

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-2
January 14, 2025
Police and Fire Headquarters
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Jackson Holmes

Agenda Item H-2

Succession plan for the City Manager's Office

Mayor Lago: Final item, City Manager, H-2.

City Manager Rojas: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. On February 27, 2024, I was appointed City Manager. At that time, I said I would serve for one year, so as the one-year mark was approaching, I made the difficult decision to fall back into retirement. It is the right decision for me and my family. My last day at the city will be February 28th. I'd like to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to our residents, team members and this Commission for the honor of serving as your City Manager. Over the past year, I have had the privilege of providing strategic leadership and executive oversight on a variety of initiatives that have helped shape our community and its future. While too numerous to enumerate all, I would like to highlight some. The planning and kick-off of our centennial year celebration, an important milestone for the city. The City Hall Complex renovation, the Minorca Parking Garage office buildout, the implementation and troubleshooting

City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025

of critical systems, such as the financial management system, INFOR and InerGov, the electronic plans review system. The purchase and installation of the temporary speed tables providing our residents with much desired traffic calming on an expedited basis and may I add, those have been favorably received. This oversight extends to the citywide broadband and public Wi fi expansion, legislative agenda formulation for the City Commission and lobbying efforts to secure state and federal grant funding, which totaled more than \$2.7 million dollars. Our office made strides in enhancing property management and strengthening tenant relationships. Establishing a property management inspection system that includes yearly independent commercial inspection services and ongoing review for local and state agency data regarding city-owned properties. The office also provided oversight for tenant buildouts, as notable sites including the Francesco Restaurant at the Miracle Theater and Senora Martinez at Giralda Merrick Way Parking Garage. A special note was the assistant site provided with the negotiation of contract agreements for the city-owned properties, including key negotiations that resulted in new or renewed lease agreements for prominent city assets. Residents favored Granada Golf Course Diner, now Birdie Bistro, LeParc Café at Coral Gables Country Club and Fritz and Franz. Many accomplishments of overseeing projects would not be possible without a staff that was communicative, knowledgeable, and efficient. It has been imperative to continue to recruit and retain top-tiered talent, such as Monica Beltran, as Director of Parking and Mobility and Joe Gomez as Assistant City Manager. This long side the establishment of fair and transparent talent management process our team members our greatest asset. In the past five years, the priority of Human Resources had changed drastically. Facing the pressures of competitive labor market, rapid technology advancements and evolving human capital trends, our focus must be on developing and retaining existing talent over recruiting new employees. To that end, I instituted a hybrid work-from-home policy, one of which has been a real success. Providing stability for our workforce is crucial, and especially noteworthy achievement was finalizing negotiations and reaching new bargaining agreements with the police and general services employee union. Our team members want to be heard. They are the front line of providing service to our residents. During my tenure, we started the Employee Ambassador Committee. I meet regularly with employees so they can bring forth both suggestions and concerns. Speaking of voicing concerns, team members can now also submit their concerns anonymously. And this direct and personal approach isn't unlimited to team members. I have an open-door policy with our residents and businesses as well. It's all part of my philosophy of leading in a transparent manner and one in where I can engage directly with all stakeholders. However, of all that we have achieved this past year, what truly stands out for me is working alongside an outstanding team of professionals. The City of Coral Gables staff is one that is committed and dedicated, and I am privileged to have been able to lead this extraordinary team. Thank you all for your support and collaboration throughout this journey and to the City Commission and our residents for allowing me the opportunity to serve. The City of Coral Gables is fortunate to have a strong bench. Last year before my appointment, Deputy City Manager Alberto Parjus was appointed as Interim Manager. There is no need to look outside of our organization for a

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

replacement. Alberto is the right man for the job, and he is ready, willing to serve. He will be able to lead our city and provide a seamless transition for our residents, businesses and team members. While my tenure is coming to an end, I am grateful for the opportunity to have served the City Beautiful and my belief in the future of Coral Gables remains steadfast. I am proud to have played a role in the city's ongoing success and reiterate my thanks for the opportunity. Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: I will make the motion to make Alberto Parjus our next City Manager.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second it.

