

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Items E-7 & F-5
July 1, 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 (Absent)

Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Claudia Miro

Agenda Items E-7 and F-5 [12:41 p.m.]

E-7: An Ordinance of the City Commission repealing Ordinance No. 2025-08, which moved the date of the City's Elections from April of odd-numbered years to November of even-numbered years; providing for severability, repealer, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

F-5: Discussion concerning the Florida Attorney General's recent legal opinion and the Governor's stated position that municipalities cannot move or cancel elections, or extend terms in office, without first obtaining voter approval. (Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

Mayor Lago: We'll move onto E-7, and we'll also hear F-5, Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Suarez: E-7 is an Ordinance of the City Commission repealing Ordinance No. 2025-08, which moved the date of the City's Elections from April of odd-numbered years to November

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of even-numbered years; providing for severability, repealer, codification, and providing for an effective date. And then F-5 Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am.

City Attorney Suarez: F-5 is the discussion item.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you for acknowledging me. This item is not really only about changing the elections back to April. This Commission has been very forceful saying that, you know, because of the election everybody wants a November election, and I'm not going to oppose that, but the correct thing to do here – so this legislation is not about changing elections back to April, this election is about letting the people vote and let's put it on the ballot to have people go ahead and vote on this. If they want November, let them vote, not an issue, and if everybody wants November, I will be more than happy to go ahead and support that decision. Number one, I think it's unethical and unconstitutional for us as a body to decide if we want how long we are going to be in office; number one, we were not the ones who put us in office, it was the voters, it was our residents. So, for us to come up here without consent or without voter approval, without going to a referendum and make that decision, it's very wrong, very, very wrong. It is the residents that decide how long we are going to serve a term, not the politicians. Besides the fact, it's against the law. I prepared a presentation for residents out there that do not understand this process so that they could better understand it. When I'm done, who is going to be clicking the slides. Do I need the little remote control. Okay.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you. So once again, I'm going to reiterate this legislation has nothing to do with choosing between April and November. This has to do with having voters able to approve this. Letting them decide if this is what they want. Who decides our elections. Why residents, not politicians, must have the final say. Your right to decide was taken away, on May 20, 2025, the Coral Gables Commission voted to move your city elections from April 2027 to November 2026. This decision shortens the elected officials' terms about five months, ending their service sooner than you have voted for. Most importantly, you, the voters who were not given a choice. The Commission acted without asking your permission even though the law requires your vote. There is a ballot question that this body approved. That ballot question is not asking you if you want a November or April election. That ballot question is affirming the fact that we already did it and it's making sure that no other Commission can go ahead and undo that action unless it goes for a referendum. That's hypocrisy at its finest. Our Attorney General's opinion highlighted. I went ahead and I attached the Attorney General's opinion to City of Miami, and I highlighted the

