

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-6
December 9, 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

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item: F-6 [Start: 2:46 p.m.]

Update and potential direction to authorize legal action regarding request for documents and information from the Coral Gables War Memorial Youth Center Association, Inc. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Let's see if we can do item F-6. Madam City Attorney, this is an item which I'm putting on the agenda, an update and potential direction to authorize legal action regarding requests for documents and information from the Coral Gables War Memorial Youth Center Association. Madam City Attorney, will you please provide us with an update?

City Attorney Suarez: Yes, Mayor. As I mentioned to each of you during our briefings, we did have a meeting scheduled with council for the association. The meeting, unfortunately, had to be rescheduled due to a conflict that came up for our Special Council, and we did reschedule it. But then, unfortunately, council for the association was called into trial. And so, we are going to work

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on rescheduling that, but I know that she's in trial at least through the end of this week. And so, we have not been able to have the meeting.

Mayor Lago: So let me tell you my intentions, and I hope that my colleagues will support me on this. I will not be kicking the can down the curb. I will be making a motion. I'm passing the gavel to the Vice Mayor. I want to take action. I want to provide 10 days from today for there to be a meeting for our request to be met. And when I mean request, the letter that was provided by our council to Kirk Menendez and the Coral Gables War Memorial Youth Center Association, that all the requested information be provided. As you're aware, if you read that letter, there's been a lot more commingling and more collaboration between the city and the Youth Center and the War Memorial Youth Center than we thought before. And when I say collaboration, I'm talking about the city has been involved financially with this organization, which, as you're aware, let their 501(c)3 designation lapse for five years, and is not being transparent as a partner for the city. So, I think it is incumbent of us as individuals who want transparency to make sure that any association that has any power over something as important as our jewel at the Youth Center be in compliance. So, if we do not get this information within 10 days, I ask that my colleagues that we give direction to the City Attorney to move forward with a lawsuit. Why do I say that? Because our next Commission meeting is in January. So, I think that I'm not in the position that I want to waste any time. Because it's simple. I've been involved in litigation. Recently, I won a big case. And I think that a little added pressure goes a long way, especially with something as simple as just providing the documents. There shouldn't be any issue with providing these documents. We're partners. We should want to provide these documents.

Commissioner Lara: Mr. Mayor, I understand the concept very well.

Mayor Lago: I know you do. You know it better than I do, trust me.

Commissioner Lara: Of adding a little more pressure, I suppose, right, to resort to litigation. I had hoped that former Commissioner Kirk Menendez would actually be here, since this agenda item has been noticed with plenty of time, for him to offer up an explanation or to answer questions coming from the dais. But from my perspective, I think it's shared by the majority here on the Commission as well. We have a former elected official, a former Commissioner, Kirk Menendez, who sits in a position overseeing the War Memorial Youth Center, who's being asked to provide documents to answer questions, not to raise more questions. Whether or not it is a legal obligation, we're not talking about a fight between IBM and Microsoft. We're talking about former colleagues of the Commission, on behalf of the residents, asking for him to show documents that provide clarity, as it pertains to a reverter clause that amounts to really a cloud on the title, as it affects the city. As it affects the city with respect to the millions in capital improvement that are invested in the Youth Center to a potentially uncertain future, given this cloud on the title. Documents that should be, I will assume, kept in a normal course of business

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records, not difficult to put your hands on. And this all could have been provided and cleared up months and months and months ago, when there was a first whisper of a concern, rather than what it's devolved into, which is embarrassing, which I think is shameful, which I still implore my friend, Kirk Menendez, to please do the right thing and just produce the documents. These are not personal records. These are not matters of family or things of that nature, but rather it's business records. These are exchanged regularly all the time, but more so under this scenario where questions and material questions need answers and need them right away. So, to avoid what might be the institution of a lawsuit to seek these documents, Mr. Menendez has the keys to his own cell. Just produce the documents. Produce them now. Certainly, before the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Castro: Through the mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You forgot you passed the gavel.

Mayor Lago: I'm sorry, Madam Vice Mayor. Go ahead.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I know, it's knee-jerk.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Chair. I think we're setting a terrible precedent, going after a civic organization with a long history in service in our community. Billy, can you go ahead and put what I shared with you on the screen?

