

MEMORANDUM

Agenda Item No. 11(A)(16)

TO: Honorable Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

DATE: January 20, 2021

FROM: Geri Bonzon-Keenan
Successor County Attorney

SUBJECT: Resolution expressing this
Board's sympathy and
condolences on the recent
passing of Osvaldo Soto

The accompanying resolution was prepared and placed on the agenda at the request of Prime Sponsor Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado and Co-Sponsor Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz.



Geri Bonzon-Keenan
Successor County Attorney

GBK/jp



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(Revised)

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Please note any items checked.

- "3-Day Rule" for committees applicable if raised
- 6 weeks required between first reading and public hearing
- 4 weeks notification to municipal officials required prior to public hearing
- Decreases revenues or increases expenditures without balancing budget
- Budget required
- Statement of fiscal impact required
- Statement of social equity required
- Ordinance creating a new board requires detailed County Mayor's report for public hearing
- No committee review
- Applicable legislation requires more than a majority vote (i.e., 2/3's present ____, 2/3 membership ____, 3/5's ____, unanimous ____, CDMP 7 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3)(h) or (4)(c) ____, CDMP 2/3 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3)(h) or (4)(c) ____, or CDMP 9 vote requirement per 2-116.1(4)(c)(2) ____) to approve
- Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required

Approved _____ Mayor
Veto _____
Override _____

Agenda Item No. 11(A)(16)
1-20-21

RESOLUTION NO. _____

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THIS BOARD'S SYMPATHY
AND CONDOLENCES ON THE RECENT PASSING OF
OSVALDO SOTO

WHEREAS, Osvaldo Soto was a Cuban exile and lawyer who, over the years, became a revered figure who fought on behalf of Miami's Hispanic, minority, and legal communities; and

WHEREAS, born in Havana, Cuba in 1929, Mr. Soto was one of five children in his family; and

WHEREAS, he later attended law school alongside Fidel Castro, and was part of the revolution to oust Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959; and

WHEREAS, when Fidel Castro became a brutal dictator, Mr. Soto left Cuba for exile in South Florida; and

WHEREAS, ever the champion for freedom in Cuba, Mr. Soto was a part of the Brigada Asalto 2506, a CIA-sponsored group of Cuban exiles formed in 1960 to attempt the military ouster of Fidel Castro; and

WHEREAS, having survived the Bay of Pigs, Mr. Soto returned to Miami unharmed and undeterred in his beliefs and efforts to advocate for a free Cuba; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto later became a teacher out-of-state, eventually becoming a tenured professor at Iowa State University, before returning to South Florida in the mid-1970s; and

WHEREAS, once back in Miami, he earned his law degree and became a respected lawyer; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, when the Mariel refugee crisis brought many thousands of Cubans to South Florida, some local residents blamed those refugees for rising crime and societal ills; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of such sentiments, an ordinance was adopted declaring English the official language of the County, and prohibiting the use of County funds for translating documents or offering non-emergency services in Spanish or any other language; and

WHEREAS, in addition, in 1984, the then-Dade County Clerk of Courts began to prohibit marriages from being conducted in languages other than English; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto, as president of the Spanish American League Against Discrimination (“SALAD”) and other coalitions, spoke out against those discriminatory measures and fought for equality for Hispanics and minorities; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1980s, Mr. Soto, along with SALAD, launched a campaign called English Plus, which was aimed at preserving the Spanish language locally as well as nationally; and

WHEREAS, thanks in part to Mr. Soto’s efforts, the County Commission repealed the English-only ordinance in 1993; and

WHEREAS, among other important endeavors, Mr. Soto’s legacy also includes advocating for minority officers to be promoted in police departments and ending discrimination in Miami Beach; and

WHEREAS, he was also active in the local legal community, advocating for more diversity among lawyers and judges; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto was a former member and past president of the Cuban-American Bar Association (“CABA”) in Miami, and, in 1991, he was among those who pushed the group to open its membership to non-Cubans; and

WHEREAS, he also courageously supported qualified, minority candidates for judicial office, such as Scott Bernstein, an openly gay judicial candidate who first ran for judge in 1998; and

WHEREAS, when someone walked up to Mr. Soto and expressed dismay about his support during the campaign, Mr. Soto said, “[t]o me, [Bernstein] is a well-qualified attorney who is running for judge. I don’t care if he’s black or white or Methodist or Catholic. I’m supporting him”; and

WHEREAS, Judge Bernstein, who won the election overwhelmingly and is still a judge today, remembered Mr. Soto as “a pioneer in the legal community” and said that his support and encouragement in that first judicial campaign “meant the world to me”; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto was also proud to see his daughter Bertila “Berdy” Soto become a judge during his life and, in 2013, to make history as the first female Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida; and

WHEREAS, on January 9, 2021, Mr. Soto passed away from natural causes at the age of 91; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by his wife, Bertila Soto, his sister, and his four children; and

WHEREAS, he will forever be remembered as a champion of the Hispanic community, minorities, and the causes of justice and freedom; and

WHEREAS, as Eduardo Padrón, a co-founder of SALAD and president emeritus of Miami-Dade College, explained, Mr. Soto “believed the beauty of Miami was its diversity”; and

WHEREAS, Chief Judge Soto remembers her father as “a Renaissance man and an amazing human being,” calling him her hero; and

WHEREAS, upon his passing, this Board wishes to honor Mr. Soto’s remarkable life and memory through this expression of sympathy and condolences to his family and friends and the countless individuals in this community and beyond whose lives he touched,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, that this Board:

Section 1. Expresses its sympathy and condolences on the passing of Osvaldo Soto.

Section 2. Directs the Clerk of the Board to transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the family of Osvaldo Soto.

The Prime Sponsor of the foregoing resolution is Commissioner Raquel A. Regalado and the Co-Sponsor is Chairman Jose "Pepe" Diaz. It was offered by Commissioner _____, who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Commissioner _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

Jose “Pepe” Diaz, Chairman	
Oliver G. Gilbert, III, Vice-Chairman	
Sen. René García	Keon Hardemon
Sally A. Heyman	Danielle Cohen Higgins
Eileen Higgins	Joe A. Martinez
Kionne L. McGhee	Jean Monestime
Raquel A. Regalado	Rebeca Sosa
Sen. Javier D. Souto	

The Chairperson thereupon declared this resolution duly passed and adopted this 20th day of January, 2021. This resolution shall become effective upon the earlier of (1) 10 days after the date of its adoption unless vetoed by the County Mayor, and if vetoed, shall become effective only upon an override by this Board, or (2) approval by the County Mayor of this resolution and the filing of this approval with the Clerk of the Board.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA
BY ITS BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

HARVEY RUVIN, CLERK

By: _____
Deputy Clerk

Approved by County Attorney as
to form and legal sufficiency.



James Eddie Kirtley