first paragraph where it gives them direction. The first paragraph says, I caution the action contemplated by the City of Miami in this legal opinion to move the date of its municipal elections or to change the terms of office for elected officials without a vote of the electors violates the County Charter and the provisions of the Constitution. This state will not tolerate such an unconstitutional deviation. If we could read between the lines, this also applies for us. City of Miami is one of the municipalities for the county and so is the City of Coral Gables. Key points for residents – Moving election dates requires vote of the people. The Attorney General’s statement makes clear that state will act if municipalities bypass voters. The warning applies to any city in Miami-Dade County, including Coral Gables, this body, this city. Attorney General’s opinion highlighted. Now, this is the second page, and I went ahead, and I just highlighted not to go through the whole opinion. According to the terms of the County Charter, control the method for changing election dates and the terms of office for elected officials. As noted above, the County Charter requires a vote of the electors to make sure you change, to make sure the changes you are contemplating what this means at bottom is that no statute authorizes or could authorize the proposed ordinance, which could amend provisions of the municipal charter pertaining to election dates and terms of office without the vote of the people. Once again, this is like he’s talking directly to us. The second two lines, you should immediately cease the process of enacting this ordinance to move the date of municipal elections and change the terms of office of elected officials. If you nevertheless move forward with the proposed ordinance, my office reserves the right to consider all available actions to prevent this violation of law from occurring. Legal implications and risks. So, I went ahead, and I copied a statement, and I also did speak to Mayor Pinellas over the phone, but I went ahead, and I copied the statement from NBC News. This is a quote from Mayor Alex Pinellas. The quote is, “The very clear risk right now for any official who proceeds in voting in favor of this proposal to delay the election is suspension from office and that may be just enough to prevent this from passing.” My intent behind what I’m doing right now is really to help this Commission retract and put this on the ballot. They want a November election – okay, let’s have a November election, but let the people vote. I feel like I’m trying to throw a lifeline to some of my colleagues up here. It’s really going to be up to you if you decide to vote for this item or not. Mayor, I’m trying to help you, even though you keep on smiling next to me. If you don’t want me to help you, that’s perfectly fine, that’s going to be on you. What the law says about your rights. The Miami-Dade Charter and the Florida Constitution guarantee your right to vote on any changes to municipal election dates, whether extends, shortens terms, changing an election date directly affects the officials you elected, and the law requires your approval first. Skipping a referendum violates your right to decide and sets a dangerous precedent where politicians, not residents, control election timing, and I want that to sink in just a tiny bit, because this is a very big deal. If this body just through an ordinance is going to decide how long they are going to stay in office, or how long not, that is horrific. That is not democracy and if we are changing to November, are we now fighting because it’s more democratic that we are going to get higher voter approval, but then

at the same time, you are not going to let residents vote on this and you are going to make the decision on your own. That to me sounds very unethical, unconstitutional, and...from this body. What this means for you. The decision to take away your right to approve or reject a major change to your local government. Without voter approval the new election date violates the law, risk lawsuits and undermines trust in your city government. Your right to vote on election timing is a cornerstone of democracy and it was bypassed. What I have done so far to defend your rights. Number one, I voted no on an ordinance that moved the election dates without your approval; requested a formal legal opinion from the Florida General Attorney when the City Attorney did not seek for guidance; shared the Attorney General City of Miami opinion with residents so you know your rights and what the law requires; draft legislation to repeal the ordinance which is this right here, this is the item we are hearing; to return election date to April 2027, unless you, the voters chose otherwise in a referendum. So, I just want to make it clear one more time, this is not about choosing April or November. This is about letting the people vote. This is about not taking their right to be able to vote for how long they want Commissioners or this body to be in office. I made it clear, if you, the residents, want November elections, you can have them, but only if you vote to approve this change as the law requires. And the last one is, I kept you informed through newsletters, social media, and meetings, because you deserve transparency on decisions affecting your vote. And that was my last slide. If you want to go ahead and take it off. I want to once again reiterate that this is me throwing a lifeline to some of the Commissioners here, it's me trying to help you guys. I really don't want us going against the state. I don't want us going against what the Attorney General is saying. I know that some Commissioners, or the Mayor is going to come up here saying that there was all the legal bounding behind it. I also asked the City Attorney from Coral Gables to go ahead and draft an opinion with three questions that I asked her. I think if legal battles come in here and somebody says that this completely legal, I'll go ahead and show that opinion and I'll have a rebuttal for it. If you guys do decide not to vote on changing this election back to April, there would be legal implications or challenges from the state. I don't think that is a position that we want to take this moment, because if we want to get this done, it's very easy, just let's put it on the ballot, let's make it fair and transparent. It's not a big deal. If you are sure that people are going to vote for November, what is the issue with putting it on the ballot. Now, if we decide to have the state challenge us, I just want to put on the record that we spent \$244,000 in banning plastic bags and straws, that's how much we spent. Then we also spent \$185,000 in legal fees trying to defend the Wawa situation. Now, if the whole purpose of changing the elections to November to save \$200,000, I think you need to think again if this is the road that you want to take, because it really contradicts the fact of saving money. I'm not an attorney. I'm not going to go ahead and engage in a legal battle or terminology with the City Attorney, but it's not my doing. My doing here is to defend the residents and their rights and that's what I'm intending to do. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Is somebody on, Mr. Clerk.