City Attorney Suarez: So, just some clarification. What would be the effective date, March 1st?

Commissioner Castro: Your last day is February 28th.

City Manager Rojas: February 28th will make it a year.

City Attorney Suarez: So how would you like to, for us to handle.

Commissioner Castro: I would like to instruct HR to go ahead and negotiate with Parjus, whatever his pay rate should be.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. I'd be remiss not to share with you the same comments I've given both City Manager Amos, as well as Mr. Parjus. In order to have the appropriate respect everybody should have an opportunity to put their name in the hat. As we do with HR and we share with every employee in our city when we have openings in our city, they have an ability to apply, so we can promote from within. I do feel that an interim City Manager position would need to be appointed first so that we can do a proper process, according to best practices, as we generally do for every other employee that we hire in our city. Just because you have the right to do things a certain way, doesn't mean it's the right thing to do. We have a process that we should follow to have the best results for the residents, our voters, to be able to have the qualifications and the vetting done in a manner that the residents know that the best person was appointed for the job, but when you bypass that system, it calls into doubt the qualifications of the person that was appointed, that's why I made that recommendation to you. Go through the process. Put your name in the hat, there may be other folks in our city that also want to put their name in a hat and let the best person succeed.

Commissioner Castro: I have a presentation, if we can please.

City Clerk Urquia: If Cable TV could please show my screen.

Commissioner Castro: Hiring a City Manager. The overview of the City Manager and its leadership. The City of Coral Gables operates under Council/Manager form of government. The City Manager appointed by the Commission acts as the Chief Executive Officer. The City Manager

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

is responsible for implementing the Commission's policies and day-to-day operations. The City Manager can appoint, supervise or remove all administrative employees. The City Manager manages an annual budget of almost or about \$350 million dollars. An executive recruiting services, this is what we have been talking about, a national search employing a third-party company. The cost of that is approximately 25 to 35 percent of the first annual salary, which could be anywhere from \$70,000 to \$100,000. History – In 2014, Collin Baenziger and Associates was used for a national search. The city spent \$68,000 on an unsuccessful candidate, Jim A. Beard. A national search takes about six months to be completed. This is what resulted from the national search from James A. Beard. That City Manager only worked for us for one week. He wasn't even sworn in. There was a background check in 2014, charges on child abuse in 2011 and more than one bankruptcy, and that's from the national search that we spent the significant amount of money in 2014, imagine inflation. I'll go ahead and update you about this individual. He just got in August of 2024, a sentence and sent to federal prison. Crimes – multi-year theft of funds, purchases, possession of two machine guns, obstruction of federal tax laws. Methods used – he altered documents, created a fake business to facilitate the scheme, and this is an individual, this is the candidate that we obtained, and we paid for, for that national search, just to put on the record. So, let's go back to the history of how it's been done here in the City of Coral Gables. Promotions within from our whole City Commission have been 58.3 percent; internal decisions, 16.7; appointment, which was Mr. Amos is, I can't read very well, but I think its 8.3, yes; and a national search, our history of a national search has been 16.7. Here is detailed explanation with data of our prior City Managers of how they have been hired and also, our City Attorneys and City Clerks. I think that given this information; I can attest that my decision is the right decision. This is the way that we have been doing it in the past. I do not intend to change any process. In fact, I'm following the protocol that we done the majority of time. Alberto Parjus is uniquely qualified to serve as City Manager of Coral Gables, combining over 40 years of proven government leadership with an intimate understanding of our city's operations and priorities. He has demonstrated exceptional leadership as Assistant and Deputy City Manager, successfully overseeing critical departments such as Finance, Human Resources, Innovation and Technology, Economic Development. His ability to deliver results, foster collaboration and navigate complex challenges has already made a lasting impact in our community. With his extensive experience, strategic vision and unwavering commitment to Coral Gables, Alberto Parjus is a leader we need to ensure continued excellence and growth. And if my colleagues would indulge me, I think this is the next step to continuing.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I just want to make sure you heard me correctly. I never said the words national search. Okay. I said advertise the job, like we do every other job; get an email out to everyone that is an employee of our city, they can put their name in the hat and come in with due respect that the ultimate person that was chosen is the best. Mr. Gomez recently joined the city, he came over from another city; Ms. Zeida Sardinias is now the City Manager for the City of Doral, this is nothing new. People have application processes, they go through interviews, they get vetted

