



City of Coral Gables
City Commission Meeting
July 25, 2022

ITEM TITLE:

Resolution. A RESOLUTION DIRECTING CITY STAFF TO WORK WITH FLORIDA POWER AND LIGHT (FPL) TO ACCOMPLISH THE UNDERGROUNDING OF UTILITIES CITYWIDE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STORM SECURE UNDERGROUND PILOT PROGRAM AND SUCH OTHER PROGRAMS AS MAY BE APPROVED BY THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION, TO PURSUE AND IMPLEMENT ALL OTHER COMMITMENTS MADE BY FPL, AND TO EXPLORE OPTIONS TO REQUIRE ATTACHING ENTITIES TO UNDERGROUND CO-LOCATED POLE ATTACHMENTS

BRIEF HISTORY:

In November 2019, the City Commission was presented with non-binding ballpark estimates for the cost of conversion of overhead utilities to underground utilities. After the presentation, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 2019-347 directing staff to prepare and execute a community engagement campaign to include educational materials, vignettes, renderings, community meetings, charettes, and written/oral surveys/polls to effectively engage with community stakeholders, listen, and learn their views, concerns, and insights on the potential undergrounding of utilities.

In December 2019, the City Commission was presented a preliminary action plan timeline for the analysis, project scoping, community engagement, and expected timeline for workshops and possible City Commission action. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the community engagement efforts were suspended.

On August 25, 2020, staff presented an update to the City Commission and recommended that if the City Commission wished to continue working toward the possibility of having a question relating to the citywide undergrounding of utilities on a future ballot, that the matter not be placed before the voters prior to 2022, to allow for the community engagement campaign to resume in the second half of 2021, should it be safe to do so at that time. In Resolution 2020-182, the City Commission agreed that due to the health, safety, and economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the timeline should be adjusted as recommended by staff.

In Resolution 2021-136, the City Commission directed City staff to resume community engagement, continue working to prepare further City Commission action and the potential execution of the citywide undergrounding of utilities, hold workshops with the City Commission in early 2022 and place any necessary items on the June 2022 City Commission meeting agenda for the City Commission's consideration on whether to place a ballot question before voters, relating to the underground of utilities citywide.

After various discussions with FPL and as a result of legislative and regulatory accomplishments and strategic milestones, the City has secured various commitments from FPL under its Storm Secure Underground Pilot Program (SSUPP), which eliminate the need for the City to lead the project, for a voter referendum, for general bond issuance, and for the imposition of the cost of undergrounding on City residents and businesses. Under the new plan, FPL commits to seeking approval from the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) to convert all remaining above-ground neighborhood (lateral) lines, poles, and individual residential and business service connections citywide from overhead to underground, under the SSUPP.

The SSUPP as currently approved by the FPSC, extends for ten (10) years and FPL has committed to converting forty percent (40%) of overhead lateral lines, poles, and individual residential and business service connection lines by year 10. Additionally, FPL has committed to pursuing timely FPSC approval to convert the remaining sixty percent (60%) of overhead lateral lines from overhead to underground.

FPL has committed to completing hardening of above-ground main (feeder) lines in the City within the next five (5) years, which hardening includes a portion of overhead-to-underground conversion of approximately 15% of existing above-ground main (feeder) lines. FPL has also committed to working with the City to find the opportunity, as part of FPL's main (feeder) line hardening, to convert specific main (feeder) line sections located along the City's signature streets where there are engineering and vegetation management issues that validate or justify the need for undergrounding of such main (feeder) line sections rather than overhead hardening.

Given FPL's commitments to the City, this resolution expresses that the City Commission wishes to allow FPL to proceed with the project as set forth above and not proceed with a City-managed and directed project that would have required a voter referendum, a general obligation bond issuance, and imposition of the cost of overhead-to-underground electric infrastructure conversion on City residents and businesses.

In it, the City Commission also recognizes that implementing the SSUPP and such other FPSC-approved projects related to overhead-to-underground electric infrastructure conversion and hardening do not alleviate the need for further coordination of the project, exploration of other avenues for implementation of electric and communication infrastructure above-ground to underground conversion and hardening, and potential regulatory and legislative action to ensure that co-located equipment attached to poles owned by FPL or other entities is timely removed and placed underground so that redundant poles may ultimately be eliminated and the City may achieve a higher standard of aesthetic and street beautification. To that end, the Commission directs staff to explore all avenues for the removal and relocation of such equipment by attaching entities.

ATTACHMENT(S):
Draft Resolution