

City of Fort Lauderdale

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Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

1:30 PM

City Hall - City Commission Chambers
100 North Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

City Commission Conference Meeting

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

DEAN J. TRANTALIS Mayor
HEATHER MORAITIS Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District I
STEVEN GLASSMAN Commissioner - District II
ROBERT L. McKINZIE Commissioner - District III
BEN SORENSEN Commissioner - District IV

CHRIS LAGERBLOOM, City Manager
JOHN HERBST, City Auditor
JEFFREY A. MODARELLI, City Clerk
ALAIN E. BOILEAU, City Attorney

~~long-standing partnership and an immediate opportunity for these four (4) schools anticipated to open in October 2022. The next step is for the Commission to draft a letter of support to the Broward County School Board. She commented on the need for community outreach to make the public aware of this opportunity. Ms. Saunders discussed the workforce development impact of this Program. The Bezos Academy is committed to hiring locally and year-round programming allows families to pursue jobs.~~

~~In response to Commissioner Glassman's question, Mayor Trantalis confirmed a letter of support is being prepared by his office.~~

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

BUS-1 21-1167

Leaf Blower Update - (Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Commissioner McKinzie provided an overview of this item and the Leaf Blower Working Group Member's background. He confirmed forthcoming input from Kyle Bolger, a private landscaper; Mike Weymouth, Las Olas Company President and Las Olas Boulevard business owner.

Porshia Williams, Department of Sustainable Development Assistant Director and Code Compliance Manager, narrated a slide presentation addressing noise complaints Code Enforcement had received regarding leaf blower activity.

A copy is part of the backup to this Agenda item.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' questions regarding leaf blower noise complaints, Ms. Williams said it is rare for Code Enforcement to receive complaints and explained the process for enforcement. When noise complaints are received, Code Officers must respond in real-time to witness violations. The landscape company is no longer present when Code Enforcement arrives in many instances.

Mayor Trantalis expounded on his viewpoint regarding the enforcement process due to the need for an immediate response. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Mayor Trantalis commented about receiving more complaints than those listed in the presentation, acknowledged limits of Code and questioned whether Code is best suited to respond.

Commissioner McKinzie discussed Working Group research findings on previously made recommendations.

Commissioner McKinzie commented on reduced Code Enforcement Staff available to address leaf blower noise complaints due to reassignment to nighttime Noise Ordinance complaints. Research indicated daytime noise complaints related to barking dogs, pool pumps and garbage trucks, and leaf blowers ranked last. Commissioner McKinzie expounded on details of his research efforts.

Phil Thornburg, Parks and Recreation Department Director, explained other than a higher pitch, there is little discernable difference in electric versus gas-powered leaf blowers. Electric leaf blowers are two to three times more expensive than gas-powered leaf blowers, and electric leaf blowers have limitations in wet conditions.

Commissioner McKinzie noted a landscaping company mentioned by Vice Mayor Moraitis at a prior Conference Meeting is a power center under new ownership servicing and selling landscaping equipment.

Michael Weymouth, Las Olas Company President, addressed leaf blowers from the perspective of private businesses. Mr. Weymouth recommended this topic be addressed from the viewpoint of hours of operation, which could be adjusted and enforced. He noted enforcement is cost-prohibitive and recommended a public awareness campaign. Mr. Weymouth pointed out this topic relates to additional landscape equipment, i.e., lawnmowers and edgers, and includes noise and pollution from commercial and residential landscaping.

Commissioner McKinzie reviewed photographs related to non-leaf blower debris in storm drains in various areas of the City. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Kyle Bolger, a commercial landscape business owner, provided his perspective regarding commercial landscaping. A ban on leaf blowers would be detrimental to his landscaping business, and mandating electric leaf blowers would be cost-prohibitive. Mr. Bolger discussed details associated with Las Olas Boulevard storm drain debris from tree canopies and items tossed by members of the public and visible at 7:00 a.m. He recommended enforcement of the existing Noise Ordinance and modifying leaf blower operations times suitable for particular neighborhoods.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' question, Mr. Bolger explained he had not used any other equipment for landscape debris collection other than leaf blowers during his time in the landscaping business. Further comment

and discussion ensued.