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

by the Commission, and may the best person be chosen for that. In three short months we have an election, the face of this Commission may look totally different. It should be the choice of that Commission, who is the next City Manager. The voters need to make a choice as well, as to who sits here next, and I think – I would think if I was applying for the position, just like I told Mr. Amos when he came in, you need to have the respect of the community, go through a vetting process, before you are hired in, that's how you get respect. That's my recommendation to you, as well, if you chose to accept this position.

Commissioner Castro: I have spoken to Parjus, he is more than ready for this position. He will work as many years as the Commission needs him and I really think this should be a unanimous vote, because at the end of the day, it is Mr. Parjus who has been working closely with the Mayor and I think they have a respectable relationship, right.

Mayor Lago: Before I speak, she said you've been working closely with me. I just want to make sure.

Commissioner Castro: This didn't come from him. This is my understanding from when you are talking about the Manager won't meet with you.

Commissioner Menendez: I just want to add.

Mayor Lago: If you can tell me when I could speak. You tell me when I can speak, and I will speak.

Commissioner Castro: Maybe I misunderstood.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead, sir.

Commissioner Menendez: First off, not only in Coral Gables, but throughout South Florida, you are highly respected, not only as a professional, but as a person. You have experience in all aspects of government, which is isn't an easy task to accomplish and yet you have. You have the respect of the employees of the folks that work with you from the outside, the private sector, our residents, you've done an astonishing job. The one thing I really like about you is your focus is serving the residents, because you were hired by Peter Iglesias, and you did a great job, and you worked with Amos Rojas, and you did a great job. So, no matter who it is that is in the room with you, your focus has always been public service regardless of the political winds, and that's why I think you are an exceptional candidate, and I think you are definitely what the city needs. You have my support.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, first off, Amos, you've done a phenomenal job as our City Manager, dealing with tons of adversity, tons of criticism, blogs, writing things about you, false information,
City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025

false narratives. Most recently they published a picture, which I think is very racist of a migrant worker with your face on it. This is what you've had to put up with and your family has had to put up with and thank you for doing that for Coral Gables and for our residents. It's unfortunate that living in the City Beautiful, the negative politics of some on this dais and outside just have to try to bring down our city and divide us every step of the way. You've done a phenomenal job. I had actually written some of the things that I know you have accomplished, you've mentioned some of them, but under your leadership, the city has successfully hired a top-tiered Assistant City Manager, Joe Gomez, after a long time vacancy, more than two or three years, commenced the structural repairs at City Hall that had been neglected by several prior administrators, changed the way we handled our budgeting process to ensure more transparency and accountability, negotiated the contracts with the Fraternal Order of Police and the Teamsters successfully, and everybody at the table ended up happy at the end of the day, but we did not break the bottom-line for our residents. You hired a Parking Director with top talent and is modernizing our Parking Department. You oversaw the construction and completion and the reopening of Burger Bob's, after your predecessor had refused to do it. You spearheaded the efforts to place temporary speed tables where needed until the permanent ones are installed, and we could just go on. Resident after resident who came to see me said, I met the City Manager, I went to his office, I had my concerns addressed. Emails that were sent to you, your predecessor many times didn't even respond to emails from residents. You always took the time to respond and that's commendable. But I must say, you weren't my first choice for the job and that does not reflect poorly on you, it reflects on how highly I think of our Deputy City Manager Alberto Parjus. I think Commissioner Castro summed up Alberto's ability to do this job, but for those who have questions, I'll refer you to my memo to the Commission on February 5th of last year, where I said, ensuring the stability of our city is paramount to providing the services residents expect and deserve, and this is not a point that I am making myself. When the Commission appointed Peter Iglesias, Peter Iglesias was the Assistant City Manager at the time, and he was promoted from within. Not only was he promoted from within, there was only a three-minute discussion to appoint him City Manager, and it was at the request of former Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli, who was asking for stability in our city. We can try to go out to a national search, put in for a bunch of people to submit their applications, but I'll remind you in 2014, that national search and requesting the applications was in itself a fiasco. We had five people that were pushed forward by our committee and those five individuals, the one that was selected as Commissioner Castro very eloquently stated, has been arrested and is serving three years for government corruption in a federal penitentiary. Additionally, the other four candidates, the Commission didn't even deem to be qualified enough to assume the role of City Manager and never even considered them when we went for a second round. The funny thing is the person that was selected was the one that was always thought to be the top candidate by some of the members of the Commission and members of the community. Jeannett Slesnick, for example, who wrote about it in the Good Gables Government publication. So, I believe that Alberto's many years of experience, qualifications, he has been here through two administrations

