

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-9**  
**September 25, 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)**

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Agenda Item F-9 [Start: 2:21 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission directing the raising of the Flag of the State of Israel at City Hall on October 7, 2025, in mourning and honor of the victims of the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving on to the last item on the agenda. Mr. Clerk, am I correct?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: F-9.

City Attorney Suarez: F-9 is a resolution of the City Commission directing the raising of the flag of the State of Israel at City Hall on October 7, 2025, in mourning and honor of the victims of the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack on Israel.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. We had a few individuals who graced us this morning to voice their concerns and their guidance in regard to F-9. I heard a few individuals who, I'll take it that maybe they didn't hear what I said before at the end of the Commission meeting. I was putting the item exactly on the way it was because we came to no resolution. I deferred the item in an effort,

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and I wish I would have done the homework and asked the Clerk to put the video up so that we could come together and find a solution. We are not allowed to talk to each other. It's a violation of the Sunshine Law. So, what I said, from what I remember, Mr. Clerk, I don't know if you have the meeting minutes there for this last item. I said, think about opportunities, bring them back, and we have more than enough time before October 7 as a result of the next Commission meeting on the 25th. I'm going to be clear. If it was up to me, and it was only me voting on this issue, I would raise the flag. This is not about marginalizing any community. I respect the community. I got many phone calls from members of the Jewish community, members of the Catholic faith who did not see it as anything that was anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, anti-Muslim. Again, there are different opinions. But I also heard from people that they were scared, and they were nervous about writing an email in opposition or in favor of what I was saying. Both people told me that on both sides of the issue. Look, Vince, I'm against raising the flag. I don't write an email because I just don't feel nervous putting it on the public record. It happened on both sides of the issue. But if I don't have the votes to do that, I still think that we should do something. One of the things that I talked to Lora in my office and Nicole was about an interfaith event, which we should have no matter what. I'd like to bring in the priest from the Santa Teresita, the Father Vigo, which is my priest at St. Augustine, Granada Presbyterian, bring in the Rabbis from UM, I think there's four or five Rabbis here in the City of Coral Gables, Temple Judea, Coral Gables Shabbat, bring everyone together. And if I forget anybody, I apologize. Members of the Muslim community, bring everyone together and we can have an interfaith event, but I think we can still do something besides that. If you don't want to raise the flag and you're in opposition to raising the flag, I don't have the votes. We talked about lighting City Hall blue and white in support. Again, it's not about marginalizing any community, but there has to be a moment where we feel comfortable doing something. So, like I left the last meeting, I bring it back to my colleagues and I'm more than willing to negotiate on this issue because at the end of the day, it's about building community. Just like when I received emails, not emails, excuse me, phone calls in favor of what we've done for other communities. Some people are in favor; some people are not in favor. But at the end of the day, there was never, like I said before, any intent to marginalize any community. Anyone? Madam Vice Mayor, by the way, I reviewed your documents over lunch. Thank you for that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, Mayor, I thank you for putting this item on because it does cause time to do a type of research and deep reflection about not just October 7th, but many other events that have happened throughout the centuries and throughout our lives. There's been movies, there's been music, as I shared with one member of the community, a song, Let There Be Peace on Earth and Let It Begin With Me. It doesn't have the origin you think it is. And that's one thing I learned when doing the background research on this thing. So, trying to find something that fits the purpose of promoting peace and remembering victims of war, I tasked our Commission aide with coming up with some banners because I was driving towards the City Hall and I saw a banner. That's one idea. Certainly, an interfaith gathering would be very welcome. And I also shared with you all

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some information about victims in general because people get the impression that, you know, it's just if you raise the flag for Israel, you're demarginalizing one other community. But the reality is the number of victims from other countries in the October 7th attack were a total of, you know, 43 countries plus residents of Israel. Lots of different people were present. Same thing happened on 9-11. You know, we had 58 different, you know, from 58 different countries, people were there, all victims. You know, and no one signed up for it. And I had some, and I mentioned this last time, deep reflections when I was young about the fact that part of my nationality is German, that no one in the United States of German descent signed up for what Hitler did in the world in World War II. Fortunately, Germans weren't put into concentration camps. The Japanese had different experience. So, I do think that we need to highlight victims and pray for world peace. I know it's just words, but I think it's to not marginalize anyone in our community or make them, not that we are, but not make them feel like they're marginalized because there's unintended consequences of things sometimes when you try to do something symbolic for a group to remember October 7th that can happen. So, if you like the banner idea, there's four different options here. We'd have to correct a typo on one of them. I'm going to leave it to you all. I'm not beholden to doing a banner. It's just an idea. Lighting City Hall is beautiful too. I'm not sure everyone historically would understand why we're lighting City Hall. So, you know, this is something we can also think about when, you know, Pearl Harbor Day comes and other days of significance in our city to help recognize and remind people that these events come and it really does have to begin with us to promote peace.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Vice Mayor. Commissioner?

