City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
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
Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-2 [12:04 p.m.]

> A Resolution of the City Commission calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question and City Charter Amendment to be held on November 3, 2026; providing for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking if the Charter should be amended to allow the appointing Commissioner or appointed Official to remove a board member from that position prior to the expiration of their term; providing for notice; providing for inclusion in the City Charter; providing for related matters; providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto F-2. Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Suarez: F-2 is a Resolution of the City Commission calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question and City Charter Amendment to be held on November 3, 2026; providing for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking if the Charter should be amended to allow the appointing Commissioner or appointed Official to remove a board member from that position prior to the expiration of their term; providing for

notice; providing for inclusion in the City Charter; providing for related matters; providing for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney how are you.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Thank you again, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. If you all recall, the City Charter currently provides that board and committee members may be removed with or without cause by a majority vote of the City Commission with some exceptions and specific boards that have to do with state law. This question would be put to the voters in November of 2026, and would allow for submission to the electors of a question asking whether or not the Charter should be amended to allow the City Commissioner or appointed official who appointed a member to a city board or committee to remove that member from that position prior to the expiration of their term, for any reason insofar as that removal is not in conflict with state law. The ability to remove a board or committee member by a majority vote of the Commission would remain in the Charter. It would simply add the ability of an appointee official or elected official to remove the member that they had appointed prior to the end of that term subject to any conflict requirements in state law with specific boards, Code Enforcement, Construction Regulation Board, etc.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Madam City Attorney. Mr. City Clerk, do you have any public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Alright. We'll close public comment. I need a motion and a second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, any comments.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think it's an excellent piece of legislation and it will help clean up the process here in the city going forward.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: I concur.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. What I understand the intent of this legislation is to improve accountability. I believe that this resolution really opens the door to political retaliation and the independence of our boards. We appoint these members to serve our community, not to serve us. Giving any Commissioner an official the unchecked power to remove someone at any time for any reason sends the wrong message. They are volunteers – their service is conditional…and political favor. These boards are meant to offer independent thought,

institutional memory and sometimes even disagreement and that's what's healthy for our democracy. If we have concerns about performance or ethics, let's create a fair transparent process for removal, not to adopt a policy that allows removals without a cause. This is not good governance, and I believe our residents expect better. I will be voting no on this item.

Mayor Lago: Anyone else before, as the sponsor of this item, give my interpretation and opinion. Okay. So, this is pretty simple, it's not that complicated. Madam City Attorney, this is the status quo for all other cities, correct, pretty much.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: I'm not aware. I believe some cities have something similar, but certainly the removal by a majority is something that other cities have. I'm not aware either way if other cities have that.

Mayor Lago: So, at the end of the day, the individual who serves on the board works at the pleasure, works at the pleasure of the person who appointed them, it just makes sense. What you are trying to do is politicize the issue and if somebody again, if I disagree with someone's position and I've done that before and I'll give you an example. I had a Planning and Zoning Board appointment which was not voting in a way that I thought was the most appropriate way for the city. They were supporting projects that, I think, were out of scale, and certain people in this room brought it to my attention, and they said, Vince, are you aware that this individual is voting in the following way. The projects are coming before the Commission, and you are voting against your appointee. So, to make a long story short, I requested that the individual who served with dignity and respect, to please no longer serve on that board. This gentleman who is a very professional individual agreed with me and said, Vince, I serve at your pleasure, I serve at the pleasure of the city. He stepped down like a gentleman, not like the politics that we've seen here before where it's an effort to control. You know who I brought in as my appointment then, the Vice Mayor, where people were very concerned because of her anti-development, supposedly anti-development views. So, my point is this, there is no need to vote against no against everything that I bring forward. This is a no-brainer. This is simple governance. This is transparency, the question of the day – transparency, the statement of the day is transparency. There is no need to vote against things that make sense. This is the way it works in many other cities, many other municipalities, and if I needed to get that list and do all that additional homework, I would have, but when I have attended other cities for one reason or another, it's much of a less drawn-out, dragged-out process. It's simple. This is simple legislation that you should be able to have somebody on that board who reflects your views as the elected official. You are not going to put people in a position that go rouge and vote against what you believe is appropriate for the city. That's happened to me before and I had to remove that person and they did it the appropriate way, not being intrenched and not moving out of that board which is what's happened here before. So, Mr. Clerk, we have a motion and a second. Please call the roll.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I called for the roll. Mr. Clerk, I call for the roll.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: I'm going to go ahead and give my comments within my vote. We appoint these members to serve our community, not to serve ourselves, not to serve the elected official who appointed them. My vote is no.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney, what does it mean that you serve at the pleasure of something or someone. What does that mean?

City Attorney Suarez: So, at the pleasure means that you can be removed at any time. There is no guarantee, essentially. It's at the will of whoever appointed you. I don't know that our code has currently – this would change it so that obviously the appointing Commissioner could remove you, if this is approved by the voters.

Mayor Lago: When you put somebody in a position of a board, of 30-plus boards, the intent is for that person to vote in a way that is in line with your views, that's why you were elected. You were brought in here and the residents voted for you because they liked your platform, they liked what you put out there, and it was very evidently clear in the last election, two months ago where the residents sided. So, at the end of the day, this is simple legislation that is not that complicated and that cleans up our Charter, and again, keeps the city moving forward in a positive way. My vote is yes. Thank you.

(Vote: 4-1)

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.