



GABLES GOOD GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

ELECTION UPDATE #2

FEBRUARY 28, 2019

GABLES GOOD GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Founded February 2009

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ELECTION UPDATE #2 - VOTE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

This is the second in our series of GGG Newsletters in advance of the upcoming April 9, 2019 City Election for Groups I, IV and V. GGG is providing insight into the candidates' views on a variety of topics through sets of questions sent to them. In this issue, the responses to the second set of questions are presented.

Candidates have been asked to provide responses by a specified publication date. However, it may not always be possible for candidates to meet the deadline. Any response received after the deadline will be published in the subsequent GGG Newsletter.

FINAL QUALIFYING CANDIDATES FOR APRIL 9, 2019 ELECTION

As of the filing deadline on Friday, February 22, 2019, the following candidates qualified to run in the corresponding groups, below:

GROUP I (Mayor):

Jeannett Slesnick (Former City Commissioner)

Raul Valdes-Fauli (incumbent)

GROUP IV:

Ralph Cabrera (Former City Commissioner)

Jorge Fors

Jackson "Rip" Holmes (previously filed in Group I)

Carmen Olazabal

GROUP V

Michael Mena (Incumbent) – no opponent (no responses included)

Gables Good Government Committee supports issues and causes that preserve and improve the quality of life in Coral Gables, and promotes the effective and efficient management of City government.



ELECTION UPDATE - VOTE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

GROUP I

CANDIDATE: Jeannett Slesnick:

1. Why are you running? What is the single most important issue you would address or advocate for if elected?

To offer the voters a choice between two different styles of leadership: I respect the residents, listen to their concerns and respond in a positive manner.

2. Coral Gables is known as "The City Beautiful", what are things that can be improved or beautified?

In considering commercial development proposals, the Master Plan and Zoning Code will be followed; always be concerned with our tree canopy and with the quality of public art placements.

3. What kind of service improvements do you think the city needs or that you may want to propose?

We need to put more money into our code enforcement efforts (the current administration has cut back on that), which will help keep the City beautiful. We need more police patrol officers in our neighborhoods. Everything that we do must have "sustainability" as a factor and it should be considered in the planning stages.

4. What ideas do you have about the city budget and the use of our resources? What would you do differently?

Focus on priority items: public safety, sanitation services and code enforcement not borrow money for unnecessary items like the metal flower pieces in the traffic circles on Coral Way and Biltmore Way.

5. Depending on who you ask, Coral Gables is either over developed or ripe for development. Where do you stand on the development issues that residents have raised, particularly in the North Gables and along the U.S. 1 corridor? Are there any lines you would not cross? Do you think the city needs any more development and if so what kind?

Coral Gables has always welcomed commercial development when it is done properly and within the guidelines of our Master Plan and Zoning Code. We do not want a "concrete canyon" effect, which unfor-

tunately we are already achieving on U.S.

1. (Something that I vigorously opposed during my time as Commissioner.) We also need to be more protective of our residential neighborhoods that border the proposed construction projects, such as the oversized residential tower approved by the current Commission next to Coral Gables Elementary School.

6. What do you envision for future economic development in the city?

Coral Gables will continue to be a prime target for commercial development. We just need to make sure that developers follow the "rules of the road" in the City Beautiful and are not granted extra mass and height – they don't need it and we don't want it. There are some developers who respect the quality of life in Coral Gables and abide by the code in their proposals (some of whom are our fellow residents). They spend the extra time, money and effort to build quality projects within the Mediterranean design favored in our City.

7. How do you propose to address the traffic the city has, particularly the cut through traffic of people who work in downtown Miami and try to get west going through Coral Gables?

There is no easy answer to this problem, but we need to continue installing traffic calming devices in key locations and to enforce our speed limits and turn restrictions.

8. Do you believe individual neighborhoods should have a say in traffic calming, sidewalks, bike lanes or should this be decided by the commission for the city as a whole? Why?

Absolutely! All citizens should have a "say" in what happens in this community. Residents need to have some influence on what happens in their neighborhood. However, the final decision on such matters rests with the Commission and if there is an overarching, valid and defensible reason to take action city-wide, that can be done. But the Commission must first listen, consider and respond to all input, so that when the final vote is taken, citizens will have trust in the wisdom of their decision.



ELECTION UPDATE - VOTE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

GROUP I

CANDIDATE: Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli:
www.valdesfauliformayor.com/

5. Depending on who you ask, Coral Gables is either over developed or ripe for development. Where do you stand on the development issues that residents have raised, particularly in the North Gables and along the U.S. 1 corridor? Are there any lines you would not cross? Do you think the city needs any more development and if so what kind?

