

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item G-2**  
**July 1, 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 (Absent)**  
**Commissioner Richard D. Lara**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**  
**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Arts and Culture Coordinator, Catherine Cathers**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Eric Fliss**  
**Adler Guerrier**

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Agenda Item G-2 [11:51 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Cultural Grant recipients and setting in place a funding mechanism contingent on the City's approved budget. (Unanimously recommended by the Cultural Development Board approval/denial vote: 6 to 0).

Mayor Lago: Item G-2.

City Attorney Suarez: G-2 is Resolution of the City Commission approving Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Cultural Grant recipients and setting in place a funding mechanism contingent on the City's approved budget.

Art and Cultural Coordinator: Good morning. So, one of the responsibilities of the Cultural Development Board is to recommend to the City Commission the annual allocation of cultural grant funding. I would like to thank our members of the Cultural Development Board who had the  
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role of reviewing and scoring each application. Board member Eric Fliss is here today to speak on behalf of the board. Eric, if you want to come up while I go through the presentation. We'll still have the presentation up, we'll do that. I would also like to thank our cultural partners, the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce and the Arts and Business Council, who provide important professional development opportunities and support our grantees throughout the year. So last year the City Commission adopted amendments to the cultural grant, included a process to encourage greater participation in the program. These amendments include bonus points for the following scenarios, they had points for organizations whose principal address is in Coral Gables, for applicants who include programming of free events and organizations whose operating budget is \$50,000 or less. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, the City Commission approved updates to the grant guidelines and process and included the addition of the Youth Arts Program category, which you heard from one of our grant applicants earlier today. Thank you. And that program has dedicated funding of \$50,000 to maintain and to maintain the previous year's funding of \$228,228 for core organizations and cultural programs. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, the Cultural Development Board reviewed and scored 52 applications for the allocation of Coral Gables Cultural Grant funding, that is seven more than last year and an 11 percent increase in recommended organizations. This includes the application required by Coral Gables Museum which is funded separately. So, proposed funding of the 51 applicants and their scores, plus the Museum have been included as Exhibit A in the proposed resolution. The board is recommending funding for these organizations, which represent a diverse range of the arts, including music, theater, film, dance, opera, literary arts, performance, poetry, gardens and museums. So, we have a few slides showing the range of cultural programs happening throughout the city. I just think it's nice for you all to have an opportunity to actually have some visuals of what's going on around the city, and these are all within the last year. So here we see some art making, music, dance, theater, concerts, a gallery opening, art cinema, book readings, more music, more art, children's programming, a coral concert, and garden tour. These are just a few all from within the last year and this is from maybe, I don't know, maybe ten percent of the applicants that we had. And finally, a summary demonstrating the impact of the Cultural Grant Program and benefits Coral Gables residents and visitors. So here you see the number of events that are possible. They are happening over 1,300. Of course, all of these are happening in Coral Gables; 43 percent of these are free events; again 52 organizations, covering about 20 different venues. The total economic impact that was reported in their applications is over \$19 million and the benefits to government revenue, as part of that is almost \$1 million. So again, board member Eric Fliss is here to speak on behalf of the board and respond to any questions from the Commission.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir. Thank you for being here with us.

Mr. Fliss: Thank you. Thank you for your support. I want to thank you again for allocating the \$50,000 this year to the Youth Arts Program. The \$50,000 – we had a significant impact to the

youth programs that applied this year, a nice increase, and it's nice to say that every applicant was funded this year. So, I think staff is doing a tremendous job in guiding the applicants and we've seen some applications that maybe were not as well polished in years past is coming back. They are looking better, their paperwork is in great shape, and it's easier for the committee to sit down with the board to make good decisions based on good applications. So again, we are also increasing the number of activities and I think the temporary closing of Miami-Dade County Auditorium has brought some new arts organizations that were maybe not previously had a presents in Coral Gables, so they are bringing their audience who maybe are not residents of Coral Gables to Coral Gables; parking, dinner, the other economic impact issues that we were just talking about. So, we are here for your approval to the resolution and hope you can support it.

Mayor Lago: Great work.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. I would like to make the motion, and we can do some comments afterwards.

Mayor Lago: Yes. I just want to make sure there's no public comment. Do you have any public comments?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Let's close the public comment. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I will make the motion, and anybody want to second.