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

and most of you know, Peter Iglesias and I seldom agreed on anything, but we both agreed on Alberto Parjus and his hiring in the City of Coral Gables. Alberto comes with experience from Miami-Dade County, over 37 years of experience. He has sat there in the trenches and worked with staff to find solutions and over the last year, he has been the right hand of our City Manager, navigating this city to where we are today. We cannot move backwards. We must continue to move forward. Now, I find it interesting that the Vice Mayor says, we have to follow the process as we do with every other employee. Just two years ago, at this exact meeting, the city named a new City Attorney. The item wasn't even on the agenda. It was placed on the agenda seven minutes before the Commission meeting started, and it was the recommendation of the former City Attorney to promote Cristina Suarez, which we are grateful to have here as our City Attorney today, that we are here in this situation today and have her as our City Attorney. But there was no application process, there was no, oh, we need to go out and find who also is qualified, there may be an Assistant City Attorney who's qualified or somebody else in our city who is better qualified. We trusted the recommendation of the person who was in the top job to recommend who would be the best person to replace them. There was also a comment about, it should be the choice of the next Commission. Well, that wasn't considered when it was the City Attorney's appointment two years ago, and it was three months before the election. It was exactly the same timetable and there was no objection from anybody on the Commission at the time to naming Cristina Suarez and waiting for the new Commission. But I'll tell you, if the concern is that we're making decisions today that should not be made for the next Commission, what is the recommendation. Should we just not have Commission meetings. This body has been elected to make decisions today, not four months from now, after the election, hoping to see if you can pick up a majority and bring back Peter Iglesias, that's not a solution. We have a responsibility today and Commissioner Castro, I would like to offer a friendly amendment to your motion to name Alberto Parjus City Manager effective the next City Commission meeting. So, Amos, nothing against you, but your last day would be the day before the Commission meeting, I would like Alberto Parjus to take over and assume the position effective the next City Commission meeting. This is not a time for dirty politics. This is not a time for dirty attacks. This is a time for civility, for stability, and for our city to move forward with the right person at the helm and I can assure you that person is Alberto Parjus.

Commissioner Castro: If Amos is okay with that amendment, I accept it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So quick comment on Commissioner Fernandez' rhetoric. The position of an interim City Manager is exactly what Alberto Parjus took when Mr. Iglesias was departed from our facility. Okay. It doesn't remove the ability of this city to function any differently if he takes up the interim City Manager position, so that we can have other applicants. You guys are going to vote him in, and I'm going to say the same thing to you, Mr. Parjus, that I said to Mr. Iglesias. We need a succession plan. None of us live forever. So, we need to be able to bring in some younger folks to the helm. I understand you have the votes. I made my personal recommendation to you on how to come in with due respect, same recommendation I made to Mr. Amos when he stepped in

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

to take the position. I understood you originally you only wanted this job as an interim position for up to three months, clearly your mind has changed since then, but that's your choice, right. That's the end of my comments.