Commissioner Fernandez: I actually like this idea. Like the Mayor, I probably would be the first one out there supporting raising the flag, but I am not immune to the heartache that has caused for some members of our community. And I think that the Vice Mayor is 100 percent correct. Peace has to begin with us. And there are ways to honor, and I think even raising the flag, a lot of people wouldn't see it. Placing a banner is something that people will see. I had not seen those banners until I drove past City Hall a couple of days ago, and it immediately caught my attention because it's something that's out of place. It's different. It's not something that you're used to seeing. And I actually like option number three from the ones that you put out there. I just like the globe with the dove of number two better. But I think it's simple. It's not overly worded, and it's a clear and concise message. May peace prevail, honoring those who lost their lives. And I think it definitely... Okay, there you go. You can see it out there. Perfect. It sends the message that we're trying to send, which is a uniting message. It's a message that everybody can get behind. I think that the idea of a vigil, I talked about it last Commission meeting as well. I think that's something that we should also try to do.

Mayor Lago: You mentioned also lighting. You had mentioned that as a possibility.

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Commissioner Fernandez: I talked about lighting City Hall as well. We've done that numerous times. I think we did it with Ukraine at one point, if I remember correctly. We've done it on other commemorating other dates as well. One thing, Mr. Manager, actually, now that we're on that topic, I had asked in the past, I don't think it ever got done, maybe have a schedule online so that people know what City Hall is being lit for, because a lot of times you're driving by and you really don't know why City Hall is lit a particular color. But maybe we can have an online calendar where people can see why it's being lit that color. And people are going to generally go and look. But I think if you tie in the banners, which can be seen daytime, with lighting that can be seen at nighttime, it really does something special for that day. And perhaps we can even just do it without the date so that we can use the same banner, like you were saying on other memorial holidays that we should be putting it up. 9-11, maybe Pearl Harbor Day, on those days that we're also remembering those innocents who have lost their lives. Just food for thought.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, it is. And I tasked our Senior Commission Aide, Gabby, with doing some of the creativity. It was a lot more wordy than this and I said less is more. So, I appreciate your contribution and thoughts on this. I'd like to hear from everybody else. The one with the dove in the middle of the globe, looking at things from a distance graphically when it's on a building, I think would be more clear that it's a dove there as opposed to when you look at a giant banner with two doves in the background here. So, your idea that a dove in the middle of the globe is a nice idea. And just saying, in remembrance, may peace prevail, honoring those who lost their lives. Okay.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: So, a little over two weeks ago, I started receiving calls, maybe at 7 in the morning. And I'm sorry, but I called the City Manager right away because I thought this was something of very large importance. During last Commission meeting, I tried to refrain myself from commenting because I really wanted to be sensitive to both parties. And I just went ahead, and I voted to defer because I thought that was the best place to take at that moment. However, on July 1st, I did bring up a resolution basically stating that I think we need to respect the United States flag. And in my opinion, that is the only flag we need to be flying over City Hall. I think we need to stand strong with honor, respect, pride, patriotism. And I think it shows a symbol of unity at the end of the day. My resolution wasn't approved. I think it would have been great. I still stand very strong. There should not be any other flag but the United States flag here in City Hall. The United States is the best country in the world. And we should feel as Americans honored, pride, and respect for our flag. Nor would I accept to fly a flag of my own country. I think that's disrespect to our country. We live here for a reason. This is the best country in the world, and I think that's

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the only flag we should be flying. A last note here is also as Commissioners, we represent every single resident, whether they're a minority or whether they aren't. So, I do not feel comfortable raising a flag from any country because we're here to represent every single resident. And I think what we need to display here is unity. This Commission at many times is very divided, but we should not be dividing our residents, and we should not be dividing our community. And that's basically where I stand. I will support any other method that is not bringing up another flag, whether it's this situation, an Israeli flag or whatever flag. I don't think it's appropriate. That is it. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. Just in case there's some confusion.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, I think there is.

Vice Mayor Anderson: This is not for a flag. This is a banner.

Commissioner Castro: I support this.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Oh, okay. I didn't know.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Commissioner, do you have anything else you'd like to add or no?

