

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
February 24, 2026
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton
Acting Development Service Director, Doug Ramirez

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item F-1 [Start: 10:42 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission directing City staff to deny the issuance of building permits to contractors with expired permits within the city consistent with applicable law. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Thank you. F-1.

City Attorney Suarez: F-1 is a resolution of the City Commission directing city staff to deny the issuance of building permits to contractors with expired permits within the city consistent with applicable law.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. It's my understanding that the Building Department is already doing this, but this resolution makes clear

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that in accordance with applicable Florida law and the building officials' authority, permits for contractors with expired permits in the city will be denied.

Mayor Lago: So let me clarify a little bit as a sponsor of the item. Let me clarify our City Attorney. The city was not doing this, correct, Mr. Manager?

City Manager Iglesias: Yes, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I brought this to the attention of the Manager, and we were one of the few cities that allowed, for example, let me give you an example. The gentleman that was just here with us before, the developer that built his home, MG, finished the home, sells him the home, but they still have an open permit, okay? If that permit is not closed, eventually that permit will lapse, correct? And what I will do, what I will do, what I recommend is what other cities, for example, in the City of Miami, require. That the general contractor, again, I'm going against my own industry once again, second time in this Commission meeting, the general contractor will not be allowed to pull another permit in the City of Coral Gables unless they rectify this gentleman's open permit in his property. That is a standard process in the City of Miami and I had it inflicted on me by our now City Manager, and he was correct, by the way. It's accountability. You should not be able to pull a permit in the City of Coral Gables unless you have addressed open and expired permits. Let me give you an example. Surami Cabrera, who was the Building Official here, who did an amazing job, an amazing job, and now she's working in the City of South Miami. We're very fortunate to have her. She came here, and my understanding, Mr. Ramirez, there were thousands of open or expired permits, correct? Did you bring us that? Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: 7,000.

Mayor Lago: 7,000 open expired permits. Through the hard work of Mr. Ramirez and Ms. Cabrera and the team, you were able to bring it down to how many? It took years, but you were bringing it down to a few dozen?

Acting Development Service Director: We're down to single and double digits only.

Mayor Lago: We could have avoided all this. We could have avoided all this. How? By not allowing my industry, again, I'm going against my own industry, to pull a permit unless they've resolved existing permit issues that they may have with an expired permit. This is accountability. This is an accountability measure that will protect the residents and the business community to ensure that no one is taken advantage of and left in the lurch with unfinished work, shoddy work, or things that, again, result in a permit not being completed. Because a lot of these issues deal with

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fire alarms, for example. Fire alarms are always very difficult, but if you let that lapse over a long period of time, it just becomes more and more clouded, and it becomes more and more of a conundrum to address. So, this is, again, contractors, engineers, architects, developers are not going to be happy about this because this stops projects. This doesn't move progress. But in reference to our residents, this is about accountability. And in reference to our staff, our staff should not be working on these projects. This bogs staff down to have to address 7,000 expired permits. You could be working on the needs of the residents today, but what you find yourself is basically having a resident come to you and say, hey, look, I have an expired permit. What do I do? Well, you contact the general contractor, and they have 10 other permits already active in the City of Coral Gables. Watch how quickly they resolve that expired permit when you don't allow them to pull another permit. Real quick. So, I'm very proud to bring this forward, even if it is against my own industry. This is accountability and transparency measures that the residents deserve.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: I've spoken about this before. When my wife and I first bought our home, we got married. We bought a home in the City of Coral Gables, and our closing was delayed because of an open permit. And the property owners believed it had been closed. The contractor had told them the permit had been closed. When we started doing our due diligence to close on the property, the driveway permit had never been closed. They had to start backtracking. This was the days of paper. So, they had to go find the original plans, have a final inspection done on the driveway, and it delayed our closing 30 days. So, at an expense to them. The contractor was nowhere to be found. He would never answer their calls. But when it comes to the city, they have no choice but to answer to the city. So, I applaud this. I think this is something that's really going to be beneficial to our residents to ensure that they don't have to deal with any unforeseen circumstances in the future, knowing that they go through a construction process, they pay a final check to their contractor, and their project has been completed.

Mayor Lago: So, I'm bringing this forward today. One final point is because I had several residents who came to me with this issue. And I brought it to the Manager. The Manager said we're going to implement this immediately with staff. About a month ago, we started doing it about a month ago. But I wanted to codify it to ensure that this becomes law. Because this is the type of legislation that, again, addresses issues and provides real transparency and really addresses residents and businesses here in the City. If there's anything else, I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447, Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, 305-323-2154. I think this item is wonderful. I support it. But I would like something else to be addressed. I had the pleasure to go on the tour of the kitchens the other day. And let me tell you, lots and lots of those properties had remodels, changes, new construction. And somebody's dropping the ball. Because I'm going to tell you, it was obvious that some of the owners did not want. When you talked about permits, they talked about something else. We have an issue with a lot of things going on. And I suggest somebody look at that booklet that they passed out. And you will see how many were done without permits.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

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

Mayor Lago: All right. We have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.