City Clerk Urquia: Can cable TV share the item?

Commissioner Castro: And I think we need to be very mindful, because if we're going to go down this path, I guess every other private civic organization in Coral Gables should be aware. From the Coral Gables Community Foundation to the Garden Club, to the Women's Club, Knights of Columbus, Rotary Club, Friends of Gables High, and so on should be on notice for a long reach. Our city government may target you for fabricated post-election political reasons. The association isn't a newcomer to Coral Gables. This is a private civic organization with an 80-year history of service, and an impressive list of civic leaders who have served on the association's board. Now, if you can go ahead and read. I'm not going to read them. They're right there on the screen. This is not even all of them. This is just a list of them for the past 80 years. And let's just face it. This isn't about producing documents. This is about carrying out vendettas. Mayor, this is your part, and this is your vendetta against Commissioner Kirk Menendez for standing up to you. Something you can't stand, even from me. Because you know very well, Mayor, when people stop fearing you, they'll see that the emperor wears no clothes. Thank you.

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Mayor Lago: Okay. Now that that was. I got to respond. I got to respond to. I got to respond to Tom Wells or whoever wrote that for you. So let me, let me.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, Mayor. Speak.

Mayor Lago: I'm sorry. Madam Vice Mayor, if I may. Madam Vice Mayor, if I may. Madam Vice Mayor, I'm sorry. So. You stood up here along with Kirk Menendez and my colleague Ariel Fernandez and said that there was a cesspool of corruption. I asked you to bring an IG here. I made the motion. The Vice Mayor was the one that supported me. I said we will root out corruption by bringing an IG here. I asked to bring the Miami-Dade County IG here. You voted against it because you said we couldn't afford it. While you raised your salary to the tune of 101 percent. You know, it has been constant attacks against me, my family, my business for the last two years over and over and over and over again. The last elections spoke volumes. People do not want your style of leadership. They don't. They're tired of the continued behavior. You have no resume in this city. I'm proud of what I have accomplished in this city. I'm proud of my dedication of service here in this community. Like Commissioner Lara said it very eloquently and very clearly. This is easy. Just provide the documents. All those individuals on that list of the ones that are alive, none of them have come to me and said a word. They've only told me that he should just hand the documents over for the ones that are still with us. So, at the end of the day, you can conflate the issues as you always do and use your proxies. But at the end of the day, just provide the documents. You are a partner with the city. You have a 501(c)3 that has been defunct for over five years. And if you provide the information, you're perfectly fine. How about I give you another option? You don't want to provide the information? It's perfectly fine. We will sign a covenant. Just release the reverter clause. We will sign a covenant that the Youth Center will never be developed, which is that's the fear of Kirk Menendez. The same person who sat with the Manager and said, "Up zone my properties or I'll fire you. A few weeks later, he fired him. The same guy who came here and said that in front of the Miami Herald that's here that said, "I was bribed or about to be bribed, or I don't know what happened. And when the Herald reporter who's here with us today called him, he said, "Well, I don't want to talk about it because it never happened. The constant smearing, the constant attacks, nothing has come out of it. It has gotten you nowhere. And that's why Kirk Menendez lost. And that's why the same thing that happened to him is going to happen to both of you in November. Because people clearly see that this is a charade that you've been playing here for the last two years to enrich yourself and everyone can see it. So, you can say whatever you like and you can attack me as many times as you want, but I continue to do the people's will and the people are looking for transparency, and this is a simple way to address the issues. If you want to see the way things are supposed to be dealt with, you should have no issues with providing the documentation. What is it that you're hiding of why you don't want to provide documents? Every person that's on that list that I have a relationship that is still alive has said, Vince, just provide the documents. We are an organization that is a partner with the City of Coral Gables. We shouldn't

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have any issues whatsoever with providing this documentation. If your first and only interest is the Youth Center, but if you have your own personal interest and you don't want to provide those documents because you don't want to provide them, because you're afraid of what's in those documents, then that's a different story.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Chair.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Go ahead. You are recognized.

