

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-9**  
**April 14, 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**  
**Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability, Matt Anderson**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item F-9 [Start: 3:08 p.m.]

Updates regarding additional plastic food containers that are now recyclable in weekly city recycling bins. (Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: F-9.

Vice Mayor Anderson: F-9 is updates regarding basically our recycling program. Is Matt here? Yes, there he is. And I also invited some individuals that have been working with Miami Blue on recycling plastic. In the back of the room, you'll see a piece of artwork and invite that person to come up and speak as well at the appropriate moment. So, Matt, I know you can talk about this in your sleep. So that is why you're the lead one speaking on this. But we had a wonderful presentation that we did at the Farmer's Market and brought a lot of people up to date on what is and isn't recyclable in our city regular recycling bin. And it really gets down to what is marketable. You know, can it be made into clothing? Can it be made into furniture? Can it be made into a piece of artwork such as the piece that you see in the back of the room? So, Matt, I'm going to hand the floor over to you. And I know that that piece of artwork although it looks heavy only weighs about

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20 pounds, perhaps it can be brought forward to where it can be seen in a camera for the public as well.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Thank you Vice Mayor, Mayor, Commissioners. If we can, bring up the PowerPoint presentation and again Matt Anderson Assistant Director Mobility and Sustainability. So briefly we want to go through just to remind everyone what is accepted in our single stream recycling. So, I wanted to start off by really, we talked about the three R's: reduce, reuse, recycle. Recycle is really the last R there. The most environmentally thing we can do is reduce our consumption or reuse right. So, I just wanted to start off by emphasizing that. So, Waste Management, who we take our recycling materials to, just opened a brand-new facility up in Pembroke Pines. I know that the Deputy City Manager and the Assistant City Manager and I were able to tour the facility on its grand opening. It's very impressive all the new technology that they are incorporating and how they're sorting materials, how they're processing it, the volume now that they're able to take. And again, it was really, really impressive. You could see some photos that we took on the right. Basically, what the recycling looks like at the end of the process before it goes to the distributors. So, what's new from Waste Management? Well recently Waste Management actually added cups into their accepted program. So, we have hot and cold beverage paper cups and plastic cups made from polypropylene. So those are now being accepted widely throughout the recycling process, because they have again, as the Vice Mayor mentioned, you know obviously recycling is great for the environment, but recycling is a commodity driven market. It's if there are markets for these materials to be able to be processed. And you can see they're listed with the types of cups that are not accepted, which obviously Styrofoam is not accepted in any form within the recycling process, and you have all the others. And then something that we have that you'll see in our messaging is always reminding individuals to empty all the liquids, remove straws and any food debris from any of these materials. So, Waste Management - we've really aligned over the years our recycling message with Waste Management, right. That's where we're taking our materials, we wanted to make sure that our messages are always aligned, and we make it as simple as possible for...

Mayor Lago: Matt, I'm sorry. I'm sorry to interrupt you. Commissioner.

Commissioner Lara: Before you move to the next slide right, I was a little confused about if what's accepted you said, okay, fine you've got Styrofoam.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Styrofoam is not accepted.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: It's not accepted yes.

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Commissioner Lara: So, a plastic cup that's made from polypropylene is that like a solo cup.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yeah.

Commissioner Lara: Red solo.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yeah. The clear or the red.

Commissioner Lara: As opposed to what's not accepted is rigid polystyrene. I'm sorry but what's what.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Polystyrene is another term for Styrofoam. So yeah, you see it in both forms. So, like your coffee cup like your Styrofoam coffee cups wouldn't be something you would be able to put in your recycling.

Commissioner Lara: Yeah. Okay. Great. So, Styrofoam foam – no.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yeah.

Commissioner Lara: And then everything else that's plastic.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yes. Okay.

Commissioner Lara: Go ahead.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Go ahead.

Commissioner Fernandez: Starbucks cup. Is that recyclable or not?

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: If depending on the material, I don't go to Starbucks that often.

Commissioner Fernandez: But the clear the clear cups that they give.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yeah.

