

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item K
January 26, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli
Vice Mayor Vince Lago
Commissioner Pat Keon
Commissioner Michael Mena
Commissioner Jorge Fors

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Attorney, Miriam Ramos
City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item K [Start: 12:20 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission granting permission to the City Clerk to proceed with preparation of the Municipal Election Order Form in conjunction with Miami-Dade County Elections Department for services, materials and support to be rendered, in connection with the Coral Gables General Biennial Election of April 13, 2021; to procure the necessary ballots and other forms, to arrange for the use of voting machines, provide appropriate absentee ballot request policy (In those instances wherein Miami-Dade County manages the distribution of absentee ballots) and canvass returns from our designated precincts within the City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Now City Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, this is just a resolution calling for the, in conjunction with Miami-Dade County for us to prepare for the April Election. The question was posed during the last meeting about the idea of early voting, and the cost for early voting was going to be \$8,500 per

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day. We went back and looked at the budget with the City Manager and we have about four days-worth of early voting that can be covered on this. So, I know Commissioner Mena had proposed the idea of perhaps doing Saturday and Sunday before the Election and before the Run-off Election.

Vice Mayor Lago: I just think it makes sense.

Commissioner Mena: Yes.

Vice Mayor Lago: Give everybody one day to kind of set up for the main election.

Commissioner Mena: I think early voting always stops that Monday anyways, right?

City Clerk Urquia: Correct. Its never on a Monday, so we would do Saturday and Sunday and also based on what Commissioner Keon had mentioned, we did reach out to Miami-Dade County, it can be done at the Library, we do not have to look for an alternate location.

Commissioner Mena: I think that makes a lot of sense.

Vice Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Commissioner Fors: I personally don't think its worth it, but I'm not particularly passionate about it one way or another. I think we are going to have, as we discussed, Mr. City Clerk, an overwhelming amount of mail-in ballots and on early day voting we are going to have maybe like 20 people vote across the city, and maybe this isn't the year to try it, but you know, I'm also not opposed to trying it passionately, but for the record, I don't think its going to make a big difference, especially this year.

Commissioner Mena: To your point, I don't think its about this election. To me, this is a conversation that's come up in the past and I just think going forward, whenever it is that we start and I just think this is the time we are doing it, but I think it's a good thing to integrate early voting into the process. You're right, this is a strange year that's probably going to be overwhelmingly mail-in, but I don't know how it will play out in years ahead.

Vice Mayor Lago: But I just thought four days was going to be overkill, especially in our city. If we can try to save that money, we already have it in the budget, I don't want to spend more than we have.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

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Vice Mayor Lago: I think two days is more than suffice.

Commissioner Mena: We should re-evaluate after as well, really look at the numbers. If we think it's not worth it going forward, we can always revisit. I have broader questions about our run-offs in general, as somebody who participated in one, in the first one, about the cost sort of benefit of it all. But then given what we see so far this year, as far as candidates running, at least in the two Commission seats, I think its likely we are going to have at least two run-offs, its just math if you have a certain amount of candidates, but it is what it is.

Vice Mayor Lago: But that's a good discussion to have. I never shy away from a discussion, either it be under the Sunshine or however you'd like to have it, through a memo, one form or another. I'm open for any discussion. I wrote the legislation in regard to the run-offs, but like you said, I'm always willing to alter or move back if it makes sense and if it's the will of the Commission.

City Clerk Urquia: Commissioner Fors, I don't necessarily disagree with you. I'm bringing it over because we agreed to do this after the last election. Its providing residents with more opportunities to vote, but I do foresee a larger than normal vote-by-mail ballots turnout this time around.

Commissioner Keon: I agree. I think you can wait until the next election to do it, but whatever you want to do.

City Clerk Urquia: Its at the will of the Commission.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: So, what is the will of the Commission, not to have the early voting?

Vice Mayor Lago: I'm in favor of it.

Commissioner Mena: I'm in favor of it.

Vice Mayor Lago: I think two days is more than suffice, but I understand Commissioner Fors concerns and Commissioner Mena's. Listen, again, this is about money, this is what it cost. We want to have as many people go out and vote, but we can try it this year and see how it goes, see what the numbers are in regards to early voting, and if it makes sense.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you make a motion?

Vice Mayor Lago: So moved.

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Commissioner Keon: Second.

City Attorney Ramos: If I may just read it into the record, because it is a resolution relating to elections. A Resolution of the City Commission granting permission to the City Clerk to proceed with preparation of the Municipal Election Order Form in conjunction with Miami-Dade County Elections Department for services, materials and support to be rendered, in connection with the Coral Gables General Biennial Election of April 13, 2021; to procure the necessary ballots and other forms, to arrange for the use of voting machines, provide appropriate absentee ballot request policy and canvass returns from our designated precincts within the City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please?

City Manager Iglesias: Just to be clear Mayor, we are talking about two days, two and two.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Two days.

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

City Clerk Urquia: I'm sorry, who second it?

Commissioner Keon: I seconded it. Was it only at one site? Its only at the Library, is that right.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes ma'am. It would only be at the Library.

Commissioner Fors: And its two days for the Run-off and two days for the General.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Will you call the roll please.

Commissioner Keon: Yes

Vice Mayor Lago: Yes

Commissioner Mena: Yes

Commissioner Fors: Yes

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

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Mayor Valdes-Fauli: Any other comments by the Commission members?

Commissioner Keon: The Run-off election, was that part of the Charter change?

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It is part of the Charter. It's the most democratic thing we've ever done.

Commissioner Keon: Right. The Run-offs came as a result of the Charter change.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: It is in the Charter and it was a result of the Charter change and very much discussed.

Commissioner Keon: Thank you.

Commissioner Mena: I'll just say that as far as how democratic it is, the net result is that less people in the voting in the run-off. So, I can only tell you from my own experience on day one, don't quote me on the exact numbers, but I think I had 44 percent of the vote with four candidates and we had to spend \$100,000, I was up by, I think, 12 points from the second place person. We had to spend all that money on a run-off, so that less people would come out and vote; ended up winning by 7 points. That's just the way it shakes out, but what tends to happen is that the Mayor's race is the race that garners a lot of the support and attention, and when that race is over, and if it doesn't go to a run-off, and only a Commission seat is left, you get a lot less interest and a lot of the people who came out to maybe support other people on the ballot, don't come out again and you basically have votes that counted day one and didn't count day two. Listen, its an imperfect science. I understand it, but it's worth discussing.

Mayor Valdes-Fauli: We've had in the past and I'm talking about, I'm not going to mention the election, but somebody wins with 30-sum percent of the votes without a run-off and I think that's very undemocratic.

Commissioner Mena: Right.

Vice Mayor Lago: So, in reference what was brought up a few moments ago. I will provide you with a full detail memo and also, I will provide you with meeting minutes when I did present that legislation and it was rolled over.

Commissioner Mena: I understand.

Vice Mayor Lago: When it was rolled over, obviously...

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Commissioner Keon: You don't have to do that. I only asked for it, because I asked if it was a Charter issue.

Vice Mayor Lago: When it was rolled over to the Charter, so one day we can present that.

Commissioner Keon: No, you don't need to do that. I only asked for memory if it was a Charter issue. I'm sure you...

Vice Mayor Lago: I'll send you the memo.

Commissioner Keon: It's not necessary.