Commissioner Fernandez: It is extremely disappointing that I don't even call it disappointing anymore. You know, I had a resident ask me this weekend, Vince has a whole lot of hatred towards you. What do you feel towards him? And I told them, pity. I really pity you because the man that I helped get into office was a man that everybody looked up to. But you've gotten yourself to the point where you don't move past things. You hold grudges, you pledge to destroy people. I mean, the show you made at St. Teresa this weekend, it didn't make the city look good. Where the Mayor of Miami had to calm you down. You need to move past things. This is clear, and we've heard it here, the Youth Center Foundation name has been used three times. Kirk Menendez's name has been used how many times? This is about Kirk Menendez. This isn't about the foundation. If it was about the foundation, nobody would have mentioned Kirk Menendez because he's just one of the members of the organization, which has a full board. So, we're now using taxpayer dollars to go after political enemies. And I, and I asked staff, I think I've been as cooperative as I can, as I've been able to be since April, working, taking the assaults, the false attacks from you. I mean, the only person up here who stood by you on the Israeli flag was me. And you went on the radio and said that it was because of me and Melissa Castro politicizing it, that it never happened. Yet I was the only one who stood next to you and said, "I'd be out there putting up the flag with you. I mean, you can't look past things because of the hatred that's consuming you. And I pray for you every day at Mass because it really saddens me. You were somebody who, my son tells me all the time, Vince was our friend. He was your best friend and now he treats you like a bully. And it's a really sad state of affairs. We have, and we live in the best city. And this has become all about political inner fighting, political vendettas and attacking people, attacking their families. You talk about your family and your business being attacked. My family and my business have been attacked for four years ever since I stood up against the Mobility Hub against you. And I told you I would not support the Mobility Hub. And from that point, everything went downhill. We need to move past things. That's the message that people sent in the election. And a lot of people have come up to me and said, we voted for whatever nickname you said you had, you guys had all, whatever it was, because we thought they were about civility, but we've noticed that's not the case. We need to move past that. I won't support this because this is supporting using taxpayer dollars for political vendettas. The only reason that reverter clause is in there is to ensure that your Youth Center as residents remains a Youth Center, so that the city can't change it into something else and give it to

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somebody else for whatever use they want. So, if we're talking now about removing that reverter clause, my biggest question is, what's the end goal? What do you want to change the Youth Center for? Because that's the only reason that you would want to remove the reverter clause. If your gripe is with the Coral Gables War Memorial Youth Center Association, because of their agreement with the city, we can have a conversation. But if this is all about going after Kirk Menendez because he had the audacity to run against you, then I'm sorry, I'm not supportive.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, if I may respond, please. First and foremost, first and foremost, I think it's embarrassing. I would love to have the Mayor of Miami here because I don't have any clue what you're talking about. And it's hilarious because it's the typical Ariel Fernandez play, like you've been known so well to do with all the employees here with Gables Insider and now the Coral Gables Gazette in an effort to smear people. Remember, don't forget, you were that close friend who was on the radio who initiated the statements about me being under investigation, which at the end of the day, I won very clearly. But my point is this, we were never best friends. We have a very different opinion professionally and in regard to the way the city should be run. The bottom line is this, for two years, when you had the upper hand, you wrote zero legislation, you brought in Amos Rojas, you indebted the city. The things that you did here, for example, to tarnish a good man's name like Peter Iglesias by getting \$500,000 worth of scaffolding put up on the city that was unnecessary. And thank God that the DCM had the courage to stand up here and say it on a record that was unnecessary. It was just in an effort to tarnish and destroy people. You are known at the FDLE, you are known at the Ethics Commission as a person who for years has turned people in. Both at Ileana's, when you were working at Ileana's as a gopher and when you were also involved with David Rivera. To come out here and say that you are like some of this, come holier than thou, you've seen the light, Ariel, you will never change. You're a person who is one of the most destructive individuals and everybody says it. We can agree to disagree on the simple facts, I heard you out, we don't have to like each other at the end of the day, but we have to serve this community. But by the way, everybody knows you pulled that phishing stunt off. Everybody's well aware of it and you can keep hiding from it. You were part of the recall against me, to say that you're my friend and you tried to recall me and you did the phishing scam and the whole thing that has been brought to light is an embarrassment, not to me, but to you. Every single time, just like when Amos Rojas was in my office and said, hey, I was assaulted by the Mayor. What happens? You ran to the Miami Herald, you got him to publish an article about saying that I was assaulted, that I assaulted the manager. Six months later, FDLE cleared my name. Just like in everything that's happened. You've put an intensive social media campaign and effort to try to do everything in your power to get me under some sort of scrutiny and nothing has ever happened. You suffer from what is the worst thing you could suffer from, and that is envy. You're envious on every single front. So, you can be holier than thou and talk about Jesus Christ and God and the whole thing and I accept that. I actually value that.

