departmental funds.

Appropriate Business Climate

Councilman Espino said he hoped for an administration that was friendly to development. He received several ideas from Mark Trowbridge, a resident and Chairman of the Architectural Review Board who is also President of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce. Some business development districts impose a fee or tax upon themselves to fund the beautification of a particular area; other municipalities develop outreach programs for new businesses to familiarize them with the Codes and Code Enforcement. He felt that both ideas had merit.

Councilman Lob said that he had heard several negative comments during the recent forum regarding Code Enforcement, and that at some point those issues had to be addressed. He felt that some of the incidents reported were isolated cases, but there were enough in number to cause concern.

City Manager Borgmann asked if the negative comments pertained to a certain time frame because there had been many positive changes made in the Building Department recently. If these were current problems he wanted to know about them, as opposed to the repetition of old tales.

Mayor Bain said it was the Administration's responsibility to be available to the residents and investigate the situations in order to get both sides of the story. He felt that the Code Compliance Department had come a long way and could continue to improve.

In response to City Manager Borgmann's question, Councilman Lob replied that it was the Building Department that he was talking about; he felt the perception that it was difficult to deal with the Building Department is still out there. The City needs to spread the word that the atmosphere has changed and it is no longer a hassle to go through the permitting process in Miami Springs.

Vice Mayor Best asked Councilman Lob if he thought people were reacting in a negative way because they were not familiar with the process.

Councilman Lob explained that he had heard from people who said they went through the process and they would never do it again. Some felt that the process was too cumbersome and others were not happy with the way they were handled, which is more of a courtesy issue. Both opinions were expressed, and if things had changed, the residents and contractors need to be made aware of the improvements.

Vice Mayor Best said that he also was approached during his tenure as Councilman by residents voicing their complaints and frustrations with the permitting process.

Councilman Lob said that contractors who deal with other municipalities in addition to Miami Springs had told him that Miami Springs is more difficult to deal with.

Resident Involvement

Vice Mayor Best noted that Lily Saborit made a key statement regarding resident involvement earlier. He applauded Councilmen Espino and Lob for participating in the forum and getting the ball rolling. He felt that getting the citizens involved was vital to maintaining momentum and solving the problems.

Councilman Lob said that one of the reasons for creating the Ad Hoc committee was to gather people who could generate ideas without necessarily having a business in the community.

Councilman Espino noted that whatever the committee is called, the intent is to have them present concrete ideas to Council for implementation or discussion. He felt that would be a good way to get both residents and business owners involved and to keep them involved. Hopefully they will be able to overcome the obstacles that have held the community back in the past.

City Attorney Seiden reminded Council that the committee would be operating in the sunshine. He asked if Council was going to appoint the committee and assign a task to the Architectural Review Board at the next regular meeting.

By consensus, Council **agreed** to establish an Ad Hoc Committee and assign tasks to the Architectural Review Board at the next meeting.

City Manager Borgmann suggested that one agenda item would refer to the entire meeting; discussion items can be listed and Council can make the appropriate motions at that time.

Mayor Bain said that the Ad Hoc committee appointments can also be made, so the members can go through the appropriate orientation.

In response to Councilman Lob's question, City Attorney Seiden advised that the Code allows residents to serve on more than one board only in some cases. Technically, this is not a Board formed by the City, so he did not believe there would any restrictions. He explained that the committee would not be making any decisions, but screening items, preparing reports and presenting recommendations to Council for discussion. Council will be the decision maker in all cases.

City Manager Borgmann noted that he had placed some additional documentation pertaining to downtown revitalization on the dais for review, which suggests creating a permanent, dedicated structure to keep the process moving forward.

City Manager Borgmann read the ideas from a study that was performed back in 1994:

1. Use the park in the traffic circle as a cultural entertainment focus. Have string quartets, singing groups, etc.
2. Downtown may be perceived as more exciting and vibrant if it had outdoor cafes, possibly on the terrazzo entrance to the theater. This would add visibility and activity to the downtown center and create interest.
3. The downtown needs to attract more night spots. Ideally, the retail business day can be stretched to maximize revenue flow from retail space. It would be necessary to fix cracks in terrazzo and repaint walls. It would be important to leave the old 1920's signage and architecture, however.
4. There is a need to coordinate the stores so they have the same business hours.
5. Work with Hialeah to capitalize on the Canal.
6. The Circle itself is a novelty. It conjures images of trendy exclusive areas like St. Armand's and Palm Beach Worth Avenue. This type of image could be cultivated in an effort to create interest.

City Manager Borgmann pointed out that this summarizes nearly everything they have talked about tonight, in a study that was done fifteen years ago. The City has made strides on some of the ideas and has a long way to go on others. He is looking forward to the next couple of years to see how much could be accomplished.

Vice Mayor Best said that all the reports state the important thing to keep in mind is that revitalization does not occur overnight; it is a long term goal and they need to keep at it.

Mayor Bain requested that the City Planner be asked for his input on where the signage should be placed around the community.

Mayor Bain reminded everyone that the Law Enforcement dinner was being held at the Optimist Club on Wednesday, June 3rd.

3. Adjourn.

There being no further business to be discussed the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 p.m.

Billy Bain
Mayor

ATTEST:

Magalí Valls, CMC
City Clerk

Approved as written during meeting of: 6/22/2009.

Transcription assistance provided by S. Hitaffer and M. Newton.