

July 25, 2017

Commissioner Willy Gort  
Commissioner Ken Russell  
Commissioner Frank Carollo  
Commissioner Francis Suarez  
Commissioner Keon Hardemon

CC: Mayor Tomas Regalado  
City Manager  
City Attorney

Miami City Hall  
3500 Pan American Drive  
Miami, Florida 33133

Dear Commissioners:

**Why...**with Mayoral and Commissions elections only four months away, would the current Commission approve major changes to Watson Island—including construction of a 300 room hotel -- before a new vision and RFP can be developed for this most valuable piece of public waterfront property in Miami?

**Why...**with a major election just ahead would this Commission rush to judgment to give developers everything they want?

**Why...**with universal support for transparency will this Commission permit Monday evenings dog and pony show hosted by the developer qualify as community involvement – especially when the new owners of the Jungle Island lease have had more than a year to engage?

These are the basic questions you need to answer at your meeting this Thursday. At that meeting you will be asked to approve language drafted by the City's Administration and Attorney to amend the City's Charter to provide a gigantic loophole for the developer of Jungle Island to build a large, 300-room hotel on Watson Island.

Here we go again. Once more, as though the Flagstone fiasco never existed, we fear history is about to repeat itself.

As currently drafted, the proposed Charter Amendments contained in agenda items RE4 and RE5 give the City Staff and the developer so much discretion that what the public will eventually see on a November Referendum may well have little in common with the very sketchy plans that have been shown to the neighbors and the public over the past year, including Monday night at Jungle Island's open house.

If RE4 and RE6 are approved by the Commission as currently drafted by the Administration and City Attorney, the likely result will be public rejection of the Referendum on Jungle Island in November.

Why? Because the current proposals give the City Administration and Attorney a blank check,--a bald "escape clause", a loophole --giving these same officials who brought us the 16-year Flagstone fiasco broad discretion to do what they wish with this precious Watson Island land.

R4 and R5 represent nothing more, or less, than a loophole big enough to drive a Flagstone-sized mega-project through.

As Commissioners you can do much better than repeat the sorry history of Watson Island development. You can give our City and its residents the gift of planning. And planning is not about giving every developer everything they want. Planning is about a review of the best public use, about traffic patterns, visitor movements and a variety of other factors that deserve to be publically discussed before a hotel of indeterminate size is approved.

Sincerely,



Roger M. Craver

Coalition Against Causeway Chaos

P.S. I have attached a brief memo specifically outlining why RE4 and RE5. Are horribly flawed and open the Commission, the City and its residents to a continuation of the parade of horrors that occurred over the Flagstone project.

July 25, 2017

**MEMORANDUM**

The Delusion and Dangers of RE4 and RE5

From November 2016 through May 2017, the Coalition Against Causeway Chaos provided 10 letters to this Commission, each documenting material problems with City Staff's management of the proposed MUSP for the Flagstone project.

We now fear that history may be repeating itself.

Approval this Thursday of the RE4 and RE5 Charter Amendments as written will likely result in public rejection in November. Why? Because as phrased, the proposed Charter Amendment gives City staff and the developer so much discretion that what the public will eventually see may well have little in common to the very sketchy plans that have been grudgingly shown the neighbors and public over the last year and last evening.

More importantly, a majority vote for RE4 and RE5 requires the public – and the Commission – to rely on the City's Administration and Attorney – something that years of Coalition and individual efforts have shown is unwarranted.

There are multiple cases now before the courts highlighting this history: *Flagstone vs City of Miami*, in which the City Attorney declared herself in conflict; a history of Public Records violations, including violations of court orders, now before an appeals court; and a case of residents vs the City of Miami for violations of its Charter.

Is THAT why City Staff want to go to extra-ordinary lengths to amend the City's constitution – its Charter – with an "escape" clause? Agenda item RE4, Line 18 includes the phrase "including but not limited to..." in defining new provisions for the development agreement. This phrase is big enough to drive a Flagstone-sized mega-development through.

The Coalition asks the Commission to refuse to give this power to City Staff and should play a more aggressive check and balance function with the City staff. Of course, the City Attorney's office is likely to pull their old rabbits-out-of-the-hat trick and say if you don't approve the Resolution as they have

written it, it will be doomsday.

For Commissioners who don't remember, please re-read your meeting transcript of May 8, 2014. A case is still pending on the clearly misleading statements on timing (and other issues) by the City Attorney's office during that hearing. After wasting two full years arguing with the State, the City jammed through a Deed Modification with deeply questionable tactics whose legality has been stalled by a questionable court case. That stalling tactic has been charitably referred publicly by a Commissioner as "law by gimmick."

A majority vote for RE4 and RE5 as is will result in more cases, more delay, more taxpayer funds inappropriately spent in court to defend a project that remains undefined and a City staff with outsized power.

Is that what this Commission stands for? What happened to transparency, integrity and access?

Please send this project back to its sponsors to require a thorough and definitive plan and require them to follow the normal processes for approval.