

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item D-4
July 25, 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 Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

Public Speaker(s)

Mari Tere Rojas

Agenda Item D-4 [10:47 a.m.]

Mayor's Comments

An update on Coral Gables public schools' ratings.
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: There is one that I want to celebrate and that is D-4, an update on Coral Gables public schools' ratings. I'd like to welcome our incredible School Board Member, Mari Tere Rojas, please join us and today we celebrate. We have a lot to celebrate and I would love to take credit for this, but I can't and neither can this Commission, even though we worked very hard with the schools, along with the City Manager, our Clerk, City Attorney, our Community Resources, our board, Chairman Fernandez has been leading for some time now, but all the success is to you as a result of your efforts and your commitment to the City of Coral Gables. I would like for you to tell everyone a little bit about what's going on and why we are celebrating today.

Ms. Rojas: Well, I am just ecstatic. I'm so thrilled to be here today, because regardless of the horrific pandemic that we have been through for the past two years, we were still able to prevail, and that is because teamwork is what makes the dream work. So, I'm going to take a moment of your time so that the whole universe can hear something positive happening in Miami-Dade

City Commission Meeting
July 25, 2022

County Public Schools. First and foremost, its not one person alone, one group alone, its all of us working together for our children. I want to start off by recognizing all of those amazing teachers. I've said here many times before and I'll say it again, teachers do God's work on earth each and every day. Having been a former teacher myself, I know what they do. I've lived it. And we cannot sit here today without recognizing them first and foremost, and if you have anyone, any family member that is a teacher, take the time to say thank you, thank you for what they have done for the amazing job that they have been able to fulfill during the most challenging times, I believe that Miami-Dade County Public Schools has ever faced. I want to thank those Principals, those Administrators in those schools. Also having been a principal myself in the past, I know what they do. They are at the helm, and they are there day in and day out, and when everyone else is home, they are there, making sure that that school is ready to provide a quality program of excellence to each and every single one of those that they serve. I thank each one of those Principals and I hope that you all do the same when you go visit, especially the schools that we represent here in this particular district, and by the way, those schools did a phenomenal job with their ratings. I also want to very quickly take this opportunity to thank all the members of our workforce, because the bus drivers are the first ones that our children see when they get on those buses every morning, and they are the last ones that they see when they are taken home at 5 or 6 o'clock in the afternoon. They play a crucial role. Our security monitors, our cafeteria employees, and just the entire workforce, but its also the marvelous team that you have out here, you all, our external stakeholders. You have made it possible for us to prevail in many different ways. And Mayor, I want to thank you and this Commission and the previous one as well, because when we were going through some very, very difficult times dealing with the safety and the well being of our children, you were the first ones to step up and I say that proudly to everyone that I speak to, and you told me very clearly, we will have police officers, we will have members of law enforcement at each and every one of your schools, because we understand that at this point you don't have your own force completed. So, until we got 500 police officers, we have 500 now, you all made a commitment, but you are still there, you are still there. I go to the schools, I go to ISPA, I go to all the different schools that are in this area and Coral Gables High School being one where we have you all whenever we need you. And just recently the safety and security and well being of all children is of utmost importance, and we just had a major drill last week where we had a joint partnership, not just with our law enforcement, but with you, with Chief Hudak, and his team. They were fabulous. And they were enacting a situation that God willing, will never occur in Miami-Dade County, but we have to be proactive, and we have to be prepared and we have to learn from what happened in Uvalde, Texas very recently, and what happened in Parkland prior to that, and we can only do that working cohesively as a team. So simply in conclusion, I just want to say thank you, this is a time for celebration, and I hope that everyone in the beautiful City of Coral Gables who knows an educator says thank you, but most importantly, its about our children. So please give them a hug and tell them how much you love them, but also tell them how proud you are of each and every one of them for what they have accomplished during these tumultuous times. Thank you. Thank you very much Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I want to take this moment to celebrate. I'm going to read the grades, because this is important and this is because of your leadership, and like you mentioned, all the individuals who take a role every single day. Coral Gables Preparatory Academy-A; Coral Gables Senior High School-A; David Fairchild Elementary-A from a B the previous year; George Washington Carver
City Commission Meeting
July 25, 2022

Elementary School-A; George Washington Carver Middle School-A; Henry West Lab-A; ISPA International Studies Preparatory Academy-A; Ponce de Leon Middle School-B; Summerset Gables Academy-A; Sunset Elementary-A. We are in a completely different place than we were when I started on this Commission. No coincidence, Ms. Rojas, being elected around the same time that I was. She has pushed, pushed this city forward. She is responsible for this, along with our City Manager, his team, everyone in his office that work so diligently with them, along with the board. Every time that I go speak in front of the board, like I mentioned before, that Mr. Fernandez is the Chair, you are always present. So, I just wanted to take this moment, there are so many things that we have to deal with everyday that is not beautiful, this is a beautiful story and I want to say thank you for your commitment. Again, everything starts, and everything ends with education. If we have an educated community, we have a civilized community and I think that is something, that is the beauty of what you are seeing now here in Coral Gables. Thank you for that.

Ms. Rojas: Thank you sir.

Mayor Lago: Do you mind if we take a quick picture with you.

Ms. Rojas: Oh, I'd be honored to take a picture with all of you, and by the way, our School District is an A for the third time, the entire district. Thank you.