

CORAL GABLES

THE CITY BEAUTIFUL

International Affairs Coordinating Council (IACC) Meeting Minutes Monday, January 26, 2026

Location: Fink Studio
2506 Ponce de León Blvd., Coral Gables, Florida

Members:	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Commissioners
Olga Ramudo	P												Mayor Vince Lago
Vicky Rua	UA												Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Alfonso Cueto	P												Comm. Richard Lara
Raoul Cantero	E												Comm. Ariel Fernandez
Richard Montes de Oca	P												Comm. Melissa Castro
Ilsa Danielson	P												Peter Iglesias
Estrellita Sibila	P												Council-at-Large Appointment

A = Absent P = Present E = Excused UA = Unexcused Absence X = No Meeting F = Former Member

The International Affairs Coordinating Council (IACC) meeting was called to order at 4:09 p.m. Vice Chair, Montes de Oca welcomed everyone to the Committee.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes from December 8th, 2025, IACC meeting was made by Board member Cueto and Board member Sibila seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.

COUNTRY REPORT

LA ANTIGUA, GUATEMALA

Ms. Leticia Perez provided a comprehensive update on the City of Coral Gables’ international engagement efforts, with primary emphasis on the official visit from La Antigua, Guatemala and the formalization of the Sister Cities Agreement between the two municipalities. From January 16–20, 2026, Coral Gables hosted a delegation led by the Mayor of La Antigua, accompanied by council members and municipal representatives. The visit included a working meeting with Mayor Vince Lago and city leadership, as well as participation from the Consul General of Guatemala and other international representatives. Departmental briefings were conducted covering mobility, sustainability, public safety, smart city technology, infrastructure, and emergency operations. The delegation also toured key landmarks throughout the city. The visit concluded with a formal signing ceremony at City Hall, attended by approximately 50 guests, including members of the Consular Corps and former mayors. The agreement

officially establishes a framework for long-term collaboration in cultural programming, professional exchanges, municipal best practices, and public safety cooperation.

- La Antigua, Guatemala- Alfombra de Aserrin:

Mrs. Belkys Perez further reported on a proposed cultural exchange initiative centered around La Antigua's renowned Holy Week tradition of creating elaborate alfombras de Aserrin, colorful carpets made from dyed sawdust that line public streets during religious processions. This centuries-old tradition is recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage. The delegation expressed strong interest in recreating a version of this tradition in Coral Gables, ideally aligned with Holy Week in late March or early April. A preliminary allocation of \$20,000 has been identified to support the initiative, with the visiting city agreeing to cover the cost of the artist. Ms. Perez outlined several logistical considerations discussed during the meeting, including potential weather risks during the rainy season, surface protection requirements, cleanup procedures, environmental safety of materials, and possible installation locations such as public plazas, grassy areas, or protected surfaces. Board members discussed the importance of selecting a highly visible public location to maximize community engagement while ensuring fiscal responsibility and protection of city infrastructure was emphasized. Due to timing constraints and the need for additional technical clarification, the committee agreed that further coordination, potentially via a virtual meeting, would be necessary before making a final determination.

SANTA TECLA, EL SALVADOR

Board member Sibila addressed Santa Tecla's inquiry regarding the potential acquisition of retired municipal trolleys or buses once they reach the end of their service life. It was noted that Coral Gables does not currently have vehicles available for donation; however, the possibility of exploring options through other cooperating municipalities may be considered.

SAN ISIDRO, ARGENTINA

Vice Chair Montes de Oca reported with respect to Argentina, that outreach efforts remain ongoing, though responsiveness has been limited. The committee agreed to continue follow-up efforts before determining whether to redirect its focus to an alternative city.

SEVILLA, SPAIN

Updates were also provided regarding ongoing Sister City programming with Sevilla. An upcoming flamenco performance scheduled in conjunction with Giralda Live will serve to reinforce cultural ties with Sevilla. Discussion also acknowledged the relocation of the Feria event to Tropical Park due to space and infrastructure limitations within Coral Gables. While the event was well received locally, its continued growth required expanded facilities.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Broader cultural programming opportunities were discussed, including exploration of international events such as wine festivals. Board member Cueto noted that cities such as Cali, Colombia are recognized for their Salsa culture and could be considered as a potential engagement.

The committee also considered the potential expansion of the Sister Cities portfolio. The attendance of the Consul General of Saint Lucia at the Guatemala signing prompted discussion regarding a possible future partnership, given the country's English-speaking status and existing local engagement. Interest

expressed by representatives of Mexico was likewise noted, particularly considering strong community participation in cultural initiatives such as Día de los Muertos.

Finally, procedural matters were addressed, including the transition to bi-monthly meetings, with flexibility to convene special or virtual meetings as needed for time-sensitive issues. A recommendation by Board member Sibila was made to improve advance communication of international events to enhance planning and engagement between meetings. The meeting concluded on a positive and forward-looking note, reflecting continued enthusiasm for strengthening Coral Gables' international partnerships through strategic, culturally meaningful, and fiscally responsible initiatives.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Vice Chair Montes de Oca and seconded by Board member Danielson. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Leticia Perez
International Business Development Representative
Economic Development Department
City of Coral Gables