

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-6**  
**May 20, 2025**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**  
**Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson**  
**Commissioner Melissa Castro**  
**Commissioner Ariel Fernandez**  
**Commissioner Richard D. Lara**

**City Staff**

**Acting City Manager, Joe L. Gomez**  
**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Finance Director, Diana Gomez**  
**Assistant Finance Director, Paula Rodriguez**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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**Agenda Item F-6**

A Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager to transmit the City's 2024-2025 Adopted Budget to the Florida Department of Government Efficiency for Review and Recommendations (Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item F-6. Commissioner Fernandez, your item.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. We had somebody from the Governor's Office who was on earlier, but they had to step away. This is a resolution directing our staff – would you like to read it.

City Attorney Suarez: Sure. It's a Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager to transmit the City's 2024-2025 Adopted Budget to the Florida Department of Government Efficiency for Review and Recommendations.

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Commissioner Fernandez: So, it would send our budget to the Florida Department of Government Efficiency, DOGE, for them to review. Right now, there have been about 87 municipalities and local governments that have already taken this action. The Governor's Office was very appreciative and asked me to relay the message that the Governor appreciates us taking this step and they look forward to taking this step for us. The Governor has put out an Executive Order requesting that everybody's budget be reviewed by the Florida DOGE and this ensures that ours is frontline, and we get a response from them sooner rather than with everybody sending them in bulk. So, I know we'll be joining our neighbors in West Miami, and I believe Hialeah that have already taken the action. So, hope I can count on your support on this.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Can I get a motion.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll make a motion.

Mayor Lago: Motion. Can I get a second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: For discussion purposes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm not in support of this, because of the comments I've received back from residents and concerns that our garbage service will be ripped out. We are very unique. So, I'm not in support for that reason.

Mayor Lago: Okay. If I may. If I may have our Finance Director come up, please, both, the team. Before I speak, I want to make sure that my colleagues, Commissioner Lara, do you have anything else you'd like to say before I speak.

Commissioner Lara: What I'd like to say is that I just got here, again, and before even with our budget being looked at by someone in Tallahassee, I'm going to take a crack at the budget myself. I think that Coral Gables is unique. I don't know if it translates that well. It's a hard enough job. It's a steep enough hill to try and get money from Tallahassee, try to explain to them how we do things here in Coral Gables. And so, at this point, I am not in support of this, but I'd like to hear from our Finance team.

Mayor Lago: So, Madam Finance Director, can you give me a little guidance and your opinion on this matter, because I'm inclined to vote for this, because I like transparency, but I'm also inclined and a little concerned about how this could affect us. What are other cities doing. What are the

benefits? – What are the drawbacks? – What do you see? I haven't had the opportunity to recognize somebody who's here. Mayor of Hialeah, Mayor Hernandez is here with us. Thank you, my friend, I appreciate you for being here.

Finance Director Gomez: Good evening, Diana Gomes, Finance Director. So, yes, I believe that the City of Coral Gables is very unique and that everything that we do, we do it because this is the way we want our city to be run and things that we want to do that perhaps would not necessarily look efficient to other, to outsiders looking in. So, I'm of the thought that inviting somebody to come in and look at how we do things without really knowing how we do things and why we do things could not give the best results. It could limit future appropriations and grant opportunities, because what's to stop them from saying, well you should be more efficient in these other ways before you come to us for anything else, and so, we have no control over what they are going to be looking at. We don't even know what they're looking at because I don't know that its an established program where we've seen what the results of a review would be, but I don't have a whole lot of information on it, because its something that's rather new, and so, that's the negative things that've heard is you have somebody else that doesn't know your operations, doesn't know how you are doing things, looking at and questioning what you are doing without having all the facts. Are they going to come and really ask and get into the real meat of what we're doing. I don't know that they would. I don't know what the process is. Its something that's completely new to me. So why would we invite that is my thought. I don't know if Paula has.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: I share the same perspective. I believe that some of, most of what we do here at the City of Coral Gables is different than most of the municipalities around us, and so, that's what distinguishes us from the other municipalities, and we take pride in that. My concern would be exactly that. What are the criteria that they are basing efficiency on. I think the Vice Mayor's statement is exactly that. I will tell you, as somebody who has worked in solid waste, it is not the benchmark to do backdoor service, and so, if you are looking for efficiencies that's one place that you would look. However, it is what our residents have wanted and what this Commission has voted for year after year and fought for. We fought for, you know, the Home Rule, right. We fought that we don't want the county or the state dictating how we function and getting involved in certain things that we believe are local decisions, and so, why would we open ourselves to that scrutiny without a criteria of what they are looking for or any explanation would concern me. Of course, we believe that we prepare a great budget, and we are always open to input, and we are always looking for ways to improve, so I don't want to take away from that, but I would be concerned about what their criteria is and what they would be looking at.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: I would like to record my vote for the memorial as a yes. Did somebody move this already or not?