Commissioner Fernandez: So sorry, not for hot coffee, for cold for iced coffee.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yes. If it's if it's the plastic polypropylene, if you see you know on the bottom, you'd have to look on the bottom, turn it upside down and see then it would be accepted.

Commissioner Fernandez: Is there a chart that we can maybe have available so you could see which codes are and which ones are not.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: So, the thing is with the codes is that's how...

Mayor Lago: Matt, can we do something right now. Can we print out 51,000 charts and we'll send it to every single person so they can walk around with this. You see how difficult this is.

Commissioner Fernandez: No, no, no.

Mayor Lago: This is insane.

Commissioner Fernandez: I agree.

Mayor Lago: So, then you start and then you start returning, now you start trying to do the good thing and you're actually contaminating the issue.

Commissioner Fernandez: Exactly.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yes. And you'll see something that we have on our market.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, we have the lowest contamination rate of any city in Miami-Dade County. So, I want to say we're doing our best.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to make it easy for you. They take narrow neck bottles.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: On the bottom that is your number that you're looking for. There's your chart. If it matches, it's recyclable. If it doesn't match it's not recyclable. Not at this point. Okay. But the Styrofoam, remember you can rinse it out and clean it. Take it to Publix. The food grade Styrofoam containers.

Commissioner Fernandez: But I guess my question on the code was, do we have that available online?

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: So, you can't always go by the number because number was developed by the plastic industry. This is something that Waste Management has been clear with us. So, they tend to market it where you have by shape. So, you have the narrow neck plastic bottles and that description versus the number because you can't always say the number.

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We used to have our materials when I first started with the city 10 years ago, a lot of our marketing materials went by, by number like one through five and seven. And number six is your Styrofoam, which has never been accepted. And we've gone away from that because again it's aligning with what Waste Management and their marketing materials are going out to try to simplify the process on the shape, right.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'll interrupt one more time because we know that they also take butter containers and things of that nature.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, these are some of the guidelines you can use. The number matches at the bottom. Great. But some people can't see the numbers. So that's why they use shapes.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. No charts.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: So again, here is Waste Management's simple five. So, your plastic bottles, cups, and containers, paper and paper cups, glass bottles, and containers, flattened cardboard and paperboard, and food and beverage cans. Do not include batteries, foam cups containers, foods, liquids, clothing, furniture, loose plastic bags. We'll talk about the different alternative recycling programs we have in the city that not all cities have and then obviously green waste, which I'll talk about a little bit as well. So, this is our updated recycling flyer. Again, keeping it simple, similar to how Waste Management has theirs. So, we have plastic cups, bottles, and containers and paper cups. We just updated that based on the new information from Waste Management; flattened cardboard boxes and paper, glass bottles, containers and food and beverage cans, and then the items that definitely you do not want in the recycling bin, plastic bags and obviously your expanded polystyrene, your Styrofoam. And then the additional tips we have there. We want to also remind our residents, keep the recycles clean, dry, do not bag them. I know that sometimes you know we have folks that do bag the recycling; keep food waste and liquids out of the recycling bin. And this is the key one we added a number of years ago. When in doubt leave it out. Don't even contaminate the recycling stream. If you're undecided about it leave it out.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to clarify you don't bag it. If you have paper and you put it in a paper bag, it's the plastic bags that are the problem.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Yes, the plastic bags are the problematic ones.  
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Commissioner Fernandez: And if I may, can we add, the Vice Mayor was mentioning Publix as a place to recycle certain items, can we add a list of or include in there these items can be recycled at Publix?

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: So, we do have information for alternatives on the website which I'll talk how we how we get that information.

