

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-2
June 10, 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

Deputy City Clerk, Yolande Davis

Finance Director, Diana Gomez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item H-2 [3:40 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission relating to the collection and disposal of Solid Waste in the City of Coral Gables, Florida; determining the Solid Waste cost and the Solid Waste Service Assessments for the Fiscal Year Beginning October 1, 2025; directing the preparation of an Assessment Roll; authorizing a Public Hearing and directing the Provision of Notice thereof; and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: Item H-2, City Manager items.

City Attorney Suarez: H-2 is a Resolution of the City Commission relating to the collection and disposal of Solid Waste in the City of Coral Gables, Florida; determining the Solid Waste cost and the Solid Waste Service Assessments for the Fiscal Year Beginning October 1, 2025; directing the preparation of an Assessment Roll; authorizing a Public Hearing and directing the Provision of Notice thereof; and providing for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: Madam Finance Director how are you.

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Finance Director Gomez: Good. How are you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here. Before we have a conversation on this and we open up to – does this require public comment?

City Attorney Suarez: This is setting the public hearing which will occur later, so there is no public comment required.

Mayor Lago: There is no public comment. I wanted to make sure. The Commission requested that Commissioner Fernandez look into this issue. I can't help myself and I start having conversations with other Mayors, because I see this as an opportunity for the city, not only to save money but also make money. So, I just want to – its all good. My point is that I spoke to the Mayor of South Miami and how he's hounded me about it three times, which is great, because he has the railway, he has the railway, and we have 72nd Avenue. He wants to do something with green matter. So, I'm putting on the record and I know that West Miami, I know that Pinecrest, the neighboring communities, are looking to do something similar, because everybody wants to avoid paying higher tipping fees. This is not going to be done in two months and three months and six months. This is going to take a year, potentially even longer, but we are very clear. We are in a position with 72nd Avenue that I want my colleagues on the Commission to speak to the Manager and to the DCM, to the ACM, in regard to we are in a good position in regard to that facility and the future and the county. Now's the time, in my opinion, as one of the items that I have here, stated here as a potential Sunshine meeting run by Commissioner Fernandez, to meet with these Mayors and say, okay, we are going to embark on this effort and we are going to look into this technology, we are going to do this or we are going to do that. We need you to sign up and come to battle with us on this front, because the garbage fees are only going to go up. I'm bringing it up now because it's an opportunity because we are dealing with it right now. Again, I put it on the record, I'm not removing pits. I'm not asking for that. I'm just trying to find a way, because we received a great email today, this week from JC Padron, you have it right there, you are going to talk about it, and we received another email from a resident that said something to me that was mentioning pits, not pits, I'm sorry, the green matter, even though they didn't get rid of their pit, even though Martha spends here whole life advertising that we can get rid of your pit if you'd like to get rid of your pit. So, my point is that I really think that now is the time – I don't want to let it linger. Set this up for September to have this meeting in September to really start putting all our ducks in a row, start looking at this technology as being used in other parts of the city, start finding out about 72nd Avenue, because I think that we could truly be the benchmark to have less waste in one form or another, and there is buy-in from other cities, because it means that they'll save money; and the infrastructure is there because our facility is on the track, on the rail and South Miami is on the rail. I just want to bring it up because since you are going to talk about that right now, I wanted to just say, this is a perfect moment to say, it's going to cost the city money.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor. I just wanted to update the Commission as well. I've already had my first conversation with the Manager about this. We are working on setting up a meeting with the Deputy City Manager, Assistant City Manager and Public Works in order to

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begin the conversation and try to explore what options we have. I know the Manager has already been working on some things as well. So, I think we've already hit the ground running on this. September, I think is a realistic time for us to have a Sunshine meeting to discuss this with more options on the table, but I just want to let you know, we've already started the process of getting the ball rolling.