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City Clerk Urquia: I'll check, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I'm sorry.

City Clerk Urquia: I'm about to check. I think somebody just pressed the wrong.

Mayor Lago: Is there any public comment before we take it to the rest of the Commission.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker, Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Here we go again. Daddy knows best. We know what's best. We don't care what the people want or do not want. We don't even want to hear because there was a petition going around and you know what, they could never get enough signatures to put it through, but yet, we know it's best to change it, and you know what, I'm glad that Ms. Castro brought up the financial side. We have spent lots of money in this city paying outside counsel to defend things that we knew couldn't be defended, because we wanted it, and we had a temper tantrum and we had to have it, and guess what, at the end, the outside counsel made a lot of money. We, the residents, we the taxpayers lost a lot of money and guess what, we have plastic bags in Publix; Wawa was not built, bottom line, stop, do the right thing. I think you should put it up for election. Ask the people what they want. Hopefully, you believe that they will vote your way, it will go through, no issues whatsoever. Obviously, you are not so sure that it will go through when you want to put it through before they talk. That is the issue. If you know that the people want it, give them the right to vote. You have ways of influencing them; you can get on the radio, the TV, the media, the blogs, Aesop, whatever you want, convincing them that it's good to change, put it to a vote and get your way, but do it the right way.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Claudia Miro.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Ms. Miro: Good afternoon, Mayor and Commissioners. I just felt compelled to come up here and speak.

City Clerk Urquia: Ma'am. Please state your name and address.

Ms. Miro: Yes, thank you. Claudia Miro, residing at 343 Minorca Avenue, Coral Gables. Thank you. I felt compelled to speak as I was saying, because I understand the issue. I've been following

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the issue. I don't think, nor do I like ever when Coral Gables is compared to anything that the City of Miami does. I think that it's a different issue, first of all, because in our case it shortens the term and in the case of the City of Miami, you are lengthening the term for a year, which is not what the voters voted for. In this case, I think that you are given a chance to say, hey, you are taking the temperature of the residents and asking them, hey, do you really want to keep these Commissioners here. You could have kept them for four more months, but hey, you are taking the temperature, and I think that that's what the fear is. The fear is not, are you afraid to put it on the ballot because you don't have the votes. I think this last election has shown that the votes are there, and again, what really bothered me and I'm very straightforward is for you to say in the presentation, this is the height of hypocrisy, when in this very Commission we talked about putting salaries for the Commission and putting it to an election and if hey, we all agree, I agree that the salaries needed to be higher, but let the public decide what that salary need to be, give it to the residents we said. The lifelines were thrown, you know, and they weren't given and again, clearly with this election, we saw that people were highly upset that it didn't go back. So for us to say hey, now let's put the people first and let's do this because the reality is there's an election that's going to shorten the term of both Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Fernandez or absentee Commissioner Fernandez, because he's not here, and I also want to say, I'm one to not believe everything that Political Cortadito puts on there or Aesop's Gables puts on there. I like to ask both sides and I would have been happy to see Commissioner Fernandez here so that we could ask him questions or at least have him say, because I think it's important, especially in this political climate that we've been living here in the city for several years, you have to show your face no matter what the situation is, no matter how hard it is. Every one of you on here has been the victim of one newspaper or another newspaper, one rumor or another rumor, and you have been here to show your face as difficult and as difficult as this last campaign was and all the videos and the damning things that were said, people show your face. You need to show your face and again, if we're going to say one thing, we need to say – we can't speak of just one side. We have to speak out of both sides. We have to take and say hey, if this is right and we needed to take this vote to the people now, then it was right to take it then and take responsibility and say, you know what, in the past I should have done this, I didn't do it, I should do that moving forward or now I see the light, but because you don't say that it makes it seem like it's very convenient and I just want to say that I am for moving the elections to November and I'll tell you, previously I wasn't. Previously, I wasn't for moving elections to November. I thought, you know, we need to do this, but I do believe that the majority of people need to come out and speak. And so, I hope that you continue to move forward and that whatever comes what may, the state, whoever, come what may, I don't think it's going to be the same situation. Those comments by the AG were made for the City of Miami not for the City of Coral Gables. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