Mayor Trantalis expounded on environmental waterway concerns due to runoff from landscaping and noted Miami Beach recently implemented a ban on leaf blowers.

In response to Vice Mayor Moraitis' question, Commissioner McKinzie explained that Mr. O'Laughlin opposes battery-operated leaf blowers. Mr. O'Laughlin agreed to reduce leaf blower hours for residential landscaping operations from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Vice Mayor Moraitis said she did not support banning leaf blowers. The main complaint from District 1 constituents is hours of operations, i.e., starting at 7:00 a.m. Further comment and discussion ensued regarding leaf blower hours of operation in residential and commercial areas.

Vice Mayor Moraitis recommended an 8:00 a.m. start time for leaf blower use in residential neighborhoods. Further comment and discussion ensued on modifying hours of leaf blower operations.

Mr. Weymouth discussed details of stormwater drain infrastructure requiring regular cleaning. He noted the need for commercial area landscaping efforts to begin by 7:00 a.m. along Las Olas Boulevard due to hours of operation for businesses. Vice Mayor Moraitis concurred and discussed the need to clean stormwater drains and catch basins of all debris regularly. She concurred with Mayor Trantalis' concerns regarding stormwater runoff polluting waterways. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Commissioner McKinzie noted the natural attrition of seasons, causing leaves and palm fronds to fall into the waterways.

Mayor Trantalis commented on correspondence from a Flagler Village resident regarding leaf blower usage and noise.

Mayor Trantalis confirmed his witnessing leaf blower debris blown into storm drains along with other debris. He discussed other examples.

Mayor Trantalis expounded on his perspective and emphasized recognizing and addressing environmental concerns and cited examples. He commented on scientific studies by the City of Miami Beach that gas leaf blowers were noisier than electric leaf blowers. Further comment ensued, and Mayor Trantalis reiterated his view that this needs to be addressed.

Mr. Weymouth discussed the need for a public awareness campaign for all commercial landscape maintenance companies and property owners. Further comment and discussion ensued on the need to protect waterways.

Vice Mayor Moraitis reiterated her support of Mayor Trantalis' concerns regarding protecting waterways and the environment without banning leaf blowers. Further comment and discussion ensued regarding other types of enforcement moving forward.

Commissioner Glassman concurred with Mayor Trantalis' comments regarding environmental concerns and the need to protect waterways. He noted banning leaf blowers was not the way to go.

Vice Mayor Moraitis recommended an education campaign and noted existing Ordinances address debris blown into waterways and fertilizer draining into waterways.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' question, Commission Members confirmed a consensus to modify hours of operation for residential leaf blowers from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays. Weekends would remain at 8:00 a.m.

Ms. Williams explained Code Ordinance Section 17-8 encompasses all yard maintenance tools. Further comment and discussion ensued on including all types of noise complaints.

Mayor Trantalis confirmed a consensus to direct City Attorney Boileau to bring forward an amended Ordinance modifying hours of operation for all mechanized lawn maintenance equipment from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays in residential neighborhoods. Further comment and discussion ensued on utilization of Code Enforcement discussed earlier by Commissioner McKinzie.

In response to Commissioner McKinzie's question, Mayor Trantalis said that having the Ordinance in place and beginning an education campaign would be a start to addressing noise concerns.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

~~CF-1~~ [21-1174](#)

~~Carr, Riggs & Ingram (CRI) Forensic Examination Report - Rio Vista Restoration Project - (Commission District 4)~~

~~Mayor Trantalis recognized Ben Kincaid, CPA, CFE, CFF, CVA, Carr,~~

~~Commissioner Glassman noted the amount of work to accomplish and the benefits of reviewing documents incrementally.~~

~~CITY MANAGER REPORTS~~

~~City Manager Lagerbloom discussed rescheduling the Commission Joint Workshop with Citizens' Police Review Board and scheduling a Commission Joint Workshop with the Northwest Progresso Flagler Heights (NWPFH) Redevelopment Board. Further comment and discussion ensued on Commission Member availability.~~

~~The Joint Workshop with the NWPFH Redevelopment Board would be scheduled on January 18, 2022 and the Joint Workshop with Citizens' Police Review Board would be rescheduled to February 2022.~~

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Trantalis adjourned the meeting at 4:51 p.m.