Mayor Lago: If I may, just one last thing. Be a testament to the Commission. That goes to show the people that we don't speak to each other and the Manager, and the City Attorney and the City Clerk are very methodical on having a firewall and being like look, this is the conversation. So, I had to take advantage of this moment that we are about to spend money right now to say, hey, this is who I'm talking to. Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, we absolutely don't speak to each other because I have been having my own meetings, not only now, but talked to our Solid Waste Director, I said, we need to sit down and have coffee, doing this on the dais is not a real efficient way to do this. So, I've been talking about this, and I know the Mayor has been talking about this for a long time; tipping fees, because land costs continue to go up, there is no other way, the less land you have the more it's going to cost to deal with this. We need to reuse these resources. So, I brought, about a year ago, and I know it was maybe two years ago, you brought the bio-char option, either way you end up with a product that can be used and sold for farms or as an aggregate for cement, so we are not wasting material. Someone else also brought me something on glass, adding that to cement. We need to stop tipping this stuff and paying the owners of the land, whether it's Waste Management or other, lots and lots of money to be able to tip in there. It's one of the reasons I did the revision to the State Statute to try to allow green matter, food waste, all this type of stuff to be considered recyclable so we are not so handcuffed on where this waste can go. We absolutely need to get together. We are wasting valuable, valuable resources. Everybody asks me why my mangoes are so good, because I have a great big compost that fertilizes the tree. It's getting free fertilizer.

Mayor Lago: Before Commissioner Fernandez takes the conversation. I wanted to thank the Clerk who is not here, but obviously we have the better Clerk here. Thank you for spending all the time and looking back on all the conversations we had over waste and putting it together and sending it to the Commission. That is a good starting point, a good starting point, but I just want to make sure that's why I pointed out that other cities are chomping at the bit to join us because they know what we have. We have the location. We have it. So, it's a great opportunity.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. We can just go through some of these details during our Sunshine meeting, not right now, because there are some of us who don't like our grass being scared up for picking up two palm fawns, you know.

Mayor Lago: I didn't want to take up more time, but think about it, if you can deliver on having a bin that you roll from the back of the house, you don't have to roll it yourself, staff will roll it, you

continue the same service, but you put your stuff in there, you recycle it. You don't have the machine; how much safer it is for staff. It's a lot of things.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Blocking traffic.

Mayor Lago: And when you show the residents, they are going to be very inclined to support something like that, as long as you make sure that we continue to offer the same service.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We are going to be very busy in September.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Finance Director Gomez: Good afternoon. Diana Gomez, Finance Director. So, this item sets the proposed rate for the Fiscal Year 26 Solid Waste Assessment. It also sets the dates of the public hearing, and so, the rates for Fiscal Year 26 are proposed to be for the discounted rate, which is an early payment rate that can be paid on or before August 15th is the same as last year, \$550 per dwelling unit. The regular rate would be, if paid after August 15th and if it gets put on the tax bill would be \$577.50 per dwelling unit. Auxiliary living units would be \$288.75, which is half of what the regular rates are. And so, this is the rate – plus any delinquencies that may happen. So, anybody who has maybe a special pick-up or some other delinquency related to solid waste will be put together and all of it must be paid before August 15th in order to get the early payment discount or all of it will be put on the actual November tax bill and paid with the property taxes. So, all residential property owners will have the ability to pay their solid waste assessment in full on or before August 15, 2025, and be removed from the assessment roll and the discounted rate is available through August 15th. So, what's being proposed here is the same rate as was proposed last year, and so, if this rate is set bills will go into the mail on or about July 1st in order for people to have 45 days to pay in advance if they want the discounted rate. So, we come back then on September 12th for the public hearing to finalize the rate, at which time it could technically go down, it cannot go up anymore, however, note that we will have billed it already for anybody to take advantage of the early payment. So, typically with the rate that we set here, it typically stands through the fiscal year.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Mr. City Attorney, Mr. City Manager, do you have anything you'd like to add?

City Manager Iglesias: No Mayor. Well, if I may just say that...

Mayor Lago: It's your item.

City Manager Iglesias: The transportation piece is up in March of next year, so this is something that we will be discussing also, and I've already discussed it with Commissioner Fernandez, and we will be looking at that also. What we lack on 72nd Avenue is space.

Mayor Lago: I'm telling you; we are ready to go. It's a great opportunity, great opportunity. Does the Commission have anything else they'd like to add to this item.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second. And just for the record, because this is a great discount for those that are struggling. If the full cost was put through for garbage fees how much would be the residential rate?

Finance Director Gomez: So, it would be about \$1,300, plus or minus.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Wow. Okay. That just shows the fact that this has to be a priority. This has to be a priority. We have a motion and a second, Madam City Clerk.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Finance Director Gomez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Ms. Finance Director.