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

Mayor Lago: We'll close public comment. Do we have any other comments from the Commission.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Can I hear from the rest of the Commission. We heard from you during the presentation. Yes, Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Briefly. There were three opportunities that the prior Commission had to put it on the ballot prior to April. You had the August Election, in which we took up an annexation issue and it was suggested and requested that the November Election issue be put on the ballot then. You chose not to. You had November Elections that it could have been put on the ballot at a minimal cost to the city. We already had other items on the ballot in August, so it would have been zero cost to the city and again, you had April Elections, so it would have been at no cost to the city. There are very many distinctions here that you failed to note. One of the number one issues consistent that distinguished the candidates running for election, the ones that won and are sitting up here today, as well as Ms. Miro, was that we were removing the elections to November. For the individuals that were confused and didn't know what the distinction was between Candidate Lara and Candidate Wells, I asked people their opinion on certain issues. How do you feel about November elections or April elections? The box was checked in favor of November elections. How do you feel about the salary choice? There it was a little more nuanced. Well, I think they deserve to earn more, but the way it was done was improper. A lot about the way things were done by this prior Commission was improper. So, to say that it's hypocrisy for us to put on the ballot for the residents to choose to affirm that our choice to move it to November after we've been elected based upon the fact that we chose to move elections to November, the people have spoken. The percentages are in. The votes are in. It is clear that that was the choice. They chose Mr. Lara because he was willing to move the elections to November. They did not choose Mr. Wells, because he was not willing to move the elections to November. That was the most black and white clear issue that we had on the ballot. There's more I could say, but I'll pass it on to my colleagues.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, do you have anything to say?

Commissioner Lara: I'll just be brief you know. I think that we've been through this in one of the most contentious and well-attended by Coral Gables standards election in 2024, I'm sorry, in 2025, this past April. As the Vice Mayor just stated, there are few black and white issues that distinguish me and my opponent, Mr. Well, in this election and the previous election included the Vice Mayor's previous vote for moving the elections to November, as well as the Mayor. In other words, it feels to me, I'm not going to use the word hypocritical, but it's still very convenient to say that now it's important to adhere to what it feels like in your view, to be the will of the people, or the

adherence to law, or taking the road more ethical than not, but the singular issues that I ran on and spoke with the residents at every single door that I knocked on was led by the issue of moving the elections to November. Both my very strong opinion on the matter and the very clear position that I heard from the residents when I spoke with them supportive of that point, right. You know, the whole thing about having a Charter Review Committee convened two years earlier than it typically would be seemed to me at the time as a candidate pretty transparent what the goal behind that was as it pertained to the November elections. But in the end, right, when I hear the statement that we've done this for 100 years and why change it now would almost undermine why you even would have a Charter Review Committee because if you don't look at what we've been doing for a long time and consider that maybe there's a better way to go, or that it reflects the will of the people that you would make the change, you should make the change. In any event, I was elected, I believe, because my views on these particular issues reflected not just the majority, but a substantial majority of the voters. In the first election I had a sizable lead going into what was the Run-Off where I increased the final percentage. The issues were focused, the issues were clearer, and it remained the leading issue of whether to move the elections to November. These were also the positions taken by the reelected Vice Mayor and the reelected Mayor. So, it is clear to me that we have the legal authority to do what we're doing. Our City Attorney has also confirmed that we have the legal authority to do this. It is also representative of the will of the people who voted us into office to carry out exactly what we promised we would do. For me to take any other position would be a betrayal of the trust that was reposed to me by the people, the residents of the City of Coral Gables, who voted me into office. I'm glad that the Vice Mayor brought back for historical context how this previous makeup of the Commission had voted on these issues, how they passed an opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to put it to the voters and then now are claiming otherwise when it is for them is convenient. I'll hold comment any further.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Commissioner, you have additional comments you'd like to add.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. Thank you. I want to make it clear this body by making this vote, it's not going against me. You are going against the Attorney General's opinion. You're going against the Governor. You are going against the state, and I think it was very clear and there were very direct consequences and warnings by making this move. So, I don't take this personal. This is something – it was a wrong that was trying to make right and I'm not trying to say April is a better day or November is a better day. That's not the question. So, for us to go ahead and bring that up, I think right now it's irrelevant, right now it's about following the law, right now if we want a November election, let the people vote. Moving elections to November because you campaigned on it is understandable, but it's irrelevant at this point. If it's not legal – you can't promise something that is not legal even if you campaigned on it, as if you campaigned to lower taxes and you find it's fiscally irresponsible to do it, you just can't do it. Just because you campaigned on it, doesn't mean it's in the best interest of the city at this point. When my colleagues here say the

