

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-5**  
**March 14, 2023**  
**City Commission Chambers**  
**405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL**

**City Commission**

**Mayor Vince Lago**

**Vice Mayor Michael Mena**

**Commissioner Rhonda Anderson**

**Commissioner James Cason**

**Commissioner Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**

**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Communications Director, Martha Pantin**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Maria Cruz**

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Agenda Item F-5 [3:07 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending Chapter 54 - “Solid Waste” to prohibit placing clean yard waste in trash bags and depositing trash bags in trash piles before 6:00 p.m.; providing for severability clause, repealer provision, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto F-5, Ordinances on First Reading.

City Attorney Suarez: F-5 is an Ordinance of the City Commission amending Chapter 54 - “Solid Waste” to prohibit placing clean yard waste in trash bags and depositing trash bags in trash piles before 6:00 p.m.; providing for severability clause, repealer provision, codification, and providing for an effective date. This is a public hearing item. Assistant City Attorney and City Prosecutor, Gus Ceballos will present.

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*Agenda Item F-5 – Ordinance amending Chapter 54 – Solid Waste to prohibit placing Clean yard waste in trash bags and depositing trash bags in trash piles*

[Date]

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Mayor Lago: Mr. Ceballos, good afternoon, good morning. Let me read the fine print, because we have someone here who, obviously speaks to a lot of people and I want them to be very clear again, very clear, the bloggers listen. Again, we are not removing trash pits.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: No, we're not.

Mayor Lago: Something that was said at the forum the other day that I'm removing trash pits. We are not removing trash pits. What we are going to do is going to clean up trash pits. Only green matter six days a week, except for the night before at 6 o'clock when you can put out whatever you'd like to get picked up the next morning. That will now include garbage bags. So, please do not put your organic material in black garbage bags and leave them out there all week, but then you start putting more other stuff in there also, and start throwing more garbage out there. It will just be loose organic material, correct.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: That is correct. So basically, the only real change is that you cannot put your clean yard waste inside of bags.

Mayor Lago: Where do you put it?

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Right in your trash pile.

Mayor Lago: So that means that we're keeping.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: The trash pile.

Mayor Lago: Hey, good job. Exciting news.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: That is the only change. You cannot put it in bags.

Mayor Lago: I want to make sure, because tomorrow you know what happens.

Vice Mayor Mena: So, the net effect is, if there's a bag in a trash pit, before 6 p.m. the night before pick-up, it is a violation.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Yes. You will be cited, regardless of what the contents are.

Mayor Lago: And what is the violation, what is the violation amount?

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: I don't know. So, I'm going to head back and find that out for you.

Commissioner Menendez: And if it is not your bag call it in.

Commissioner Anderson: So, I have a question. You have in here all clean yard waste, how do I distinguish clean yard waste, dirty yard waste and just plain old yard waste?

City Attorney Suarez: It's a defined term in the code; the clean yard waste is defined in the code.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: The defined term basically phrased sort of clippings, any sort of organic matter. So that is not garbage and that is not household refuse, which are also two defined terms in the city code.

Mayor Lago: Another thing they're doing also too, I'm sorry Mayor is, some residents are putting garbage and then they're putting organics on top; they are putting organics on top to hide the garbage. Again, just because you put organics on top of garbage, cardboard, wood, construction debris, bricks, whatever that may be, its still you're going to get a fine.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: That's correct.

Commissioner Cason: What kind of a campaign are we going to have to let the residents know about this, because its going to be confusing.

Mayor Lago: Martha, please join us, thank you.

Vice Mayor Mena: Agreed.

Mayor Lago: Very important.

Communications Director Pantin: So at the last meeting, you requested that we come up with a campaign to make sure that people were aware of what was happening. These are actually pictures that I take in the morning when I'm walking around.

Commissioner Anderson: Close to Christmas though.

Mayor Lago: Go back. Go back. Does anybody notice, you see the big black garbage bag in there, that's not full of green matter, that's actual cardboard boxes, different things inside the black bags and they just make it seem as if its organic.

Communications Director Pantin: So, this is just some background. We know that trash fees have increased. We also know, which is not here part of the background, that this also causes the city to look unsightly and our goals are to educate, keep our streets free of unsightly materials, show residents what can be done and just generate support for correct swale maintenance, and we are planning to execute a swale campaign communications plan. And our key messaging is placing the items that are not green matter out after six, that appliances and furniture require a special scheduled pick-up, items that can and cannot go in the trash pit, and about reporting illegal dumping, and outreach and social media, newsletter, printed ads, door-hangers, etc. Some we

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already have and we have some educational videos about the proper use of trash pits and the proper maintenance. I don't know if you want to see one of the videos.