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Commissioner Castro: Don't go after my faith.

Mayor Lago: I actually value that. But at the end of the day, everyone knows who the real Ariel Fernandez is, okay. So, Madam Vice Mayor.

There's a guy up there and he's watching you. And he knows you better than I do.

Mayor Lago: I know, I know, Ariel. It's okay, don't worry.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, let's see if we can set aside-

Commissioner Fernandez: Agreed.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, if I may say one last thing, if I may, I'm sorry to interrupt you. It's not about Kirk Menendez. This is about getting the facts. It's about getting the information. So, if it were Kirk Menendez or anybody else, I would want to make sure that there isn't anything that is holding the city hostage. And I believe that this entity is holding the city hostage.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I want to see if we can just focus on the issues, not this tit for tat on politics and personalities. By the way, I was out at St. Teresa. I have no idea what you're talking about.

Mayor Lago: Can you say that again, Madam Vice Mayor? You were there in St. Teresa. Did you see something in St. Teresa? Because it's a typical Ariel Fernandez technique. What did you see at St. Teresa?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I didn't see what was described. So, I saw a lot of love. I saw a lot of good feelings that were expressed there. And a lot of happiness that evening and what we were there for at St. Teresa. And everybody was thankful that we were present. I also opposed the first version of the mobility hub. And I'm not going to reiterate why. It was an aesthetic issue for our city. We need the parking now. When we first discussed this issue about the records from the War Memorial Youth Center, I emphasized that we need to have a good historical record. It's part of the fabric of our community. And I would think that someone would be proud, and the organization should be proud, to have well-established their contribution to our city. I also emphasize the fact that we have a number of parks in our city. We're only growing the number of parks in our city. And there's no intention whatsoever to develop these things. In fact, we want to protect them from development. That is why we've created them. We passed something today about green spaces and so forth, again, to protect from development. There are many parcels out there that I wish we could have obtained. Hindsight's always 20-20. But I do have concerns that the history of the organization has not always been alive and well. It's been dissolved. It's renewed itself. And if we

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truly want to protect a parcel of land from development, there's a better way to do it than rely upon something that may not be here tomorrow. So, I do feel kicking the can down the road is not an effective way to do it. For our historical record, we do need to have things in place. And the existing asks haven't worked for something that should be something you should be proud of providing to the city so that we can have a complete historical record and sit down and talk about, for the future, the best way to make sure that this property is preserved. Okay. Now we have a Commission meeting coming up in early January. Having dealt with countless cases in my, or at least countless now in my career, dealing with something where there is not a date marked, I know what will happen. The can will continue to be kicked down the road forever until a date is set by something to be done by or the city has to take the necessary actions to move forward and get the records that they need. And I think it will help encourage parties to get around the table. And that's, I think, the ultimate goal. Let's find the best solution to make sure that the Youth Center is here today, tomorrow, for the next 100 years, for the next 200 years. And it doesn't turn into a Live Local project. It doesn't turn into a housing project. I mean, this city has a history of preservation. I mean, look at what the history was for the Biltmore Hotel. Developers wanted to tear it down and make it into a development. City didn't allow it. The residents spoke up. So really, the reverter itself doesn't have that effect. But if we're going to invest money into this Youth Center to increase and expand the quality of the experience that our children have there, we need to make sure that we don't have a situation where you have an organization that's alive today. It's not alive 20 years from now, trying to protect something that is a precious gem in our community. Or worse yet, someone buys an interest in that, it is a developer, and now we're talking about serious litigation. So, like any contract, the language can be interpreted. I think it's better that we preserve this property. So, I'm in favor.

