

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items C
May 19, 2026
Public Safety Building, CMR
2151 Salzedo Street, 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)

Alison Curran
Maria Cruz
Enrique Lopez
Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item C [Start: 11:09 a.m.]

Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Public comment, Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. Thank you. First speaker this morning is Alison Curran.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Curran: Two and a half years ago, my husband and I moved from South Gables to the downtown area and we're directly across from Fritz & Franz and the Plaza, where he wants to have a watch party. The owner of Fritz & Franz, Harold Neuweg, is one of the most attentive and hardworking bosses we've ever met. He has a knack of finding the right staff who share the same work ethics as he. He runs a tight ship and always keeps a close eye on the patrons to ensure

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everyone is able to enjoy themselves safely. We enjoy the soccer, and we enjoy watching the fans who gather here to see their favorite teams play. Rival fans sitting side by side without confrontation or malice, and they're just having fun. We've seen many championship tournaments and watch parties on the Plaza at different times of the day. And yes, we've heard the cheers of unbridled joy and disappointments, but the amount of times has not been an inconvenience for us. This is the World Cup. Coral Gables was thrilled and proud to have FIFA headquartered here. The entire soccer world will be watching. And for many of us who cannot afford to buy a ticket or even pay for the parking to watch a real match in person, allowing Fritz and Franz to utilize the plaza will enable more fans to enjoy the excitement and the camaraderie of watching their favorite teams play. Coral Gables has the extraordinary chance to show what a welcoming and all-inclusive city it is, and also the amount of business and PR for the entire downtown is priceless. That's it. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, 305-323-2154. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Public officials may not suppress protective political speech, nor may they retaliate against a citizen for asserting constitutional rights, criticizing government officials, challenging governmental conduct, or participating in public discourse. The City of Coral Gables violates that when they deny citizens their right to speak. This also opens the city to lawsuits and damages which the taxpayers will eventually pay for. Thank you.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Just give me one second, sir. Do we have anybody else?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Yes, sir.

Commissioner Lara: I just want to recognize Mrs. Maria Cruz for a very professional and very respectful and very appropriate toned public commentary today, which is appreciated. For all who take the time to speak, a public commentary today was an exemplary way of expressing your views. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Enrique Lopez.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

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Mr. Lopez: Good morning. I'd like to start by saying that I echo the sentiments of the woman who spoke earlier about the beer house. And on another note, regarding that, what's the recent discussion regarding the beer house watch parties with increasing disappointment. I found that while reasonable concerns were raised, it was because of the tone exaggeration and would seem to be an apparent bias that they were delivered in an unprofessional manner.

Mayor Lago: Sir, if I may interrupt you, and I apologize. Can you provide your name and your address for the record?

Mr. Lopez: Enrique Lopez, 2451 Brickell Avenue, apartment 15N, Miami, Florida, 33129.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mr. Lopez: Sure. At multiple points during the meeting, you framed a long community event as though it was an impending public disorder, a crisis. Words such as mayhem, unruliness, and references to crowds arriving in droves painted a picture that bore little resemblance to the reality many have experienced there. This is not an uncontrolled music festival. It's not a nightclub district spinning out of control. It's a series of televised soccer matches watched by residents, families, visitors, and longtime patrons of a local institution. The problem was not that you raised the concerns. The problem was that you appeared to enter the discussion with a conclusion already reached. Many early in the hearing, you repeatedly announced that you were a no vote, long before meaningful deliberation had concluded. Rather than facilitating a balanced discussion as Chair of the Commission, your posture often resembled that of a prosecutor building a case against the applicant. You repeatedly emphasized alleged windfalls and seized upon the applicant's comment that the World Cup period is Christmas for businesses, as though the existence of profitable weeks for the hospitality establishment were somehow improper. Many survived because of a handful of major events each year that helped sustain them through slower periods. To frame that reality as greed was unfair and dismissive of the economic realities small businesses face. Even more troubling was the selective way the area was described. Often it was residential, other times commercial. I'm going to skip through all this because there's not a lot of time. At the end of the day, a lot of the things that you were mentioning in particular were about people coming here and being dissuaded for some reason, because Fritz and Franz is having a watch party. I took the time to look at a map and will tell you that the footprint of the Fritz and Franz is 0.25%, leaving a 99.75% of downtown Coral Gables available to anyone else who doesn't want to watch soccer. I felt that the attack was unwarranted. And rather than embracing an event that I believe I've attended for 25 years, tradition, multiple generations of people that I witnessed there, sons, fathers, grandfathers, it's not an animal house. It's not a roadhouse. It's a beer house. The way it seemed, if I had only heard your remarks, I would have assumed that someone was going to break a bottle over my head at some point. Excessive drinking, I haven't seen that. I don't know what the police records are. But I can tell you, never seen a fight, never seen an arrest. Just the opposite, a very wholesome tradition that we sorely lack. We seem to be bulldozing the past at the expense of the future. I've run out of time, so I thank you for yours.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

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City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Greetings. I want to thank Maria Cruz. I hope that she sues the city for First Amendment rights. For the people at home, I think the truth is now being repressed by the City Commission. We can't even speak the truth. And that's very scary, actually. With respect to Fritz and Franz beer house, I think this is, let's see now, we're into the First Amendment, so maybe you'll forgive me. It's a revenge tour by Mayor Lago and City Manager Iglesias. Secondly, they're jacking up the prices in what I think is a discriminatory way, making it actually impossible for the owner to make money. He's had 24 years of this. They're saying that FIFA is somehow a special event that requires doubling the police fee and instituting, for the first time ever, a fire fee. And I think that's absolutely baloney. And I think that it should be rescinded. There is nobody else being charged. This is a unique fee specially designed to punish wrongfully Fritz and Franz. And I ask that you rescind those increased fees, which don't stand up to scrutiny.

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

Mayor Lago: Perfect. And we will close the public comment.