Apart from most of the objected projects having been approved in prior administrations, I am for rational controlled development where it is beneficial or appropriate. When Coral Gables was founded, and until the not so distant past, we were a city at the edges of Miami Dade county, up until the early 70's no Dadeland, no FIU, there was very little development West of us. Now we are smack in the middle of the County.

As many as 800,000 cars cross Coral Gables every day, we are a different city than what we were 30 years ago. We have to apply logic to the situation, U.S. 1 has 400,000 cars every day; to me and to everybody U.S. 1 is not a "quiet residential street." As to major developments there, are car lots a good logical use for that amount of traffic in a major thoroughfare?

We used to have car lots, The Collection, and other not appropriate uses for that volume of traffic.

The big line not to cross is West of Le Jeune, North of U.S. 1 because major development there would intrude into residential areas. I would protect our residential areas as if they were sacred and by the way, I think the having allowed the Aloft Hotel west of Le Jeune was wrong.

6. What do you envision for future economic development in the city?

We should continue with our very successful eco-

nomic development efforts. I am very active in these efforts, for example I have just returned from a presentation at U.M. to the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce and am going later today to a presentation to Hyatt's national sales force on why Coral Gables is the best city to visit. We have over 150 multinationals and 19 consulates in our city with major efforts by leading international companies in our city. Many of these were attracted to our city by my efforts.

7. How do you propose to address the traffic the city has, particularly the cut through traffic of people who work in downtown Miami and try to get west going through Coral Gables?

As I stated above, we are smack in the middle of our county. It is impossible to go East West in Miami Dade South of Flagler Street without crossing Coral Gables. The big challenge is to keep this traffic out of our residential streets.

During my administration we have lowered residential speed limits and are now working on traffic calming devices which is not an easy thing because we depend on county approvals for these. We have finally obtained these approvals, after an unconscionably long delay and have started implementing these traffic calming devices.

8. Do you believe individual neighborhoods should have a say in traffic calming, sidewalks, bike lanes or should this be decided by the commission for the city as a whole? Why?

Individual neighborhoods of course should have a say in whether or not to have these devices. Many don't want them and many do. The problem arises in that in many cases streets do want to have these "but not in front of my house." Yes, individual neighborhoods should have a say.



ELECTION UPDATE - VOTE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

GROUP IV

CANDIDATE: Ralph Cabrera
www.cabreraforcommissioner.com/

5. Depending on who you ask, Coral Gables is either over developed or ripe for development. Where do you stand on the development issues that residents have raised, particularly in the North Gables and along the U.S. 1 corridor? Are there any lines you would not cross? Do you think the city needs any more development and if so what kind?

Growth in any city is inevitable. However, the way we grow and how we grow is critical to preserving our city's unique quality of life. I will support tempered, smart, thoughtful, and compatible development. This type of growth adheres to our exceptional zoning code and should create compatibility to our residential neighborhoods. Specifically, the North-East Gables provides the greatest opportunity for this tempered growth where development can take place that is consistent with nearby residential areas. As far as the US1 corridor, I prefer to conduct a comprehensive study to determine the future viability of further development there. I would go as far as suggesting a development moratorium along the US1 corridor until this study is completed and fully analyzed by the City Commission.

6. What do you envision for future economic development in the city?

I favor continuing to support our central business district by soliciting entities that would make it a true destination for shopping, dining, and entertainment.

7. How do you propose to address the traffic the city has, particularly the cut through traffic of people who work in downtown Miami and try to get west going through Coral Gables?

Cut through east-west traffic will continue to be a priority for me. Reducing residential speed limits to 25 mph have already proven successful in minimizing fatalities. The enforcement of this new speed limit must now become an ongoing priority for our police department. As I have in the past, I will continue to also create traffic calming measures to ensure greater safety and residential livability.

8. Do you believe individual neighborhoods should have a say in traffic calming, sidewalks, bike lanes or should this be decided by the commission for the city as a whole? Why?

I have been a strong proponent of allowing those impacted most by these initiatives to make the final decisions. While I support recommendations from professional City staff, I am most interested in receiving the final feedback from residents who ultimately are the most affected by these initiatives.

HOW TO JOIN GGG

Send a letter to: Gables Good Government
1825 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Box #448
Coral Gables, FL 33134
Email us at gablesgoodgov@gmail.com

ANNUAL DUES LEVELS

\$50 Individual / \$75 Household
\$250 Sponsor or Advertiser / \$500 Donor
\$1000 Corporate Donor



ELECTION UPDATE - VOTE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

GROUP IV

CANDIDATE: Jorge Fors, Group IV
votefors.com

5. Depending on who you ask, Coral Gables is either over developed or ripe for development. Where do you stand on the development issues that residents have raised, particularly in the North Gables and along the U.S. 1 corridor? Are there any lines you would not cross? Do you think the city needs any more development and if so what kind?