Mayor Lago: May I say something? You know, I think it's also the typical assault that's done by my colleagues is the continued, like what happened here with Kirk Menendez the other day, I was going to be bribed. You know, when the Herald calls, cowards doesn't want to say anything. You say that you're afraid that the Youth Center could be redeveloped and that the reverter is required. Name me one elected official on this dais, or in this past dais, that has bought more private land and has contributed more pieces of property in the downtown. And right now, the Manager will tell you that we're working on a six-acre parcel of land that we are weeks away from bringing to the Commission to take it from private hands and to bring it into the city to make the largest park in the city's history. There's never been on this Commission a person that has found more pieces of property to conserve and to put into public trust to make sure that they don't get developed and that we have more green space here in this city than myself. So, the problem is the idea of scaring residents, they see past that. They see past that. And there's no need for a reverter because no one would be insane enough to redevelop the Youth Center. The intent of the Youth Center is to serve the residents of this community. And it's so simple when you look at it. You just provide the information, just like you provide audited financials when you have to get a bank loan. When you

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get a bank loan, you have to provide audited financials. They ask you for audited financials. It's not a big deal. Everybody provides them. I have to provide my audited financials all the time. So, when you don't want to provide the audited financials is because there's a problem. And because you don't want to show those documents and you don't want to show instability. You don't want to show that maybe the money's not there. So again, when you tell people that, no, because the Mayor wants to redevelop the Youth Center, you're the one that looks ridiculous because everybody here knows that I would never even dare do that. And it's just, and that's what people tell me on the street. And it's evidently clear when you look at the last elections. There was a clear choice between two individuals and two polar opposite views. And at the end of the day, like you said, hey, everybody says, a week ago you were saying that everybody's telling, talking around town that I'm Vince Lago 2.0. You're the one that said that. It didn't come from my mouth.

Commissioner Fernandez: I know, it saddens me.

Mayor Lago: Oh, okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: But just to answer his point, Madam Vice Mayor. You asked about me saying that I was afraid. I said, no, I was wondering if that was the intent because the organization from my understanding is there for the eventuality if the city decides to move in a different direction. And I think the Vice Mayor phrased it perfectly in the last discussion item where she said, "We're here now, we're not going to be here forever. And we need to make sure that it is preserved. And I think that was the initial intent of the creation of the foundation to protect the Youth Center and ensure that the Youth Center remained. Now, Madam Vice Mayor, I'm sorry, Madam City Attorney, there was a meeting scheduled. Our attorney canceled. And then when the next one was scheduled, their attorney was called to court, to trial. So, there is an intent to have a meeting after this trial period ends, which is supposed to be when?

City Attorney Suarez: My understanding is that she's in trial through the end of the week. At least through the end of the week, I don't know how long.

Commissioner Fernandez: Got it.

Mayor Lago: So, that's why, Madam Vice Mayor, through the Chair, I said, from today, you have 10 days to meet and provide the documentation that was requested by our attorney in a good faith effort by the association. If not, we give direction to the City Attorney to move forward with engaging in litigation. It's pretty simple and standard stuff. It's nothing, Madam Vice Mayor, am I correct? Pretty simple, pretty standard in the legal world?

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I do have to correct you on one thing. Audited financial statements were not necessarily required. What was required was under penalty of perjury type statements.

It's something I routinely do for a lot of my small clients, so to decrease costs. I do have a question, though, for the Clerk. When is our first meeting?

City Clerk Urquia: January 13th.

Vice Mayor Anderson: 13th.