Mayor Lago: Now that this is codified, are we going to do actual like a mailing to people's homes or something?

Communications Director Pantin: We can certainly do that. We can do that actually once a year without having extra charges. We can do it when the bills are sent out. So, Michael, if you could run one of the videos, please.

[Video Presentation]

Mayor Lago: Can we in E-NEWS use this video again and just say, news flash, there is new legislation in regards to your trash pit. Your trash pit is not going anywhere, but please follow the following rules to keep the city beautiful.

Communications Director Pantin: We can definitely do so, and as a matter of fact for this year for Earth Month, we plan to concentrate on a lot, not only about things like Arbor Day, etc., but talking about things like recycling and the proper use of trash pits. And then we also have a promotional video featuring our Emmy Award Winning Police Chief, Mr. Hudak, and although this is not his best performance to date, Michael if you could play that video.

[Video Presentation]

Mayor Lago: I need this video like ASAP, please.

[Laughter]

Mayor Lago: This will be on my newsletter this month, please.

Communications Director Pantin: Okay. I'm premiering it here. We came up with the slogan of "Swale Responsibly" like...

Vice Mayor Mena: Drink responsibly – (laughter)

Communications Director Pantin: "Swale Responsibly".

Commissioner Menendez: I love the low energy coming from him, the low energy, I can feel it.

Communications Director Pantin: So, we plan to have other videos like these. The other ones are on the website and we've put them out before, but these usually get more traction if they are more fun. So that's our campaign, "Swale Responsibly," which we're showing you today and we plan to go ahead with it. This is what we were asked to do at the last meeting.

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Mayor Lago: I love it. When do we start? When do we roll it out?

Communications Director Pantin: Tomorrow.

Mayor Lago: I'm excited. Mr. Manager, great work, great work. And by the way, before we move onto the next item, we need to vote on this, right.

Commissioner Cason: Make a motion.

Commissioner Menendez: Second.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor we do have a member of the public requesting to speak, Ms. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Vice Mayor Mena: Is there a way to possibly amend that to add this?

Mayor Lago: Yes, we should. Tell Martha.

Vice Mayor Mena: Martha, how realistic or unrealistic is it to edit that to add this new.

Mayor Lago: The plastic bags that you can say...

Communications Director Pantin: Its very easy, as long as talent agrees.

Mayor Lago: Like just use an example of one that has like four or five black bags and just say, this is not acceptable, but this is. You show all the green matter.

Vice Mayor Mena: Just something simple that you can introduce into that, you might as well.

Communications Director Pantin: Well actually in the voiceover part, where he talks about things like the other type of waste that you cannot put out, we can actually edit that in.

Mayor Lago: And another thing we need to do too, and we have a lot of outreach opportunities with landscapers, because we have that legislation before it was preempted by the State, we should also send this to the landscapers in some sort of document or notification or an e-mail telling them, just reaching out to you to tell you that the legislation has changed, your client will be fined if you use plastic bags.

Communications Director Pantin: Well, one of the challenges we have with landscapers is that by state statute, we no longer are able to register them.

Mayor Lago: But we have information.

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City Attorney Suarez: The information that we have, even if its not the most current.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Ms. Cruz: Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. I like what I'm listening, what I'm hearing, but I see a problem. If you look at one of the pictures you saw a pile of leaves. There are very windy days sometimes, and those leaves spread all over the place. My question is, is it possible, I just heard something about green bags and I didn't understand what that was, is it possible, is there any possible way that clear bags could be added so that loose leaves do not end up all over the neighborhood on windy days? We could bag them.

Mayor Lago: I'm going to answer you. Will you stop the time please. I'm going to answer you. I wrote this legislation, the legislation moves forward as it is, and it stays the way it is. We will not be adopting clear bags.

Ms. Cruz: Okay. And I'm hoping that some of the people sitting on this dais will entertain, because I believe you wrote a legislation, but you need five votes.

Mayor Lago: Okay. We have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Cason: Yes

Vice Mayor Mena: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: And that makes five, Vince Lago. Moving onto the next item. Thank you for your support.