I believe that over-development is an ever-present danger in Coral Gables and strongly disagree with the statement that our city is "ripe for development." We have experienced instances of development during the past few years that are regarded as both irresponsible and inconsistent with the vision of our city. If elected, I will stand against any proposed development that compromises the character of our neighborhood, strains our resources, or affects our quality life.

There should never be a situation where the majority of the residents oppose a project, and the majority of our elected officials do not. That is a line that should never be crossed. With that being said, our city must continue to grow and evolve, but it must be done intelligently with the aim of improving quality life. Indeed, I would support smart, conscientious development that improves the walkability of our city and avoids developmental sprawl into our residential neighborhoods.

As I mentioned in my response to the previous questionnaire, the decisions we make regarding development during the next four years are critical because we will not get a second chance.

6. What do you envision for future economic development in the city?

During recent years, our administration has done a great job of attracting businesses to our City that I regard as assets. Not just the businesses, but the work force that we are happy to welcome as neighbors. I intend to fully support that policy. With that being said, it is much too difficult for certain small businesses, such as retail stores and dining establishments, to thrive in our downtown area. I know our residents appreciate the privilege of having unique stores and eateries both on and off Miracle Mile, and I believe this is important to our quality of life. All our residents should have the option of working, living, and playing here without going any further if they don't wish to. Unfortunately, a combination of factors have made it difficult for business that cater to our residents to survive in our commercial districts. I believe that the viability of the small businesses that call our city home is tied to the walkability

of our city and the ease of transportation and parking in our commercial districts. If elected, I intend to work with our administration to continue expanding transportation options, such as the Freebie Program, and promote smart parking technology that reduces the amount of nuisance traffic downtown as visitors clog our streets searching for a parking spot before eventually finding one.

7. How do you propose to address the traffic the city has, particularly the cut through traffic of people who work in downtown Miami and try to get west going through Coral Gables?

The east/west cut-through traffic is one of my primary concerns. I live on the corner of not one, but two, cut-through streets and also have a little girl who will want to play in our front yard and sidewalk soon. I have knocked on thousands of doors during my campaign and cut-through traffic is one of the issues that our residents are most passionate about. It is one of the biggest factor affecting our quality life. This means our elected officials should be laser-focused on resolving the problem, and emboldened to employ any action necessary to resolve it. This is NOT an area where we should tip-toe around limitations imposed by the County. I intend to work with the County exhaustively and, if necessary, fight for our city's right to take meaningful action to resolve our cut-through traffic problem. It is important to note that our "cut-through" traffic problem is two-fold: It is not merely the volume of traffic that cuts through our streets, but the manner in which the vehicles cut through, the problem is not how to calm it. There is a whole menu of traffic measures that can be employed including traffic circles, raised cross walks, speed bumps, speed cushions, traffic diversions, media treatment, the list goes on and on. The problem is our inability to employ these measures. I will not take no for an answer when it comes to making our problematic thoroughfares safe again.

8. Do you believe individual neighborhoods should have a say in traffic calming, sidewalks, bike lanes or should this be decided by the commission for the city as a whole? Why?

I believe individual neighborhoods should have a say in traffic calming, sidewalks, and bike lanes. Which traffic-calming measures work best on which streets is something that traffic experts should opine on, but after speaking to 1000s of residents, I have learned that our residents have become very qualified experts regarding the problems faced by the street they live on. My plan is to listen to those residents, then employ all measures possible to effect meaningful change on every street. In fact, during my campaign, I have compiled a list of these streets that I intend to address.



ELECTION UPDATE - VOTE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

GROUP IV

CANDIDATE: Jackson “Rip” Holmes:

www.ripholmes.com

5. Depending on who you ask, Coral Gables is either over developed or ripe for development. Where do you stand on the development issues that residents have raised, particularly in the North Gables and along the U.S. 1 corridor? Are there any lines you would not cross? Do you think the city needs any more development and if so what kind?

I am for smart growth, not excessive growth. For instance, if elected, I would advocate SIGNATURE ARCHITECTURE BUILDINGS like the Bacardi Building, the Miami Tower, and the Biltmore Hotel, and I would not be inclined to approve variances for run-of-the-mill development projects lacking SIGNATURE ARCHITECTURE buildings.

6. What do you envision for future economic development in the city?

I like the great work our City Government and Economic Development Department have done in recruiting companies and Consulates to locate in Coral Gables. I want a department store for Miracle Mile & downtown retail, to maintain the low-rise retail main street of Miracle Mile.

7. How do you propose to address the traffic the city has, particularly the cut through traffic of people who work in downtown Miami and try to get west going through Coral Gables?

As a long-time taxi and Uber driver – 26 years – I agree with Commissioner Lago as to:

- A. RAIL NOT ROADS, and
- B. I ADVOCATE THE CITY JOIN VINCE LAGO AND SUE FOR AN ACCOUNTING OF PENNY SALES TAX REVENUES BY THE COUNTY.