Mayor Lago: Now, I'm going to speak. So, as I notices this item was added to the agenda and if we're going to discuss this important position, we should discuss it with everything that we have. It shouldn't just be about today; it should be about the past year. Succession planning is important. As a person who has a business with a lot of employees, its critical to make sure that today is going to be as good as tomorrow and tomorrow is going to be even better. But it has been done with intelligence and strategy, not based on impulse. Selecting a City Manager directly impacts how our city operates, how its perceived and most importantly, how we serve our residents. And when I took the time to write this, I knew this was cooked, just like the last time. So, I knew no matter what I wrote here was not going to be considered, but at the end of the day, at least it will be memorialized. The role of City Manager is the backbone of our municipal government. It is a position that ensures our operations run effectively, our goals are met, and our vision for the City of Coral Gables is realized, but for this to happen we need leadership that is not only capable, but carefully chosen through a thoughtful transparent and professional process. That does not have to be a national search, it could be as simple as a local search, it could be as simple as opening up to all the employees, many of whom I see in front of me, who have come to visit me in City Hall, and have asked me, giving an unqualified individual a position sends a bad message for employee morale. Unfortunately, we experienced what happens when this process is ignored. Let's reflect on how our current City Manager Amos Rojas was appointed. His hiring was anything but conventional, certainly not reflective of the standards we've worked so hard to uphold here in the City of Coral Gables. In a moment that was unprecedented, as it was troubling, a decision was made on the spot, in the middle of the Commission Chambers, the previous City Manager was fired, and a new one was announced without the formal process we've relied on for decades. Not a resume, not a background check, chosen. To make matters worse, the individual chosen lack the necessary qualifications and credentials for the role. I think one member on the Commission said they made the decision based on Linked-in. This was not how Coral Gables operates. It was a deviation from our core values of professionalism, transparency, and excellence. This is not who we are. When we by-pass the process, we risk everything. Without a structure hiring and recruitment process, we undermine the integrity of the city, we diminish public trust, and we jeopardize the efficiency of our city. Everything begins to fall apart, from daily operations to long term strategic goals. Mr. soon-to-be manager, your own words, correct me if I'm wrong, you said you were disgusted the way things were handled and that you did not approve the way they fired Mr. Peter Iglesias and you'll be leaving in a month. I guess you weren't disgusted enough by the actions taken by this Commission. Succession planning is about more than just filling a position. Its about ensuring continuity, stability and leadership that reflects the high standards of Coral Gables. When we take the time to conduct a formal recruitment process, we open the door to highly