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people have spoken, how have they spoken. Let them speak. Let them vote, that's how the people are going to speak, not just because they elected me and I was for this, this is the sentiment of the public. No. The sentiment of the public is when we ask a question in a ballot and we put it up for referendum, that's when you let the people speak, that's when the people are going to speak. That's what's really in question. Billy, can you please put up the City Attorney's legal opinion.

City Clerk Urquia: I haven't received it yet ma'am.

Mayor Lago: I think we all got a copy of the legal opinion. It's a public record.

Commissioner Castro: I wanted to go ahead and put it up there, because there are some things that the City Attorney missed and I know that there are two attorneys here, well three, but there are two attorneys' here as Commissioners and I think it's important that I bring this up.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Briefly. I'm a little confused Commissioner, but you said at the beginning of your presentation, you are not an attorney, correct.

Commissioner Castro: Correct.

Commissioner Lara: You are not going to debate the law, correct.

Commissioner Castro: Correct.

Commissioner Lara: Okay. But it sounds like that's what you want to do by putting up a legal opinion, but you are not going to speak to it because you are not a lawyer or get into the legalities of it. I don't see how that's prudent. You mentioned earlier though that we are going against what the Attorney General says in a letter that he wrote to the City of Miami. You understand, I wasn't elected by the Attorney General. I don't answer to the Attorney General. The Attorney General gives an opinion. I was elected by the residents of Coral Gables, that is who I represent and that's who I stand up for and the will of the people in the vote that I've given in the vote that they gave me reflect the same. That's what I'm here to do, but I'm not here to cowtail to what an opinion may come from an individual who is giving nothing more than an opinion, not an order. The Governor hasn't given me or any of us on this dais an order. They are giving one opinion to a different body, and I have and remain a practicing attorney and have been so for over 30 years and I have seen many opinions given, sometimes they're right, and sometimes they're wrong, and it depends on the reviewing body almost all the time. So, I will not get into the legalities of something that you admit you are not qualified to speak on, but I appreciate that you gave us your view on it. I don't think it's prudent for you to, though however, in my view, invite scrutiny, invite challenge,

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invite attention, almost it appears to me that you are seeking intervention from the Attorney General of the State of Florida to create the very litigation or legal challenge that you are saying right now we should be trying to avoid. I could be wrong, many times I am. My gut tells me something different though. So, I hope my points have been clear to you. We have legal grounds to support the ordinance that we already passed. I understand there are different viewpoints, and I understand that it isn't what you have voted for in the past, and I understand that despite you saying that you do not have a view one way or another with what you are proposing, I do believe that you are quite against a November election, certainly everything that you've ever said and done on the subject points to that. So, we should put the cards on the table. You are doing what you are doing to undo this, because your endgame is to not have a November election, not because you are worried about any other of the issues that you bring up. Should that be the case, you would not be writing letters to the Attorney General asking for an opinion on a matter that our City Attorney has already said is legal.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think this item and there has been no motion is dead and with that I have another matter I'd like to bring up.

Mayor Lago: Before we get into that, I'll like to address one item, Madam Vice Mayor, I'd like to just make my comments on the record.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Sure.