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'll start off and I'll just like to reemphasize some of the last figures you put in that people often overlook. I think the equation is about at least seven-fold increase in revenue to our city for the dollars invested, and the attraction of people from outside the city, not only have you seen it, but I've seen it. I went to a function over at the Sanctuary of the Arts and I learned that all the people were coming down from Ft. Lauderdale to see what Coral Gables is doing. They were staying in hotels here locally and having dinner, so the economic impact is becoming greater and greater, the more that we have to offer. The obvious is the educational value and psychological support that the arts do provide people. You can't really measure it, but it's there. So, thank you for all you do.

Mayor Lago: If there is no further comment from the Commission, we have a motion and a second, Mr. Clerk.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

(Commissioner Fernandez: Absent)

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Art and Cultural Coordinator: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Before we move on, I'm going to take a personal point of privilege and I'm going to probably embarrass somebody right now, but I think this is the most appropriate time to do it. I have had the privilege of knowing Adler for probably a decade and I've been an admirer of his art, but not only as a resident, but I have also been an admirer of his commitment to the arts. He is an amazing world recognized artist, who I saw his work personally at the Whitney Bi-annual when I travelled to New York to see it. He's a home-grown talent. He's represented by one of the most important galleries in the world, not locally, in the world. His works are shown at Art Basel. He's had museum shows, and I've had multiple conversations with him in my office, and he humbly always tells me no – no, no, no. I'm part of the board. I serve at the pleasure of the city. My objective is to expand art and culture in our community. Vince, I don't think that it's appropriate. So, I'm going to do it transparently here and not in my office, okay. I think we should consider this gentleman for Art in Public Places opportunity. We give him a deadline of two months, after the summer. I told you I was going to do this, so at the end of the day you left me no choice. We will give him a two-month deadline to produce a work. It can be a mural, it can be a sculpture, and you present it to the Commission and to the board, and you may not like this, and I understand that, but I'm going through the Manager and I'm doing it on the Commission floor. You have the credentials. I think you are an amazing artist. I think we would be honored in the City of Coral Gables to have one of your works. So, I ask you to please consider this and I'm willing to make a motion that you come back to us with a work, and if I don't do it this way, you are going to keep kicking the can down the curb and avoiding me, like you've been avoiding me for the last ten years on this.

Mr. Guerrier: Not avoiding.

Mayor Lago: No, you know what I mean. You don't want to do it because again, it just doesn't look right, but at the end of the day, I think that you are an exceptional artist. Everybody in this

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community respects you and we want to see your talent shine here in the city, not just in the museums in New York or Art Basel in Switzerland, or Art Basel in Miami Beach Convention Center, or in Freeze New York, or the Armory in New York, we want to see it here in our community. I think it's right and it's about due time that you have a commission here in the city.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second that motion. I totally agree.

Mr. Guerrier: If she's okay with that and all of you are okay with it, I'm okay with it.

Mayor Lago: That's not what you told me in the office.

Mr. Guerrier: Its different. The office, like you said, the office is you and I. This is a few thousand people, so sure.

Mayor Lago: Listen, I think it's more than appropriate. I'd like to see you bring something back in September, if you think that's fine.

Mr. Guerrier: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I'd like for you to scout a location. I'd like for you to work with our staff, through the Manager and his team, and I'd like for you to bring something back again, that's impactful. Something that talks about the centennial, something that talks about our forefathers, something that talks about what makes Coral Gables special. Again, I leave it up to you. I never tell an artist what to do, but I think that its such a spectacular moment in our history to have somebody of your capability and your recognition, who gives up – how many years you've been serving on the board now?

Art and Cultural Coordinator: He's at six years, I believe. Hopefully reappointment for the last term and since you brought it up, Mr. Mayor. Adler, of course, is a wonderful artist and has been invaluable, being an artist and his input on the board, on the panel has just been wonderful. Of course, we're just waiting a couple more years to maybe dip our toes into that, but if it's sooner, I'm fine with that, and just want you all to know and you've seen him up here numerous times. What a wonderful panel member he's been.

Mayor Lago: And I'm happy you said that. I don't want to waste an opportunity. When I have an opportunity to do something, and again, it may be bringing the cart before the horse, like you said, because you are waiting for years. Why wait. You don't know what will happen tomorrow. We could have something and leave a beautiful legacy here in the city. So, we have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

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Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)

(Commissioner Fernandez: Absent)

Mayor Lago: September Commission or follow the process that you are so familiar with.

Mr. Guerrier: I accept. Thank you very much.

Art and Cultural Coordinator: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Tell everyone on the board thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Mr. Guerrier: I will.