

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-3
January 13, 2026
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

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item F-3 [Start: 4:00 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission amending Resolution No. 2025-301 to amend certain language and calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question and City Charter amendment to be held on April 21, 2026; providing for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking if the Charter should be amended to change the City's General Election from April of odd numbered years to coincide with the General Election held in November of even numbered years and adjusting the association qualifying and run-off dates and changing all subsequent elections; providing for a mail ballot election; providing for inclusion in the City Charter; providing for related matters providing for severability; and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Again, we're moving on. Item F-3.

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January 13, 2026

*Agenda Item F-3 – Resolution amending Resolution No.2025-301 to amend certain language
And calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question*

[Date]

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City Attorney Christina Suarez: F3 is a Resolution of the city commission amending resolution number 2025-301 to amend certain language in calling a special election on the proposed valid question and City Charter amendment to be held on April 21, 2026, providing for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking if the Charter should be amended to change the City's General Election from April of unnumbered years to coincide with the General Election held in November of even-numbered years and adjusting the associated qualifying and run-off dates and changing all subsequent elections, providing for a mail ballot election, providing for inclusion in the City Charter, providing for related matters, providing for severability, and providing for an effective date. So now the Deputy City Attorney will present this item.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Thank you, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. This is not Deja Vu. I know this was before you earlier, but this is coming back to you. This is the resolution calling for the Special Mail Ballot Election to be held on April 21, 2026. This is the question about moving the election date from April of odd-numbered years to November of even-numbered years. You will note that there have only been a few small changes to the ballot question title and question itself. That's to comply with all requirements of state law regarding the 15-word title and the 75-word question. You will note that for this one specifically, there were two small changes that we added the word approximately to note that it's an approximately four-month reduction of current elected officials' terms should this item be adopted and clarifying that the run-off and the associated dates would also be changed with that. The strikethrough to the Charter itself is also included in the question, and as I noted, it's already set for the April 21st. This is just a small change in the language of the question.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. May I have a motion?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Mayor Lago: May I have a second? Second. Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. First speaker, Mrs. Maria Cruz. Hold on one second, sir. Remember, we have very clear rules. If you've spoken on this issue already during the day, you cannot take a second bite of the apple, correct, Madam City Attorney?

City Attorney Christina Suarez: If you spoke on this during public comment, correct, on this particular item.

City Clerk Urquia: Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I have not spoken about this F-3 item, so I get to talk about it. And I get to express once again, like other people did, the issue of the mail ballot by mail, because not everyone that lives in Coral Gables likes to vote by mail. And as you all may know, if you receive U.S. mail, sometimes you get it, sometimes you don't. So having said that, I object to this continuous event trying to push somebody's will as opposed to the will of the people. And I really am trying to remember what the Charter Committee suggested, because I thought it was very good in reference to this. That's all I have to say. We know that respect begets respect. So, since I want to be respected, I will respect.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Greetings. My name is Jackson Holmes. I live at, I don't remember where I live, 35 Sedonia, here in Coral Gables. This is an extremely important issue. And I concur with the great recommendations made by the Charter Review Committee. I didn't even realize they were performing all these miracles. But so, it makes it easier for me to focus on my one issue, which is we need to remove the clause in what's being presented to voters with the intention of increasing voter turnout and reducing the cost of the election. I think, honestly, well, I should defer to the language used by former Mayor Slesnick. It's taking an advocacy position. It's promoting that people, but secondly, I'm sorry, but I focus very closely on whether or not things are honest. And it's not honest. We know that the real motive or the intention here is to make the election purchasable by the money people, namely developers. It's yet another deceit of the voters who are anti-development and trying to trick them into giving total power over the U.S., over the Coral Gables, excuse me, government for developers. It's dishonest. It takes sides and we need to strike it. And I'm actively involved in finding the right lawyers to take this to court. This is the wrong language. It needs to be stricken. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Please close before the public comment. Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: Yes, so I'm going to go ahead and since there's already a motion and a second on the table, I'm going to go ahead and offer from the amendment. And the amendment would be to go ahead and consider the language that the Charter Review Committee suggested regarding this ballot question. This ballot question exactly was asked. It was kind of what they were referring to was that it's kind of biased. And I think we would be in a circumstance that we could legally be pursued. So, I think just to not waste time, I think we should consider the recommendation if the sponsor would accept my amendment, that would be great. And if not, then I guess we know what repercussions we can come into. And that would be it.

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Mayor Lago: You done? The answer is no. Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: The motion was made by the Vice Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Again.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, she would have to answer.

Mayor Lago: I am the sponsor. I'm the sponsor of the bill.

Commissioner Fernandez: But the motion wasn't made by you. It was made by the Vice Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead, Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Christina Suarez: So, I think that the commissioner offered a friendly amendment, which yes, typically then the move-in could accept the friendly amendment to the motion. But you also asked if the sponsor would be willing to agree to it. And so, I think there was a little bit of a mix of both there.

Mayor Lago: So, I said no. I said no. Okay, but we're moving on. We're moving on from that.

Commissioner Castro: The attorney is correcting the record. I'm sorry. And I think she's a parliamentary figure.

Mayor Lago: You cannot run a meeting. All right, guys, guys, listen. Another hour.

[The Commission took a recess and later resumed the meeting]

Mayor Lago: All right, item F-3. We have a motion and a second. We've had public comment. Public comment is closed. We heard from Commissioner Castro. We had a friendly amendment request that was made to the Vice Mayor. The Vice Mayor, where do you stand on that position?

Vice Mayor Anderson: No.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Fernandez, the floor is yours.

Commissioner Fernandez: Where my train of thought was, but I think the reason we have a Charter Review Committee is to take their advice. It was a unanimous vote by the Charter Review Committee, which is made up from a diverse group of members of our community. I believe the language should be consistent with their recommendation. So, I would stand by Commissioner Castro's recommendation for the friendly amendment.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Lara:

Commissioner Lara. I'm ready to vote.

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Mayor Lago: Okay. Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm ready to vote as well.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, perfect. First and foremost, when we talk about taking advice, the previous Charter Reviews were seven individuals through the leadership of Commissioner Castro and Fernandez. It was knocked down to five. Thank God we went back to the previous recommendations, which was be at seven. This is not the first time that language has been used. Madam City Attorney, correct me if I'm wrong.

City Attorney Christina Suarez: Correct. This is a language that was used by South Miami.

Mayor Lago: By South Miami. And they were not challenged legally. Mr. Clerk, we have a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I call for the vote.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: No.

Commissioner Fernandez: No.

Mayor Lago: Yes.