Mayor Lago: Over one month from now.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I know we do have the holidays. And hence, my respectful request that we ask them to meet. And I think a meeting is going to be fruitful by a week ahead of time, by January 6th. Because I think there's more in common than there is not in common in wanting to preserve this gem for the future. And if people could sit down around the table, they'll find out that 95 percent of it is in common. And I think they would understand from a historical perspective why it's so incredibly important to honor the legacy of the work of all those individuals you had up on the screen, Commissioner. And be able to provide the complete history of the contribution, not only from the War Memorial Youth Center, but the contribution that City of Coral Gables made to the foundation as it then existed. It's not the same foundation anymore. But there was this cohesive relationship. And for the legacy to continue we need to make sure it's perpetual. Because the foundation has lapsed in the past. And to have to maintain a board there's a better way to do this than having this reverter clause to an organization that can be gone tomorrow. We owe it to our community. We owe it to our children. We owe it to the future generations for the City of Coral Gables. So that's my modification. I guess I can't pass the gavel back. I don't know.

Mayor Lago: If I may, Madam Chair. My intent was simple. 10 days. You want to make it two weeks to me? If not, the City Attorney has the right to proceed to litigation. It's more than enough time for them to have a conversation, for them to meet, and for them to share the documents. And I think it's very interesting when we talk about this. Because what if we found out that this organization was defunct? What if the money that they had had been misappropriated?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Don't know. Don't know. But we'll never know if we don't sit down.

Mayor Lago: But I think that's my point. My point is that why wouldn't a partner of the city want to have a transparent conversation with the city? It doesn't make sense. And the reason why I use the issue of audited financials, when you have a credit line, or an equity line, or you do business with a bank, you have to provide audited financials every year. So, they're providing, they're asking you for that level of transparency for you to conduct business with that bank.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Vice Mayor. A question for you, City Attorney. So, has a position been taken by Council for the War Memorial Youth Center that the reason they're not turning it over is because of some concern that they've expressed?

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City Attorney Suarez: The position has been that they're not obligated to turn them over.

Commissioner Lara: Okay, so put differently. They've stated no reason why they are not turning them over, but just stating, I don't have an obligation to turn them over. Am I right?

City Attorney Suarez: That's correct.

Commissioner Lara: Okay.

City Attorney Suarez: And just because to be fair, they did give some documents, as you know, the publicly available documents, and yeah.

Commissioner Lara: Right. And I was going to go to that point. So, it's a little confounding because they said that they're not going to turn over some documents because they're not obligated to do so. They nevertheless sent over some documents, even though they're not obligated to do so. So that leaves me kind of wondering, what was the methodology or the thought pattern behind it? You said to me in answering my question, they've offered none, correct? Other than I don't have to turn them over, right?

City Attorney Suarez: Yes. They've also said that some of the documents we're asking for, the city should already have. And so, they did give us some samples of what that might be. But it's email communications that their position is the city should already have these.

Commissioner Lara: So then open question, I guess, to the Commission. So, if there's anyone on the Commission that believes that the position taken by the War Memorial Youth Center board is that they're concerned about potential development of the Youth Center, that has never been a stated position from the War Memorial Youth Center, right?

City Attorney Suarez: Commissioner, I'd have to go back there. They did send one comprehensive letter that I think they did mention something about a concern of development, but it's not the reason, I think, for holding back the documents.

Commissioner Lara: Right, because the only issue I understand is that we're trying to get our hands on these documents as it connects and relates to our concerns regarding the reverter clause. However, that's never, as far as we know at this point, been the basis for withholding the documents that we've requested, right?

City Attorney Suarez: Right.

Commissioner Lara: So, if there's a suggestion from this dais that they are holding the documents back that we've requested because of a concern of development, that has never been the position taken by the War Memorial Youth Center, correct?

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City Attorney Suarez: I don't believe so.

Mayor Lago: So, Madam Vice Mayor, through the Chair. My request is 10 days to two weeks to provide the documentation to meet, if not, provide the City Attorney the legal checks and balances so she can move forward with litigation to attain the requested documentation.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, understood. I think it's a reasonable request. Do we have a second?

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Call the item.

