

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D – Mayor’s Comments
November 9, 2022
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item D-1 [10:05 a.m.]

Mayor’s Comments

Discussion regarding process for appointment of individual to fill the upcoming vacancy on the City Commission.

Mayor Lago: Moving onto Mayor’s Comments. I have a discussion regarding process for appointment of individuals to fill the upcoming vacancy on the City Commission. I sent the following memo to my colleagues. Thank you to the City Attorney and her team for assisting me in putting it together. I’d like to put it briefly on the record. As all of you know, on November 22, 2022, there will be a vacancy on the City Commission. Pursuant to Article 1 – Section 1 of the City Charter, within 30 days after a vacancy occurs on the Commission, the remaining Commissioners shall elect a Commissioner to fill the vacancy until the next General Biennial Election. Accordingly, the seat must be filled by December 22, 2022. Since the City Commission only holds one regular scheduled meeting in the month of December, the City Clerk will be placing an item on December 13, 2022, City Commission meeting agenda, in order to fill a vacancy. In accordance with Section 3, Article I of the City Charter, members of the City Commission shall be residents of the city for at least one year prior to serving. The Charter is silent on a process to consider individuals for that appointment. I therefore recommend the process below for your

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consideration. Anyone interested in being considered for appointment should submit proof of residency, a resume, and a brief statement detailing why he or she would like to serve and why he or she is qualified to do so. Said documents should be submitted to the City Clerk by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, November 29, 2022. The Clerk should then forward all submittals to the members of the City Commission for review and approval of an appointment at the December 13th City Commission meeting. Despite the process set forth above, the City Commission reserves the right to appoint individuals whom they believe are qualified to serve until the April 2023 Election. A Commissioner wishing to nominate individuals for appointment may do so verbally at the December City Commission meeting, at which point the remaining Commissioners may consider the nomination and may approve an appointment by a majority vote for the Commission. With that being said, I would also like to take a moment to congratulate my colleague, Commissioner Fors, on his service to the City of Coral Gables. Running for office and serving as an elected official is incredibly difficult. It's a thankless job. People take you for granted, but at the end of the day after you've served maybe one year, two years, four years, eight, whatever your time is, whatever you are blessed to serve in this community, you leave a legacy. Your legacy is one of being selfless, to be of service, of giving up time from your own personal business, of giving up time from your own personal family, from seeing your young children grow without you being there, withing tucking them into bed, because you have commitments, and the city comes first. So, I just want to say thank you for putting the city first, for your commitment to the city. We wish you much success and God's speed.

[Applause]

Mayor Lago: The Vice Mayor would also like to say a few comments.

Vice Mayor Mena: I'll cut Commissioner Fors off for one of the last times.

Commissioner Fors: One last time.

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Mena: No, all joking aside. You know when Commissioner Fors ran for office, we had a lot of friends in common, but we really didn't know each other personally that well, and over the course of the last few years he's really become a close friend. I have a lot of respect for him. I think he's done a tremendous job serving the city. He always brings a positive demeanor to our meetings. I think he has a good rapore with staff. I think he's led a lot of really positive initiatives; the list is long. We can talk about play zones that he focused on around parks. We can talk about some of the interesting hand-to-hand combat training for police, which I thought was a very creative and innovative idea. The list goes on and on, but mostly just serving our residents, I think in a humble manner. To me, he's a very down to earth guy, a guy that's very approachable, a guy that our residents feel comfortable talking to, and I just think he served with a lot of dignity and respect. His family is really wonderful people. I've gotten to know them as well. I was talking to him last night, you know, anytime you put yourself out there to run for office, its really a unique experience. It's hard to explain to somebody, but when your name is on that ballot and you're getting results and living that experience, its hard on you, its hard on your family, and I know that

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that he might have been disappointed with yesterday's result, but I think he carried himself with a lot of respect. I know he had tremendous support in the City of Coral Gables, which I think speaks to the service he's had here, and I just wanted to just say thank you to him more than anything. We are going to miss you here, and I look forward to joining you in retirement in April, but all joking aside, it's really been a privilege and an honor to serve with you. I've come to have a lot of respect and admiration for you, and I know we are going to continue to be in contact, obviously. We have a small, little token that I know staff prepared to present to you, which I thought, Martha, if you want to just show it. Just something for you to keep and commemorate in your office and commemorate a small part, obviously of your legacy here in the city, something that anybody with children and a family can appreciate. I know you have three young girls and we thought that this was just a neat little token for you to hopefully hang in your office and keep as a memento of your service to the city. So, thank you. We are going to miss you, and obviously, looking forward to the rest of today's meeting, but you're going to be missed.

[Applause]

Commissioner Menendez: Its hard to top what the Vice Mayor said, but when I became a Commissioner, one of the joys was not necessarily work related, but related in terms on a personal level, and I've become very good friends, very close with George, because we share a common love, I think like all of us do, for family, community and kids. Quite honestly, you know you are well thought of when someone invites you, me, to a little kid's birthday party and all my kids are in college, because they wanted me to feel like I'm part of their family, and I highly respect and admire your work. I admire you as a person and I honestly think that you've always brought a lot of humanity to every decision you make. Its funny because you know, you're a former wrestler, but you have a heart of gold, and to me, that's what's most important. So, its an honor to have served with you, but more importantly, its an honor to be your friend.

Commissioner Anderson: I'll just follow up and mirror the responses that you all have said. I've been sitting next to Commissioner Fors here for the past few months, and we've got to know each other a little better, both on the dais and off the dais, as well. I want to thank you for the Youth Zone idea, because it's made a little easier for us to talk to the county about the need for traffic calming near the parks and highlighting the fact that we're close to parks. So, thank you and yes, you will be missed.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you. Thank you for the presentation. Life takes you down different paths, some expected, some unexpected. For me, getting into politics and ending up on the Coral Gables City Commission was definitely an unexpected turn, but after I found myself here in this building, it became an extremely rewarding experience more so than I could ever have imagined or dreamed of. I've learned so much and I've made so many friends along the way. I want to thank my colleagues on the Commission for working with me, and embracing me, after I was elected and throughout the years. I want to thank staff, especially the City Manager and the City Attorney and Commissioner Menendez, I hope that you, I think it's a good fit for you to continue with some of the add-ons on the Youth Zone Initiative. We have designated certain zones, there's still more to be done and perhaps I can fill you in on that when Sunshine no longer applies to our meetings.

And thanks again. It's been a great ride. It's been an amazing experience. I love this city. I love
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serving and I look forward to continuing to contribute in any way I can, to the continued advancement of the City of Coral Gables. Thank you very much. It's been an honor.

[Applause]

[Photo was taken of the Commission along with Commissioner Fors to commemorate his service to the city. This was his last meeting as a Commissioner with the City of Coral Gables]