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

qualified candidates, whoever those candidates are, those who bring expertise, fresh perspectives and a clear understanding of the responsibilities ahead, and in many cases, it reinforces that we have the best at home and we don't have to go out and look at another municipality that we could potentially offer that job to somebody we have in-house in one form or another. Going out and testing the waters is not a bad thing. It's a good thing. But this isn't just about hiring the right person, its about preserving the fabric of our community, a robust process fosters accountability and reinforces our commitment to responsible governance. When our residents see that we prioritize qualifications and transparency, they feel confident that our city is in capable hands. You must also view this as a lesson learned. The appointment of Amos Rojas was a failure, one that cannot be afforded to be repeated. It's a cautionary tale what happens when process is ignored, and standards are compromised. If this happens in the public sector your company will not survive. As we prepare for leadership, transitions in the future we must commit to smart succession planning. This means formalizing procedures, conducting thorough searches and ensuring every decision we make reflects the professionalism Coral Gables is known for. Coral Gables deserves leadership that is earned, not announced, leadership that is carefully vetted, not hastily chosen, leadership that reflects the values of this incredible community; and by the way, I'm not against naming somebody from our ranks, but I'm a believer that it should be 5-0. Its shouldn't just be done, the items mentioned and the Commissioner to my right and to my left immediately one, two, just seemed so contrived and so prescribed. Let us move forward with a renewed commitment to excellence. Let us learn from past mistakes and ensure that we never again allow process to take a back seat, because the future of Coral Gables depends on the choices we make today and the standards that we chose to uphold. So, if we name a current Manager right now, just to give you some simple facts, the Manager will take office February 27th, he will have five weeks before the new Commission. Again, whoever is elected will then make a decision whether the Manager is kept or not. At a minimum, we should not allow the Manager to have a five-month severance if he works here for a month, because at the end of the day, who knows what the next Commission is going to do. So, imagine, you are in office for five weeks, you are let go by the next Commission and you are given a five-month severance. Again, that is not being fiscally sound, in my opinion. So, now is the time to focus on employee morale. Now is the time to focus on pushing the city forward and doing what we can. Mr. Parjus, you told me you'd be leaving in a month, now you are fighting for this job. I told you I cannot support you, not because I don't believe in you, or respect you, its because you know very well that there has to be a process. So, I wish you God's speed my friend. I will do everything I can to support you. I will be here. I will listen to you and God willing you'll meet with me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity. Thank you.

City Manager Rojas: I would like to say one thing. Thank you for those kind words, Mayor. To answer Commissioner Fernandez question. Yes, my last day would be the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Castro: So, I accept his amendment and also about the rate, about the salary. I know we can appoint one member of the Commission to go ahead and negotiate.

City Attorney Suarez: The Mayor is authorized to negotiate unless the Commission designates somebody else to negotiate.

Commissioner Castro: I'm just afraid that he's not going to do it as goodwill, since he's opposed to this appointment.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Let me make a suggestion because again, he's exactly what you've complained about. Commissioner Fernandez complains about hits being put on somebody; you are presuming that something's not going to be done in good faith in making that allegation against somebody. Why don't we try following the normal process first.

Commissioner Castro: I would except for the fact that when he started to speak, he was trying to intimidate Mr. Parjus, so I don't want to go ahead and risk, like we did last time the appointment of Ralph Cutie, it would be the same situation.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Just say God speed, you know, good luck.

Commissioner Castro: I'm not going to....So in my motion, I would...

Mayor Lago: May I answer this really quickly. I'm not even going to touch what you said because its so ridiculous it doesn't even merit. I forgot to mention something. I need to apologize to somebody out there who was slandered by multiple people on this Commission. James Beard was chosen by this Commission and was chosen by John Beard, James Beard, Jim Beard, I can't remember. I can't remember his full name.

Commissioner Castro: Jim Beard.

Mayor Lago: He was chosen for the position. He was vetted by an outside company, I think we paid \$50,000, they made a mistake, they didn't catch certain things in his background. We were reimbursed that money, it happened in a Commission meeting, but to bring that man up here and slander him, in my opinion is very distasteful and we're better than that as a city. I wish that man nothing but the best, no matter what legal trouble he's having. And we shouldn't bring that man's name up here just to make an example that a search did not work in one form or another. I think we can do much better than that. So, if you don't trust me to negotiate with Mr. Parjus, no problem, then select another member here of the Commission and they can do it as you please. Listen, everything here is three votes. It's been like this for the last year and-a-half, look how well we are doing with these three votes. Do as you please Commissioner.

Commissioner Castro: Everything I said about Jim A. Beard were facts, and the sources were on my presentation. They are not made up; they are not hallucinations.

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

Commissioner Menendez: I have an IRS press release here; Atlanta's former Chief Financial Officer pleads guilty to theft of government funds and tax obstruction. This is the IRS, so this isn't the National Inquirer. So, its part of the record. Just like some people can say, you said this, and you said that. You want to bring the past, we bring the past, because the past affects the present and the future we are going.