City Clerk Urquia: Madam Vice Mayor, I have members of the public requesting to speak on this item.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Absolutely.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay. Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, and it is Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. If this wasn't so sad, it would be so funny. I think if we play the tape, some people will be laughing at the silliness that was being discussed here. But thinking, you know, all the time that I've been sitting here today, I wonder, you know, we have several organizations that we partner with. I didn't see one in the list that Ms. Castro proposed, but I know there's one that we somehow raised money through a Mayor's Ball that we gave thousands of dollars to. And nobody has ever questioned what happens with the money or whether the money is really given to them. Maybe we should ask for their financials to see. And since it's a 501(c)3, they would have to provide it because that's public record. But then we have somebody who was my friend. Not only was my friend, but I thought it was one of my best friends and because I didn't do what he wanted me to do to support somebody, I became his enemy. I was not Mrs. Mayor anymore. I was Ms. Cruz. But let me move on from that because that's silly. He raised the point that, you know, we need to trust him because, you know, there's no intention. There's no real intention. Well, how can we trust someone who for years told his selected group for 10 years or so sitting at his house that he did not have any business within the city borders, no business conducted within our borders. And then it was a lie because there was business conducted within the city. So how can you trust somebody that says one thing today, another tomorrow? He had at one point 90 employees in his business. Well, it doesn't seem that it was his business. Then it was 40, 30. The number has changed back and forth. Now we find out that it was after all not his business. And some people have checked some financial records already that it was never his business because it was a different entity that he had some interest in. You know, let me tell you, it is very sad that we are

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in a position that instead of doing what we promised the day that the new Commission was installed to take care of the fences, to bring back civility. And now we're fighting like cats and dogs over something that makes no sense whatsoever. So, I don't know. Some of you have to go back and watch that video and see what you promised the people.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, may I respond, please? I think it's important. Coming from a person who was thrown out of the School Board and is well-documented and a person who is currently involved in a massive lawsuit with her brother because she stole her brother's inheritance is not one to come up here and speak. Number one, in regard to my Gala, which is next week, and we raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for charity, both the Community Foundation and both La Liga Contra el Cancer, of which none of the individuals to my left or my right are willing to do that. And I'm more than willing to ask them to help me to do it, okay? I've been doing it for years. Knowing that this would happen one day, you know how I've always run that gala? That the checks for the donations are made straight to La Liga. I don't have any 501(c)3. It goes straight to La Liga and they're the ones that deal with the money. But again, this is your typical effort on the record to try to smear, defame, you know, hit somebody on the head that's trying to do something good because they're not doing anything good. All they do is spread rumors and lies and continue, but nobody raises money. I was going to mention it before, but I'll mention it now. Last week, our wine auction was an incredible success for those that attended. Thank you. We raised over \$100,000 for scholarships for young children in the Coral Gables Community Foundation. Every donation was paid directly to the foundation. If you'd like to audit La Liga and you'd like to audit the foundation, please call them. They'll give you all the documentation. They know how to run a real 501(c)3 and they've never been defuncted. Number two, in regard to my employment, where I was a partner, I'm no longer there after 16 years. It's a big step in a different direction for me, but it's something that I'm proud of having given 16 years of my life to a company that we took from barely a handful of employees to over 60, 70 employees at one point. And it's something that I worked on very, very hard in my life and I'm very proud of, extremely proud of. And I look forward to building that back up again. And I wish my ex-partners only the best of luck. The constant statements, the constant mentioning, the Gazette, the Political Cortadito, they're trying to tear me down. It's the complete insanity that you have here, which both to my left and to my right take advantage of it every day. Because I do things differently, my friend, very differently. My name is on everything. It's called Coral Gables First. That's what I do. And I'm very clear that when I write something and I say something, I have facts and I put the facts out there. So again, envy is a very dangerous, very dangerous feeling, emotion that people deal with. And at the end of the day, I can't help you deal with your envy. I can only be who I am and continue to do what I can on behalf of the city. So while you sit in the back and you giggle and you laugh and you say horrific things, like in front of my family members and my children, when you were very clearly in front of St. Augustine Church and you said that, I hope that Vince Lago shoots himself like Sergio Pino and multiple people heard it in front of my family. It only comes out that you're an

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individual who has tried everything in your power to destroy me. And I'll pray for you, just like I pray for my friend Ariel Fernandez and Melissa Castro.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Vince Lago, 2.0. Madam Vice Mayor, thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mr. Clark, is there any more public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Can we call the item?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, ma'am. Vice Mayor Anderson.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: I almost forgot what the item was at this point. No.

Commissioner Fernandez: No.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 3-2)

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Moving on.