We can afford rail and similar solutions, but we need to account for, and receive back monies which I believe were illegally taken from the Penny Sales Tax Transportation Fund.

MetroRail on our superhighways – SR 836, Palmetto Expressway, Turnpike, etc – is THE SOLUTION TO REDUCING TRAFFIC.

8. Do you believe individual neighborhoods should have a say in traffic calming, sidewalks, bike lanes or should this be decided by the commission for the city as a whole? Why?

Yes. Smart cities like Coral Gables have better answers than the County.

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ELECTION UPDATE - VOTE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019

GROUP IV

CANDIDATE: Carmen Olazabal, Group IV

www.carmen4coralgables.com

5. Depending on who you ask, Coral Gables is either over developed or ripe for development. Where do you stand on the development issues that residents have raised, particularly in the North Gables and along the U.S. 1 corridor? Are there any lines you would not cross? Do you think the city needs any more development and if so what kind?

We should ensure that development in the city is aligned with the master plan created to achieve the vision for the city we want. In the past, many developments received approvals beyond what is allowed by the existing zoning, and the result was not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. Our residents deserve better. I believe that we need to protect our residential neighborhoods by ensuring that development is of appropriate scale at each location. I also think that we can improve the outreach to residents when potentially controversial changes are anticipated, so that more points of view can be heard and considered to achieve a product more inline with what neighbors envision.

6. What do you envision for future economic development in the city?

I believe that we should continue development of downtown Coral Gables as a place to work, live, and play. A walkable downtown encourages residents and visitors to take Freebee and Uber, park in garages, bike or walk, and enjoy their evenings among friends and colleagues while not increasing the stress on traffic and parking. The success of the Giralda and Miracle Mile streetscapes show how city planning, beautification, and economic development can work hand in hand to enhance our quality of life. I also believe in promoting entrepreneurial activity via partnerships with local universities and investors, to nurture an environment where ideas produce companies, and where companies produce jobs. Economic development is the product of good planning and long-term vision.

7. How do you propose to address the traffic the city has, particularly the cut through traffic of people who work in downtown Miami and try to get west going through Coral Gables?

I believe we can manage our traffic issues through comprehensive and effective traffic calming and speed limit enforcement. Residents in every neighborhood in Coral Gables are concerned with the impact of commuters from outside of our city speeding down streets designed only for the people who live there. Neighbors nicknamed these out of town commuters 'runners' because they run through stop signs, dodge left through roundabouts endangering our children, property, and pets. This is a serious threat to our quality of life, but there are proven solutions:

- Increase a strict enforcement of 25 mile an hour speed limits by empowering more traffic control officers
- More traffic calming measures such as speed bumps, traffic circles, and better designed intersections in residential areas
- Work with our partners in Miami-Dade County and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on the incorporation of new technologies that mitigate traffic congestions on major roads

8. Do you believe individual neighborhoods should have a say in traffic calming, sidewalks, bike lanes or should this be decided by the commission for the city as a whole? Why?

Our government should be one that listens and responds to its residents' needs. When it comes to traffic calming, sidewalks, and bike lanes, these solutions impact our neighborhoods directly, and the neighborhood feedback needs to be carefully considered. It is very important, as well, that all the impacted community is heard so that solutions are comprehensive. Sidewalks in arterial roads and bike lanes are part of a network that serve the community as a whole so broad input is needed. Also, the City needs to make sure they are reaching out to the affected community with clear information so residents consider all the pros and cons when providing their feedback. With effective information campaigns, residents feel they understand the reasons behind decisions, even if they don't happen to agree with the outcome.

The Business & Government Affairs Committee of the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce Presents:



2019 Candidate Forum

Meet the candidates for City Commission and Mayor, hear their thoughts
on the critical issues and ask your most pressing questions!

Thursday, March 7, 2019

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Fieldhouse at the University of Miami

1245 Dauer Drive, Coral Gables

Next to the UM Watsco Center

Moderated By Dr. Jennifer M. Connolly
Assistant Professor, Political Science
University of Miami

6 PM | Commission Group IV Candidates Ralph Cabrera
Jorge L. Fors, Jr.
Jackson Rip Holmes
Carmen Olazabal

7:15 PM | Group I / Mayoral Candidates Jeannett Slesnick
Raul J. Valdes-Fauli

Do you have questions for the candidates?

Submit yours in advance by e-mailing events@coralgableschamber.org

Hosted By:



Supporting Organizations:

Coral Gables Democratic Club | Gables Good Government Committee
Young Republicans of Miami

Complimentary registration. Please RSVP by March 5th.

Light refreshments will be served courtesy of our Chamber.