

Contractor offers to rebuild torch

By HILDA INCLAN

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A Cuban contractor has offered to rebuild the Torch of Friendship at no cost to the City of Miami.

City Manager Paul Andrews said today he plans to ask city commissioners whether they'll accept the contractor's offer.

Yesterday, city officials

said they would foot the cost for restoring the torch since the Cuban American Jaycees abandoned a fund drive it had initiated among area Cubans to pay for the work.

The offer to rebuild the torch, which was knocked down Oct. 11, was made by Valerio Capote, of Cuban Construction Inc. He said he was representing the group ASI — Independent Labor Union Action — which planned the destruction of the torch.

The Cuban American Jaycees said they backed out of rebuilding the torch after their organization and Miami Vice Mayor Manolo Reboso, who supported their offer, were accused by some Cubans of using the incident to their own political advantage.

The Biscayne Boulevard torch was destroyed when ASI leader Conrado Rodriguez rammed a rented truck against it to protest renewal of relations with Fidel Castro by Latin American nations which have national emblems on the monument.