Mayor Lago: We are dealing with a person, we are talking about a person who has no stakes in the discussion today, and you are tearing somebody down for no reason. There is no reason for it. Its distasteful.

Commissioner Castro: So, I would nominate Commissioner Kirk Menendez. I think that he is balanced and making that decision with our new City Manager.

City Attorney Suarez: And just to clarify, that would be still subject to Commission approval, of course.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Can we have two motions, one for the approval, the naming of Mr. Parjus and then obviously, naming Commissioner Menendez to do the negotiations.

City Attorney Suarez: Yes. And does the Commission want us to bring back the resolution with the benefits package to this meeting.

Mayor Lago: No. We can do it...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Next meeting.

Commissioner Castro: Next meeting.

City Attorney Suarez: For the next meeting. Okay. So just to clarify a few things. So then, if I'm understanding correctly, the City Manager, his resignation would be effective Monday, January 27th.

Commissioner Castro: Correct.

City Attorney Suarez: You tell us sir.

City Manager Rojas: Whatever is the fastest – January 27th is fine. It doesn't really matter to me.

Commissioner Menendez: Its efficient.

Vice Mayor Anderson: He wants to go out to the mountains. I know. I understand completely.

City Attorney Suarez: And then the appointment of the City Manager of Alberto Parjus would be effective January 28th.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

City Attorney Suarez: With the resolution approving the compensation and benefits to come back at that meeting on January 28th.

Commissioner Castro: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Okay. We have a motion, and you have a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I have members of the public requesting to speak on this item. First speaker, Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: There is never a surprise around here. Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I am moved that the Mayor is concerned that we are dragging somebody out that has such a record when he goes on...I don't know how many other stations to talk about what's going to happen when he and Mrs. Anderson get elected and they bring Peter Iglesias back and they are going to be, what's the word that, I didn't listen, but I got somebody telling me how funny it was that he said that then we are going to investigate all the illegal stuff that the three have done. So be ready because there are going to be investigations, but I have several things. Number one, its not true that we put names in a hat before we select people. We have selected a number of people to work in this city without putting names in a hat by direct appointment. It has happened many times. It will happen again I'm sure, but in order to make this clear, so the residents and the blogs and the cronies and all the people that want to talk about how illegal this is, let me tell you. I have in my hands the agenda for September 25, 2018, and then I have in my hands the minutes from that meeting, and its so funny because in the agenda there was nothing about naming Peter Iglesias after two weeks in the job, the permanent City Manager, two weeks, not three months, not four months, two weeks, two weeks, two weeks, 14 days, he was not on the agenda. How do I know? – because the minutes says non-agenda, as the Mayor's comments, a resolution of the City Commission appointing Peter J. Iglesias as City Manager for the City of Coral Gables. And much to the surprise of some of us that were very close to Mr. Lago, Vince, when he was a Commissioner, when he came home he assured us he didn't have anything to do with that, and we believed it, till I pulled the minutes and it says, motion was made by Vice Mayor Keon, seconded by Commissioner Lago that this matter be adopted by resolution number 2018-255, the motion passed by the following vote, all five of them voted for Peter Iglesias to become the City Manager without any public comments, without anybody having the chance to say anything because you know what, we could have had several things to say about Peter Iglesias. We could have talked about the disaster on Miracle Mile streetscape. We could have talked about the disaster with the Fire and Police Building. We could have talked about the fact that we later solved, that he didn't have any evaluations of the employees