Mayor Lago: You have anything else you wanted to add, or you're done.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I'd like to speak. I haven't spoken once on this issue.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. I mean I think that's following Robert's Rules, right. That's great.

Mayor Lago: What do you mean I'm following Robert's Rules. I'm not understanding.

Commissioner Castro: Let me go ahead and continue. Billy were you able to go ahead and put up the opinion.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes ma'am.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. I requested an opinion from the Attorney General directly for the City of Coral Gables that hasn't been given as of yet. I'm pretty sure we will be getting it soon and

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when that happens, I'll go ahead, well I think the City Attorney can go ahead and circle that around. Can you put it on the screen.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. This is a legal opinion I asked for from the City Attorney and I'm only going to state what the Attorney General stated, because I am not in a position to come into any legal rebuttal or debate. The City Attorney's opinion only addresses state statutes, it doesn't acknowledge or analyze Miami-Dade County Home Rule Charter, specifically Section 6.03, which requires a referendum which means a voter approval for Charter Amendments like changing election dates and terms. He also stated the Florida Constitution Article 8, section 6(e) grants Miami-Dade County's Home Rule Charter authority over municipal matters unless preempted by state law and none of the cited statutes preempt the county's charter requirement for voter approval. Her opinion as well ignores controlling county law. In a charter county like Miami-Dade, state statutes give municipalities general authority to set election dates...by the County Charter and the Charter requires voter approval. I think all these facts are laid here. Whatever you guys want to go ahead and do, would be providing all the facts that I did provide, and you feel comfortable with that vote, that's what it's going to be. I think the Governor and I think the Attorney General most probably is watching right now and they know very well where all of us stand.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. I have some prepared comments that I'd like to read and speak about a few issues that I think are important. So, I was concerned to learn that a member of this Commission independently reached out to the Attorney General suggesting a position that was neither discussed nor adopted by this Commission. That position communicated did not reflect the consensus or will of this body and that is deeply troubling and goes against what I've seen this Commission do as-a-whole over the last twelve years. Everybody is entitled to their opinion, but like what Commissioner Lara stated very eloquently, when you are reaching out to the state to enjoin yourself in this process it sends a horrific message and jeopardizes the city. This situation highlights exactly why I have worked to clarify the role of the Mayor, particularly as it relates to our lobbying efforts in Tallahassee. When speaking on behalf of the city or this Commission, it is essential that our message is unified, deliberate and representative of the collective decision. This was done last year by Commissioner Castro, Commissioner Fernandez and Commissioner Menendez, that's why we were able to get zero dollars in appropriations from the state. Multiple state Representative and Senators told us it was a result of self-serving actions taken by Commissioner Castro and Commissioner Fernandez, like raising your salaries, like not moving elections, like firing competent staff, like hiring a manager without a process. As elected officials, we each have a responsibility to respect protocol and maintain the integrity of our processes. When individual Commissioners act without coordination or authorization, it not only undermines our credibility as a governing body, it creates confusion among our state partners and risks damaging

