

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-4
December 9, 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
Acting Development Service Director, Doug Ramirez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-4 [Start: 12:39 p.m.]

Update regarding pet waste enforcement in trash pits
(Sponsored by Vice Mayor Anderson)

Mayor Lago: All right. Item F-4. We'll do F-4 and F-5, and then we will and then we will head out to lunch before. We have a one o'clock time certain.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We'll eat quickly.

Mayor Lago: Yes. Sir, how are you doing?

Acting Development Service Director: Good afternoon. Douglas Ramirez, Acting Development Service Director. A very, very short presentation.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes. The question is, how are we doing?

Acting Development Service Director: Yes.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: On the suggestion that I had made that, along with the citation warning, we have a pet waste sign in hand to educate the residents. And they can put the pet waste signs up, which, by the way, from what I can see, is having a 90 percent success rate of reducing the pet waste in these trash pits, probably even more. Because it's only like one or two bags occasionally, I find now. All right. With that being said, rock and roll.

Acting Development Service Director: Okay. Thank you. So, I'm going to talk a little bit about what the code actually says right now. The pet waste and removal of animal feces is regulated in Section 10-4. Basically, it says that it must be immediately removed and placed in a sealed container and it must be disposed of properly. You're prohibited to put bagged or unbagged pet waste or used cat litter in the swales or in the trash pits. The code is very specific about what the penalty should be. It's spelled out there for us. So, there's not much for us to think about in code enforcement. It tells us exactly what to do. The exception being that the signs that you're talking about. If the owner requests one, we give it to them. They put it in their swale. If somebody else comes along and puts something in their swale trash pit, we would not cite that property owner. It's not their fault that somebody else came in the neighborhood and did that, right? There's also an exception for disability people that have dogs. Those dogs are trained anyway not to do that there. But there is an exception. So, what have we done? We did have a meeting with the City Attorney's office for guidance on exactly what the code says and how we could approach this from a Code Enforcement perspective. We created an SOP for the officers that gives detailed guidance, a little bit more detail than what the presentation here says, about how to handle things using the body cameras, what to do about issuance of IDs, requesting the IDs of anyone that we might observe doing this, and documenting the incidents. So, we went into that. The officers, to answer your question, Vice Mayor, the officers have the signs in their cars now. So, if there's somebody who requests it on the spot, we can give it to them, and they can put it in their swale so that they have it already readily accessible from us. And then we would work together with the Public Safety Aides to educate and enforce. In most cases, they can immediately comply. If we catch them in the act, they're just going to pick it up and I'm sorry, I'm not going to do it again. We would still document what happened in case we get a repeat offender. And then the, if necessary, in cases where the individual refuses to provide ID, refuses to comply, then we always have police available to help us with those circumstances.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, I don't think you're going to find many people with ID on them out walking their dogs. They're usually doing the round around the block to get the morning routine done, but a friendly encounter to educate. Hello, I'm so-and-so, pleasure to meet you. I want to make you aware that, you know, city has a code that prohibits this, et cetera, et cetera, that you might be able to get the name that way and document it, but just make it a friendly encounter. Because once people understand the why, they usually change their behavior. Thank you for doing this. Do we have any documented encounters where we've done enforcement?

Acting Development Service Director: We don't have any documented encounters yet. Now that we have the SOP, there's a good outline path for if and how. We have had occasions where officers have educated on the spot, but it's never been documented.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. Well, can we have documented encounters in a few months? You choose the date. What month do you want to do this again?

Acting Development Service Director: Six months, just to see. We have to catch them in the act. That's the issue.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's not only that. It's a warning to the homeowner. Here's a sign. That way you don't get cited. That's an encounter as well. Okay, so six months. I'm going to hold you to it.

Acting Development Service Director: If you please.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It'll be a summer topic. How much pet waste have we reduced in our trash pits? Thank you.

Acting Development Service Director: You're welcome.