

Memorandum



Date: July 9, 2014

To: Honorable Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa,
and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carlos A. Gimenez", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Subject: Proposed Charter Amendment Public Meetings

A proposed Charter amendment regarding Article VII and to permit additional uses at Park facilities, sponsored by Commissioner Esteban Bovo, is scheduled to be on the agenda for the Board of County Commissioners (Board) meeting on July 15, 2014.

Per Ordinance 11-44, which states "the County shall hold six public meetings regarding any resolution calling an election on a proposed Home Rule Charter amendment," my office scheduled public meetings so that interested residents would have the opportunity to ask questions, and provide comments on the proposed charter amendment.

Attendance at the meetings varied from one resident up to sixteen. Present at all of the meetings were staff from Library, Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces, Elections, the County Attorney's Office, the Clerk's Office, as well as staff from Commissioner Esteban Bovo's office and my office.

Meetings were held at the following locations on the following dates:

- June 17th – West Kendall Regional Library
- June 18th – North Dade Regional Library
- June 18th – South Dade Regional Library
- June 19th – Arcola Lakes Library
- June 23rd – Miami Beach Regional Library
- June 24th – Kendall Library
- June 25th – Miami Lakes Library
- June 26th – West Dade Regional Library

A number of questions and comments were made by residents at these public meeting, including:

- Why this possible charter amendment was being put to the voters;
- Which parks and storefront libraries could be affected by this proposal;
- Whether the footprint of existing facilities in parks could be expanded for library use;
- Concern that moving storefront libraries into parks could reduce the size of the libraries;
- Concern that these newly re-located libraries could take up too much of the existing parking at county parks and could cause green space to be lost;
- How the libraries' budget would be affected by this proposal, and whether the cost of retrofitting the current parks buildings would offset the cost of the continued lease payments made to private landlords for the storefront branches;
- Whether other proposed parks, such as the Camp Matecumbe property, could be added to the list of exempted properties from Article VII, including overall support for Camp Matecumbe;

- If the proposed NW 58th Street Regional Soccer park has had sufficient environmental testing given it was previously a landfill;
- If the ballot language could be bifurcated to have ballot questions on each individual project instead of one question;
- How the proposed amendment affected the approved long-term capital plan for libraries;
- Support for increasing the library millage;
- The possibility of libraries being co-located at Miami-Dade County Public Schools;
- Positive examples were cited of co-located libraries in city parks in the City of Miami; and
- The Urban Environment League felt that Article VII works well and opposes any efforts to weaken it (attachment).

If you need any additional information, please contact Inson Kim, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs at (305) 375-5140.

attachment

c: R. A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney
Jack Kardys, Director of Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces
Raymond Santiago, Director, Miami-Dade County Public Library System
Penelope Townsley, Supervisor of Elections
Mayor's Office – Senior Staff
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor
Christopher Agrippa, Clerk of the Board



Date: June 9, 2014

To the Chair and Members of the Recreation and Cultural Affairs Committee

Subject: Proposed Resolution Calling for a referendum to amend the County Charter - Article 7.
Agenda Item No. 2(b)

The Urban Environment League of Greater Miami strongly opposes this resolution. This section of the Charter was a citizen initiative, the result of the efforts of many voters, to “Save Our Parks.” It has worked well and we protest any effort to weaken the protections provided to our parks and natural areas. The very idea that a very last minute agenda item could potentially undo years of effort is simply appalling.

Parks are not simply available land for even well intended private enterprises. Nor are they simply convenient locations for other public services, such as libraries, schools, police stations or fire stations. Parks are public spaces that serve all residents and visitors for recreation, leisure, adventure and family time. This resolution would open the door to uses – that while perhaps laudable in themselves – would rob us of public space for this and future generations.

It is not as if the County and many of its cities have a surplus of public parks. Instead, many have called for – and voted for – increased funding for park land and park improvements. To give away any part of our system of parks would be a slap in the face to all who have worked so hard to keep them. Yes, this item calls for a vote. But Article 7 already provides the possibility of a vote that would allow non-park uses in parks – but on a case by case, park by park basis. Why change that now? What is the rush to open the gates at all our parks at once?

In the very recent past The Open Space Master Plan was adopted by the County Commission. This plan brought high honors and positive attention to Miami Dade County. It is up to you to make sure that the honor does not turn to shame.

We urge you to have the courage to stop this effort now.

Defeat this resolution.