Commissioner Fernandez: What I would ask is if we can create this graphic as a social media graphic, so that we can share it on our socials as well. But it would be good to have that information on there so that you can recycle the plastic bags at Publix, because a lot of people don't know and they just sit around, they end up in our garbage anyway. If we don't have to throw those away, if we don't have to go through that process that also removes extra costs for the city.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: Absolutely. So I also want to mention when we, when Public Works and the city went to the blue recycling bins, one thing that we added that I want to definitely emphasize to our residents is there is a QR code on the side of your recycling bin on every residential recycling bin, if you scan it, it takes you to the city's recycling education page that gives you all the information what's accepted, what's not, alternatives, and that has that information readily available for our residents. So, this is our city website what's accepted and what's not, so you see the list there. It again mimics what we have, and it goes into a little more detail there on what's accepted and what can be recycled, and then obviously what can't be recycled, and we have information there on alternatives. A lot of the programs that our team manages like the plastic bag recycling that we have at the Adult Activity Center, the War Memorial Youth Center and our Parking Mobility Services office, along with our next rex program. So, these are some of the programs I know we've shown in the past, but we have our cigarette litter program, we also have the plastic bag the rectangular box there is for the specialized plastic bag program that we have, that we've collected over 2,000 pounds since we started. We also have the battery recycling available to the residents. These programs are extremely popular. My team is always going out and collecting with the assistance of IT on the battery side, going out and collecting these as they fill up within our city facilities. We also have the other programs like the Christmas Tree drop-off and the holiday cardboard, which was our most popular year this past year with all the cardboard being generated with online shopping. We also have our events, we have our recycling drive-through event happening next Saturday, not this coming Saturday, the following Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> from 9 to 12 in the City Hall parking lot and all the items that we take are the items that are the alternatives that aren't accepted in your regular single stream recycling. So, your electronics, your household hazardous waste, your sensitive documents, we'll take plastic bags and film at that and then clothing. So, the city has a lot of alternative programs in place for those items that aren't accepted in your single stream recycling. So we want to give the residents the

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opportunity to be able to properly either recycle or dispose of these products and that's something that really sets our city apart because there are not a lot of cities that have this amount of alternative programs for our residents, and again, anytime we have these programs they are incredibly popular with our community. Speaking of which I'll talk about a little bit later on the other item, but we have our composting program starting on April 20<sup>th</sup> next Monday. You all should have the invite in your calendar; we're looking forward to it. We're finalizing our contract right now with Renewable and I'll speak a little bit more about that in the next item, you'll see here what we'll be accepting. Again, I'll cover that in another item and then just overall how we're marketing recycling and sharing this information with the community. We have our city website, we have the waste bills every year that go out, we insert that information into the waste bills and working with Communications and the Finance team. We also, at our community events, through Keep Coral Gables Beautiful. We alone have done over 300 events since 2020. We're out in the community all the time and promoting not only the programs that we have, but also helping educate the residents, businesses on recycling practices. City facilities – we have information posted in the city facilities; social media obviously, E-NEWS; we have our green business program where we're going out and actively working with local businesses on what they can do to be more sustainable, included in that is a big category on waste diversion. We work with Waste Management, they go out and do education, and then obviously too, probably the key to all of this, our solid waste team, who does an excellent job at out at collecting and really helping educate our residents as well on the items that should and shouldn't be going into the bins. And all of that kind of comes together to the Mayor's point, on really maintaining that below 10 percent contamination rate, which is the lowest in the region, and it's one thing that again our city really does well and it's something that yes, we can constantly look for ways to improve, but overall our contamination rate on our single family residential side remains below 10 percent when we're audited by Waste Management and that's something to be really, really proud of.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, next to you is an item that's made from plastic, and I asked these young men to bring it in to show people what can happen to plastic bottles, and so forth, when they are collected instead of being allowing your gardeners to throw them into the trash pits and so forth. I get pictures from people questioning why they're in trash pits. So, if you just give us a brief description of this piece of artwork and how it was made and the purpose behind the organization and creating it, maybe it'll inspire more people to pick those bottles up out of the trash pits instead of leaving them there and getting our gardeners put them in a recycle bin.