Commissioner Lara: Briefly. I think everybody's pretty much said everything that needs to be said. I mean, other than I'll say, I really applaud this Commission for the way, and you in particular, Mr. Mayor, because when I expressed my views last meeting, there was, because I'm not in support of raising, it's not that I'm anything other, and I've said it before, I'm saying again, I'm perhaps the staunchest supporter of the State of Israel. But that's not what matters because as a Commissioner, we're here to represent everyone. And I do believe it's an awfully conflicted subject and a very divisive moment if we were to raise a flag, which is undoubtedly a political symbol versus something else that could be in memorial or in remembrance or a sign of hope for those who are still hostages after the October 7th events. And when I expressed my views, everybody, it took a moment to say, let's reflect and let's think about it again. And in particular, Mayor, you said, you don't want a split vote, and you want unity from all of us here. So, I applaud you for taking leadership on that point. And here we are again. So, no one's talking about raising a flag. I understand that when you started, you needed to clarify that because it's quite confusing when the resolution reads exactly the same way it did last time. But that's kind of to my point, right? Even if the flag were raised with a crystal-clear resolution, the optics could be taken the wrong way, just like this resolution, as identified the way it was, was taken the wrong way by some people. So, I'm focusing now on the suggestions that the Vice Mayor has raised with respect to these really beautiful options for a banner. I, in particular, just for whoever cares, you know, I like number three with just a slight typo. It says in it just we got to spell remembrance correct on that, but that's like you did this in a hurry. But that one's the one I think probably represent best. There's two sides, at least to every issue, maybe more. You have two doves there. The prevailing point is that peace

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needs to prevail in honoring those that lost their lives. I think it sums up the sentiment beautifully, and it's inclusive, which is what I think we always need to have as the banner leading the way for us because we represent one Coral Gables. And, you know, there's a lot out there that causes division and conflict, despite our best efforts. So, pivoting the way we have to avoid inserting any there, I think was the right move. So, I'm supportive of that.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. And if you notice, the Commission, there's four comments and there's one Instagram post. And the key here is, is not to continue to poke in the eye and poke in the eye for the next comment, which is a cut and paste opportunity, as is on the gram constantly. But thank God our residents see past that. As you said so eloquently, we finished the last meeting with a deferral of the item with the objective of finding something that pays the proper respect. As I said, I still stand by my position, but I'm flexible in an effort to finish something and get something done appropriately. I think we should do the banner; we should have the interfaith event. And I'm willing to light the city, City Hall, if you're interested in doing that, and do it blue and white. It's a beautiful gesture. And I would like to make the motion on that with those three items, if you would indulge me on that.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, we have a motion and a second. Do we have any further public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect. We'll close public comment.

Commissioner Fernandez: And just to be clear, banner three?

Mayor Lago: How about even better? Whatever banner is fine with me. What do you say? Banner three is fine.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think the majority wants banner three. So, I'm not going to weigh in on it, other than the typo.

Mayor Lago: Banner three is fine.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And thank you, Gabriela Torres, for creating these in a rushed fashion to be able to give us something to talk about and ponder. She did a beautiful job.

Mayor Lago: Banner three it is.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

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Commissioner Lara: Just a quick question. So, I don't know about the logistics, but like, when are we contemplating putting it up and for how long?

Mayor Lago: What do you think, 48 hours? Appropriate? A week?

Commissioner Fernandez: It's going to take staff some time to put it up and take it down anyways.

Vice Mayor Anderson: The day before or day after.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, day before or day after is fine for me. I have no problem with it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Three days.

Commissioner Lara: As amended, then, based on what you're saying.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Attorney Suarez: And if just Mayor, I don't know if the Manager needs any further direction regarding the interfaith events.

Mayor Lago: Well, I was talking to, this is something that I mentioned at the last Commission meeting, and I was talking to Lora and Nicole in my office. I actually had a meeting with the Manager, just very briefly, we're just talking, just kind of over the top. Let's invite every religious organization in the city. Everyone. You know, everyone who is engaged here in the city in one form or another invite them to join us. We can allow them to have maybe, you know, a few moments to speak. Maybe we can offer some coffee, some light bites or something. I don't have an issue sponsoring it if I have to, personally. So, I want everybody to feel welcome and it's an opportunity. I would request that we have security, as always, like we had today here. I think it's important. I want people to feel comfortable. But I think it's just to be a simple, something simple. Kind of what we do for other events here in the city. Okay. So, we have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Fernandez: As far as the location outside City Hall, right here in front, where the banners are going to be? We'll do the menorah, right? When we do the menorah? When we do like the Christmas tree lighting, kind of that area?

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

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(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.