important relationships. Case in point, the two previous years, we made around \$3 million dollars in appropriations, the highest we've ever gotten in the city, and then we went to zero. Rouge actions like this can have far-reaching consequences. It can make our city appear divided and unprofessional. Case in point, hiring Amos Rojas in the middle of a Commission meeting without a resume, based on a Linked-In profile. That's insanity. To run a thousand-employee, almost \$300 million dollar business and hire somebody based on their Linked-In profile without a background check. The intern in my office had to have a background check by the Police Department. She couldn't come to work until her fingerprints were taken. Just let that marinate for a second. So rogue actions like this can have far-reaching consequences. They can make our city appear divided and unprofessional, as I stated, and they may jeopardize our ability to secure state funding or support because they suggest a lack of cohesion and clarity in our leadership. It is imperative that we move forward with the shared commitment to communication, transparency and accountability. We must work as a team and when we speak on behalf of the city it must be with one voice, grounded in process, guided by protocol, and reflective of the decisions made by this Commission as-a-whole. Just as a reminder, because Commissioner Castro is well aware because she is the one that mentioned it, we are not breaking new ground here. This happened in the City of North Miami and the Governor, under his term, took no action and neither did the AG. They moved their elections. 28 out of 34 cities have their elections in November. We are not extending our terms and I'm one of the individuals that would lose five months of my term. This is the right thing to do. Remember, we have a City Attorney opinion that is very clear and concise. I've run polling of this multiple times, over 75 percent of the residents and Claudia Miro will tell you, and Richard Lara will tell you, and the Vice Mayor will tell you; you knock on doors and it's overwhelming the question, why don't we move elections to November. In the words of one of our constant guests here, the reason is, we want quality over quantity, and what does that mean, that is a dog whistle where at the end of the day, an April election will result in less voters. You can control the narrative, using the likes of the CGNA, you can control the narrative using the likes of the newly created Gazette which is controlled by the same people as the Gables Insider, you can control it using different platforms. You can push an agenda, like Commissioner Fernandez did with those push polls that were exposed. And Commissioner Lara touched on it very well and he took a little bit of my thunder, but I've got to give him credit. This is not about November elections. This is about less voters. Commissioner Castro is well aware, after everything that's happened over the last two years, the voters are awake. There were over 10,000 people that voted. The only election that garnered more support was my first Mayoral election which had a few hundred votes more. People came out to vote for change. This was not an election that somebody won by one percent, 100 votes. No, no, this was an election that was won by 18 percent, 10 percent, massive numbers. Okay. People wanted change. So, we can stand in the back and giggle, laugh and deny the facts, but the truth is in the polls, the truth is in the individuals who went to vote. They wanted a change. I sent out an email to all the residents today, promises made, promises kept; change elections, that

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*Agenda Items E-7 and F-5 – Ordinance repealing Ordinance No. 2025-08
Which moved the date of the city's elections from April to November*

is part of my platform, no one's being caught off guard. People knew what they were voting for. So, thank you for throwing me a lifeline. I appreciate that, but I tried to throw you a lifeline for two years; an Inspector General, because you didn't want an Inspector General, because you preferred the politics. We got an Inspector General done. You raised your own salary without public input, hiding it in the budget. I told you and I begged you, along with the Vice Mayor, please, don't do that, let's have the residents have input on it, let's do it the right way. No. You raised a car allowance, again, hiding it in the budget, that's not transparent. You resisted moving elections to November, over and over and over again, and you unethically hired a City Manager to run a city where the city was paralyzed for ten months. It was shameful and embarrassing. The city deserves better, our employees deserve better, our residents deserve better. So, at the end of the day, thank you for the lifeline, but I attempted, along with many people in this community, to throw you a lifeline and you didn't listen, that's why your polling is where its at. I have the polls and that's why people have an opinion, and you don't want to move elections to November. You want to maintain them in April to suppress the vote. It's very clear, the less voter turnout the better, in your case. But I'm not afraid to go in front of voters, I never have, because at the end of the day my work speaks for itself, my commitment to the city speaks for itself, and the proof is in the elections. So, we have a motion, is there a second on the body here. So that motion fails. Madam Vice Mayor, you had a comment you wanted to make.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, I do, and it's really an extension of what we've been talking about here. The actions, Commissioner, of sending a letter without calling a Special Meeting, sending a letter to the Attorney General without calling a Special Meeting of this Commission, of this board to get our input, unilaterally trying to sabotage what this Commission, the work it has done, the votes that came out, the people that voted for change is a censurable item. You asked for an opinion from our City Attorney on June 14th. You asked for an answer by June 26th, and you got it, but what did you do. What did you do before that opinion even came out? – you went ahead and you sent a letter on June 23, 2025, unilaterally, without consulting with any member on this Commission asking for an Attorney General to take an action that contravened what the voters voted for, what this Commission voted for, and overturn which, he doesn't have the authority to do, what this Commission had voted for. Really important information is in there for the Attorney General, so even if this Commission chose to send a letter to the Attorney General there were critical facts omitted, but it didn't really matter, didn't really matter. By the way, the election date that you put in there implied that we extended our terms by more than a year, because you used November 2027, as the election cycle.