Unidentified Speaker: Good afternoon to everybody, Mayor Lago, Commissioner Lara, Vice Mayor Anderson and the rest of the panel. This is a perfect example of plastic that's being collected from the ocean, and we have different programs, one of them being Blue Ocean Program. Marco Olivier, the artist he's the official artist for the Mandela family in Cape Town South Africa, also one of the winners of Art Basel's awards, created this piece of work and he's created many of them, but his purpose wasn't really art only or making money, like most of them are, it was basically

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helping the environment. We love the City of Coral Gables basically because of what they're working towards and this is a perfect example what those pieces of plastic, like Vice Mayor Anderson mentioned, you throw it on the floor or the garbage hopefully, uh this is what comes out of it, and it's not only this image, it could be many other images. Something that can maybe be customized to the Coral Gables image, which is what we're thinking about. I think that's what you were.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right. So, I appreciate you bringing it here today because it's one of many examples. The other example we have is with the plastic bags over at the Youth Center, it's made a bench, and I think we're close to what a second bench soon.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: We've already received the second bench which the Commission has voted on what will be a tribute to Mark Trowbridge, so we're going to be ordering that plaque and putting it on and finding a location working with the Chamber.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. So I appreciate you bringing this today, because I think it puts a real face on what can be done with plastic as well as the benches and other useful materials that we can make in the future and hopefully instead of throwing stuff in trash pits people will put them more in a recycle bin where they can be made into productive pieces of artwork or benches or furniture of other nature. So, appreciate you doing this presentation. It is earth month there's lots of different things that we worked on. In fact, we received messages before that we could take our campaign signs and even have those recycled, that's another specialized pickup that we've had in the past. So, thank you, appreciate it.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Speaker: Thank you for the opportunity and thank you everyone.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Commissioner Lara: So, you know, I want to say that I look at that and like I mean that's just garbage, right, because it's what it is, but it's beautiful, it's amazing, it's gorgeous and I'm not sitting here in awe that that's made out of plastic harvested from the ocean, right, is that what you're saying. All right. So, Vice Mayor, that was a good move on your part among many to bring this in, because it caught me pleasantly by surprise, like I almost think I want one, you know that kind of thing.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I know I surprised the Mayor too, like what, this is not on the agenda. Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

Commissioner Lara: Its wonderful. It tells you what you can do when you care about the environment, when you think outside the box, right, and when you aspire you know to spin and

turn on its head a problem can become a solution and garbage, you know is something that everybody just always gives such a negative connotation to it, but you're turning it into something amazing. So, are you the artist?

Mr. Garcia: My name is Juan Carlos Garcia. I am the Managing Director of his gallery here in Miami, the local gallery that I helped start up a number of years ago, and now it's my pleasure to introduce you guys to this because as a child of Miami someone who grew up here in Coral Gables, I was always inspired by our ecology here. I was one of the first classes in university here at FIU that I fell in love with and how do we attack these things from a very Miami perspective. We are a beautifying city. We are a city that donates its time and its efforts to making it more beautiful for everyone who lives here and what a perfect example this is to be able to upcycle something like trash, like plastics, that are polluting our beaches and making it more difficult for our families to enjoy their time at rest, then turning it into art where they can enjoy it forever, but thank you so much for the time and this is also the Fragment Series. The Fragment series in gold dust. This is gold dust that's layered onto plastics that have been gathered from the ocean, alongside the Blue Ocean Research Project. They specialize in sending out boats across the world to plastic patches and we purchase the recycled material that is then cleaned up. We put it into our process, and we come out with art that looks like this.

Speaker: As far as that it gets wet.

Mr. Garcia: Exactly.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: Is there a way to get some of the products that's collected in Coral Gables and create an art piece and maybe we can place at a location where we're currently doing recycling to showcase what can be done. I think that might be something that we can do to expand on the Vice Mayor's bringing this to us but maybe it's something that we can incorporate into what it's currently in our art, public art, but it's different. It also promotes our recycling program and maybe it can be taken from the products that are being recycled from Coral Gables.

Mr. Garcia: 100 percent. We'd love to be able to facilitate that here in Miami.

Assistant Director for Mobility and Sustainability: And I'll add. I've been talking with Catherine to see where we can find opportunities to have environmental art and art similar to that, so we've already been kind of exploring that.

Mayor Lago: So, let's work on it. Thank you very much. We're going to take a five-minute break because we're going to have to discuss E-6 and E-9, those are the next items that we'll be talking about. I need to meet with the Manager, City Attorney and anyone else that needs to meet in regard to that matter, five minutes. We'll be right back.

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Mr. Garcia: Thank you so much everyone.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you for coming.