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

under him. So, when he came during his tenure City Manager that Mr. Lago wanted to fire an employee and the employee wanted to go to, what did they call it, the board, and there were no paperwork, there was nothing to show that she had done something wrong, and guess what happened, Mr. Iglesias testified that you know, he wanted to give people another chance and he didn't want to write anything, so he didn't have any proof. You know how it all ended? – by that employee that was illegally really fired because it was not the City Manager's choice because it was Mr. Lago who wanted her out, she ended up getting what the city normally gives something in the figure of \$100,000, give or take a few pennies here and there. Okay. Let me tell you, when Mr. Salerno was the City Manager, guess what, Mr. Lago as the Commissioner, made sure, pushed him to resign. Oh my God. Mr. Lago as a Commissioner pushed him to resign. Can you imagine that. Listen guys, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. I am so sorry, Mayor, that you have been known to say that you are a powerless Mayor. You know what, its your doing, because you could have had five Commissioners on your side working with you if you had not chosen to keep saying that they were illegally elected, that they didn't deserve to be elected, that they didn't know what they were doing, etc., etc., etc. And you know what, the chickens came to roost. It only takes three to tango in Coral Gables and it has happened today – three votes are what makes this city. We do not have a strong City Manager and guess what, we will have a new Commission come April 8th and I hate to say it, the way things are, I'm sure that we will have new people in the city on the Commission. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Hello. So, when our hero, Amos Rojas came in, in the first City Commission meeting, I said that he is the second coming of Jesus Christ for Coral Gables democracy and that's never been more true throughout his tenure. Amos Rojas is the second coming of Jesus Christ for Coral Gables democracy. He's the best City Manager that I've seen, certainly in my lifetime and what it contrasts with – two Commissioners here that are the spokespersons for developer-ocracy, they want developers to run the city; and then there's three, thank God, who want a democracy, and they want the voters to run the city, right. Kirk Menendez has chosen to try to bring democracy to the mayoral seat and I pray to God Almighty that you win, Kirk Menendez to become the new Mayor of Coral Gables. There are probably more things that I could say, but I'll just finish, I'll repeat what I just last said. I pray to God in Heaven that you defeat Vince Lago and are the next Mayor of Coral Gables. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I'm going to Zoom next, its going to be for Elizabeth Green.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Green.

Ms. Green: Hi, good evening, this is Elizabeth Green from 1316 Alhambra Circle. I know many residents are busy dealing with families, maybe work even at this late hour, but I can't help but be extremely frustrated by the fact that you all are going to push through a new City Manager that's

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

meant to represent our city at this late hour when I think most people aren't even aware of it, after you pushed through Mr. Rojas last year quickly with one of the many incessant 3-2 votes, and instead during this transitional period not taking a minute to maybe appoint Mr. Parjus as an interim City Manager, taking the time to go through this transitional period with elections right here at our doorstep, as evident by the many signs that I see popping up in the neighborhood, and maybe doing things differently. Nobody is saying to spend \$68,000 to hire a company to help you do some big nationwide search. We are saying, open it up, give the opportunity for the right candidate to come in and represent us as residents and to take care of the city that we all love. Please do not do the same thing you did last year, yet again, and expect a different result, because that is truly the definition of insanity, which has been what the city has been like to live in for the past year and-a-half. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Alright. We've got a motion, got a second. The first motion is to make Mr. Parjus the permanent City Manager; the second is to have Commissioner Menendez negotiate his package, his compensation package which will take effect on February 28th.

City Clerk Urquia: No sir. January 28th.

Mayor Lago: I'm sorry, January 28th, I apologize. Thank you for my correction, it's been a long day – January 28th.

City Clerk Urquia: So, the first motion I have Commissioner Castro making the motion and Commissioner Menendez seconding.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: No

(Vote: 3-2)

City Clerk Urquia: I do not have a motion on the second.

Mayor Lago: Somebody make a motion.

*City Commission Meeting
January 14, 2025*

Commissioner Castro: I made the motion.

Mayor Lago: For the second one, for the second one.

Commissioner Castro: I moved it.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay. Is there a second.

Mayor Lago: The Clerk said he didn't know there was a motion, that's why I'm asking.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll second.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: No

Mayor Lago: No

(Vote: 3-2)

Mayor Lago: God speed. Congratulations. Alright, meeting is over.