Commissioner Castro: That was a typo.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Big typo. This is a censurable item. No member of this Commission on the downside of a vote should reach out and try to overturn a decision on this Commission without the

advice and consent of the rest of the members of this Commission. You had the ability, if you felt that it was an emergency to call for a Special Meeting, you chose not to. You had the ability to put it on the agenda and wait to hear from us. You chose not to. So, in order to make it clear to you that this type of behavior is improper and should not be tolerated in the future, I move for your censure on this item and direct you in all future instances to not be hasty. You can put something on the agenda. If it is an emergency that can't wait a few more days to the meeting, you can ask for a Special Meeting.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. And I want to make it extremely clear. I will not stand here while this Commission tries to take away resident rights and I will say it again. Whether this Commission agreed to whatever they agreed to, I am not going to agree to taking resident rights away and I will stand up for them and I will fight once and once again. So no, I would have to reach out to the Attorney General again, I would do it a thousand times, because I was trying to undo a wrong this Commission made. Now, if you guys want to go ahead and you want to vote with the Vice Mayor to go ahead and censure me for standing up for my people, for standing up for my residents, go ahead and do it, but you know what, you are going to give me a lot of publicity, let me just tell you, for standing up for the people. So, it's up to you.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Commissioner Lara: I think there's been, unfortunately, so far, too much attention put on you, Commissioner Castro, negative attention in what I believe is also your rogue act in writing unilaterally like that, in this climate, at this moment, under these circumstances, as the Vice Mayor said. On your motion, Vice Mayor, I second.

Mayor Lago: Okay. So, in reference to attention, if you consider Political Cortadito and...

Commissioner Castro: Politics.

Mayor Lago: If you consider Political Cortadito, I didn't interrupt you, again, you said Robert's Rules. Respect Robert's Rules.

Commissioner Castro: Okay.

Mayor Lago: If you consider Political Cortadito and a pay-for-play scheme, like the Gazette and all the cast of characters that are behind that, some sort of publicity, I think that's negative publicity, because everybody knows that it's all pay-for-play and it's a beautiful thing to have a November election, because you go in front of more voters, you shouldn't be afraid of that. So, we have a motion and a second, Mr. Clerk.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: No

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 3-1)

(Commissioner Fernandez: Absent)

Mayor Lago: We don't have a motion to move forward on item E-7. We'll move to E-8.

City Attorney Suarez: E-8 is a Resolution of the City Commission...

Mayor Lago: By the way, if I may, excuse me Madam City Attorney, I apologize. I'd like for my colleagues here to mull over attention amicus brief, if we have another city that moves forward, because I'm hearing multiple other cities are considering potentially enjoining themselves if there is a lawsuit in the state in regards to November elections. I would like for my colleagues to consider supporting any of these cities that move forward, if there is a lawsuit in the future.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I would move that.

Commissioner Lara: And I would second, assuming of course, the issues and the law align sufficiently, not just to insert ourselves in another.

Mayor Lago: 100 percent.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Mayor Lago: And at the end of the day, a friendly amendment to my own piece of legislation, it will be brought before the Commission before we move further, not just allow the City Attorney or the City Manager just to inject themselves.

City Attorney Suarez: Okay. So, Mayor, typically the City Attorney does have authority to file an amicus brief, but in this particular case, I am understanding the direction is, if there is such a lawsuit and I'll bring it to the attention of the Commission and the Commission can decide whether we want to.

Mayor Lago: Because at the end of the day, we support the Governor and the Attorney General and we have the utmost respect for our state leaders, but if you use North Miami as an example, there was never an issue when North Miami did the correct thing and moved elections to November, and I want to make sure, because I'm hearing from other cities that if they engage in

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this conversation and potentially supporting if there is a lawsuit, hopefully there is not, and we move forward, that I would like to make sure that we properly show support for this action. Mr. Clerk, you have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Castro: No

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 3-1)

(Commissioner Fernandez: Absent)