

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-3
June 10, 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

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item E-3 [10:13 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending City Code Chapter 2, “Administration,” Article II “City Commission,” Section 2-28 “Mayor; Duties and Powers,” to clarify the Mayor’s ability to designate City representatives for City Delegations; providing for severability provision, repealer clause, codification and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney, item E-3.

City Attorney Suarez: E-3 is An Ordinance of the City Commission amending City Code Chapter 2, “Administration,” Article II “City Commission,” Section 2-28 “Mayor; Duties and Powers,” to clarify the Mayor’s ability to designate City representatives for City Delegations; providing for severability provision, repealer clause, codification and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: No public comment, Mr. Mayor.

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*Agenda Item E-3 – Ordinance amending City Code Chapter 2 “Administration”
Article II “City Commission” Section 2-28 “Mayor; Duties and Powers”*

[Date]

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Mayor Lago: We'll close the public comment. Can I have a motion and a second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Mayor Lago: Any comments from the Commission.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No comments.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. Last Commission meeting I mentioned that I didn't vote for this item. Before this came to the Commission and the Commission voted on it, as far as who would belong to whatever delegation and now the Mayor is sponsoring this item himself, which I find it to be very unethical to go ahead and gain or give yourself more powers as the Mayor. This probably would have been or looked better if somebody else would have sponsored this type of legislation. For that reason, my answer would be absolutely not.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Madam City Attorney, in your legal opinion, is this ordinance an expansion of the Mayor's powers or is it more appropriate to call it a clarification of existing power.

City Attorney Suarez: I would say it's more clarification since the section of the code that's being amended already says that the Mayor has the authority to designate other Commissioners to represent the City Commission in negotiations, meetings and functions, except as otherwise designated by the City Commission.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Commissioner Lara: Commissioner Castro, I believe that that addresses your concern. There's been no expansion to this proposed ordinance of existing power, just a clarification.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. City Attorney is this the way we have done it in the past, in the past two to three years.

City Attorney Suarez: It's my understanding that has not been the practice, but the authority was in the code, yes.

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Commissioner Castro: Thank you for clarification. So, in other words, we are changing what we are doing in the past. By clarifying what it says doesn't mean that we are still following the same procedures we have been following. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Anything else. Okay. I'll address the issue. Very clearly, just because we weren't following procedures, because there was a majority on the Commission that did unethical things here on the Commission floor, doesn't mean that again, it was not law in the city, is that correct Madam City Attorney. Just because we didn't follow certain protocols that were in the code or in the Charter, doesn't mean that it's the way of the world now, correct.

City Attorney Suarez: Right Mayor. The code has always said what I just read, and this is making it express with specifically the city delegations.

Mayor Lago: Exactly. So, it's always been part of the rules and how we conduct ourselves. There was a previous Commission that decided to conduct themselves in a different fashion that did not bode well for us, both in Tallahassee and in other efforts at the federal level for us to garner appropriations, as been told to us by multiple leaders, both State Representatives and Senators, and this is across the board. It's just again, a clarification. We've had this discussion. There is no need to politicize every single issue, and I think it's an opportunity to just move forward and address issues. If my colleagues on the Commission would be interested in engaging in one form or another in delegations, and let me be clear, I've never taken a trip abroad on the city's dime. I've never done that in 12 years of being in public service. I welcome it. If you want to join us, but at the end of the day, the Mayor leads the delegation, that is very clear, its already existing in the code, and I think this is a clarification as stated by the City Attorney. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you for recognizing me. I've practiced law for 38 years and worked with teams of lawyers. We always have a lead counsel, which would essentially be like the mayor and a decision is made who's going to be the spokesperson either for the press, to a particular opposing counsel, who's going to lead a particular issue or an item and that's just protocol. It's normal. I don't find anything about this abnormal. I think it's a wise decision to move forward because you get a better result. We are here to serve our residents in the best capacity possible and get the best results. So, this is why I support this item, and I think it's a wise way to do it. So, the folks in Tallahassee who are not happy with having too many people coming up for a particular item will also be listened to as well.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: And City Clerk, Billy.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes ma'am.

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Commissioner Castro: Whenever you have a chance can you please go ahead and pull a public record of when was the last time that we actually followed this practice, if we ever did follow it, and what I'm talking about is the Mayor going and designating the Commissioners to delegations. I know I said two to three years, but maybe we haven't followed it in the last 20.

City Clerk Urquia: Will do.

Commissioner Castro: I mean it's interesting, it's just the timing of when this is coming up. It's pretty interesting. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, if we have no further comment, please call the roll.

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: No

Commissioner Fernandez: No

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 3-2)

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.