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Commissioner Fernandez: I moved it, and the Vice Mayor seconded for discussion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I did not second it. I said I was not in favor.

Mayor Lago: I actually was the one that seconded.

Commissioner Castro: Okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: She said, I'll second for discussion.

Mayor Lago: Let's bring it through the Mayor, please. She didn't second. I'm the one that seconded it. I wanted to hear about the proposal, because I'm very intrigued by it and I believe that if you want to be as transparent as possible, you shouldn't have a reason why not to do that. This is something I had multiple discussions with, but now, I'm concerned because we do, do things that are not the most efficient, but they are great things for the City of Coral Gables, because our residents like them. So, I don't want to adversely affect the city and our services by doing this. So, what would your recommendation be?

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: This is really the will of the Commission and what you want to do. I would be concerned for those reasons. I think there are many things that we fund that, if I were to bring to you the most lean budget, you know, the frequency of tree trimming, the frequency of grass trimming, right, those are things that you look at when you look at the efficiencies in your city. Does the grass have to be two inches before we trim it or four inches. So those are the kinds of things that I'm just concerned about. This is really the will of the Commission. My preference at this time would be not to do so. Why be the first in line. Let's see what the results of other review are, but again, I don't want any perception that we're not open to scrutiny or – we go through audits, we have confidence in the work that we do.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. As the sponsor, do you have anything else you'd like to add before I call the roll.

Commissioner Fernandez: No. I think in my conversations with the Governor's Office, they are in the process of organizing their process. They do have about 87 municipalities that are already in line in queue to be reviewed, but the Governor's Executive Order will require that everybody's budget be reviewed anyway. So, I think I was giving staff this example during my agenda review. I've judged science competitions and usually when you review that first science project, you are kind of not sure what you're looking for and you're less geared towards those specifics that you will be when you are number 3 or 400, because then they've already made a list of programs that they are recommending cut, and another thing, these are recommendations, they are not binding. These are recommendations that they will make that will give us an opportunity to say, look, there are other places where we can cut our budget and find money here and there and maybe fund City

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Hall, and find other ways to fund, especially if we are looking towards the financial situation, you're talking about in fiscal year 2026-2027.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: Depending on the outcome of state's decision.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear you.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: Depending on the outcome of the state's decision, right.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

Assistant Finance Director Rodriguez: I'm being prudent because I don't know what the decisions will be.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct. That's my thought process on this. I think we are better off being on the front end than on the back end of this procedure, and I think if we're looking for goodwill with the Governor as well to make sure that our projects are not vetoed this year, this is an opportunity to show the Governor that we're committed to transparency. It will be a process that will take time. My understanding is we are looking at potentially eight to nine months before they get back to us.

Mayor Lago: Alright. So, we have a motion and a second. Mr. Clerk, please call the roll.

Commissioner Lara: It could be something to get behind once we get a better sense of what the program looks like, and we'll get a sense of it some nine months from now. I don't particularly see the advantage of getting in front of it. I think you said you see it, but I don't. That being said, no.

Vice Mayor Anderson: For similar reasons, no.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Speaking with the Finance team, they swayed me. Obviously, I want to minimize the effect of future funding at the state, but I think that right now, potentially it's a little too early, in my opinion, so I'm a no vote, but I'd like to bring it back if possible.

(Vote: 2-3)