

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-17
September 13, 2023
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 Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Ed Santamaria

Agenda Item F-17 [12:00 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission creating a Charter Review Committee.

(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Commissioner Fernandez: Madam City Attorney, would you be able to read it into the record?

City Attorney Suárez: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you.

City Attorney Suárez: Of course. F-17 is a resolution of the City Commission creating a Charter Review Committee.

Commissioner Fernandez: And would you be able to read the actual resolution? Anderson -- Vice Mayor Anderson said she hadn't been able to read it, so.

City Attorney Suárez: You want me to read the entire resolution?

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes, please.

City Attorney Suárez: Then let me pull it up. Give me one moment.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Plus, I'm having a little trouble with my computer, so I'm not able to bring...

Commissioner Castro: You want to share mine?

Commissioner Fernandez: Yeah, the computers have been having issues today.

Commissioner Castro: You want to share mine? It's right here.

Commissioner Fernandez: They're not connecting to the Wi-Fi.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Can we maybe get IT in here so we can have an intelligent discussion?

City Attorney Suárez: So, F-17 is a resolution creating Charter Review Committee, whereas the Charter of the City of Coral Gables is a constitutional document for the City, establishing the underlying structure of City government; and whereas the City Commission has in the past created Charter Review Committees to review the Charter and make recommendations as to items that should potentially be amended, including most recently in 2015; and whereas the Charter has not been subject to a Charter review for over eight years and the Commission believes it is time to create another Charter Review Committee to conduct such a review; and whereas the City of Coral Gables will be celebrating the hundredth anniversary of its founding on April 29, 2025, and the Commission believes the City should review its Charter prior to its centennial. Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Commission of the City of Coral Gables, Florida that the foregoing whereas clauses are hereby ratified and confirmed as being true and correct and are hereby made a specific part of this resolution upon adoption hereof. The City Commission hereby creates a Charter Review Committee to be composed of five members. The Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners will each appoint one member who must be a City resident. The Commission shall ratify its appointees to the committee at the October 10, 2023 regular City Commission meeting. The Commission shall take input from residents on potential questions to be considered by the committee after the appointment of the committee members and prior to the first meeting of the committee in the form of two town hall meetings to be held no less than 30 days apart and

the meetings cannot coincide with any religious or federal holidays. The Commission will discuss resident input from the two town hall meetings at the next regular City Commission meeting following the last town hall meeting in order to provide guidance to the committee on the questions it should consider. The Commission will then hold a joint Sunshine meeting with the committee in order to provide the committee with guidance on the questions it shall consider. The committee will elect a chairperson from among its members and set its schedule. The City Attorney's Office will serve as counsel to the Charter Review Committee. The Charter Review Committee will follow guidance provided by the City Commission in the aforementioned Sunshine meeting as to the areas of focus for the charter review, although the committee is not limited solely to those areas unless otherwise directed by the City Commission. The committee will also hear public comments at least once during each of its meetings. Any proposed amendments to the Charter approved by the committee will be considered by the City Commission for potential inclusion as a ballot referendum if a referendum is required or for potential amendment by ordinance where appropriate under the Municipal Home Rule Powers Act. The Mayor or any Commissioner, as well as the City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk may also propose Charter amendments for consideration by the City Commission. The Charter Review Committee shall be considered a temporary advisory board that will sunset once its mandate is completed. The members of the committee shall serve without monetary compensation. Members of other City boards may be a member of the Charter Review Committee as well.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you. So, in conversations with staff, recommendation was that this be done sooner rather than later, just to make sure that there's enough time for the committee to make its recommendations and to thoroughly review the issues that are brought before it. But this is something I was already planning on doing. I didn't think that we needed to do it as quickly. I thought the last Charter Review Committee only took about four or five months. The City Attorney told me it took a lot longer. So, for that reason, I'm placing it on the agenda for discussion. I think the time is now to start preparing our city for its centennial, especially with questions such as the change to the election. I don't think we should be the ones making that decision. The decision should be made really by residents, but this committee can help advise us as to what the proper course of action should be and how we should proceed. So, I know there's other questions that have arisen in the community over the last few years on things that should be reconsidered in the Charter. That's why I want to open it up for town hall meetings where residents can come in and give us their opinion on issues that should be addressed in this Charter Review Committee and make sure that we're getting resident input. Again, we serve at the pleasure of the residents of the City of Coral Gables. This will set us up for the next 100 years as a municipality. So, with that, Mr. Mayor, yield back for the discussion.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for yielding. I'm in favor of a charter review. I've been in favor of a charter review before, but I do have some additional comments that I'd like to make. I'd like to hear my colleagues on the Commission, what they recommend, and then I would give you my recommendations from past charter reviews, how they've worked, the makeup of the individuals. And you know, we usually do them every 10 years. This is now eight. So, if the Commission wants to do it early, that's the will of the Commission. But I think we should discuss little finer

details of the makeup of the actual charter review. So, I'll leave it up to the Commission and then I'll give you my thoughts at the end.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, I was going to ask the City Attorney to provide us -- I mean, since this was dropped onto the agenda after my agenda review -- some background on prior charter reviews.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may, if I may. So, this was brought in at the last minute, which is perfectly fine. I welcome it. I welcome anything that wants to be put on the agenda. It doesn't matter if it's right at the last moment at the final agenda review. It's a good thing to have these conversations. So, if you look at the last charter review that was done, it was eight years ago. We usually do them every 10 years. The makeup of the Charter Review was the five members of the Commission appointed an individual, the City Attorney had an appointment, and the City Manager had an appointment. Ten years in the past, it was the same makeup. And ten years in the past, it was the same makeup. And the chair of the Charter Review has always been the Mayor's appointment, three times running over 30 years. This request by the Commissioner is to remove an appointment by the Manager and to remove an appointment by the City Attorney and not make the Mayor's appointment be the chair. It is to be voted by the Charter Review. I'm a believer -- we're talking about not changing things if they worked so well before. There should be seven people appointed to the board and the Mayor's appointment should be the chair of the Charter Review. I have copies of the resolutions going back all the way to 2004 under the previous mayors that had the privilege of serving here in the City Beautiful. I have it here if you'd like to see it. I can share it with you, whoever would like to see it.

Commissioner Fernandez: Would you like me to answer that?

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, the reason that I reduced it to five members is we are the five members that are elected by the people. City Attorney and the City Manager serve at the pleasure of the Commission. So, in order to have truly resident input, it should be representatives of the Commissioners. As far as the makeup of the chair, if we're talking about opening up elections and the process, this is an opportunity for the City to lead and have its Charter Review Committee select its own chair from within its five members. I don't think that that's a major change. I think it just allows an opportunity for the committee to select its own direction and leadership.

Mayor Lago: Anyone else?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, my comments are the following. We did this eight years ago. We've had the same Charter Review Committee members come forward and make a comment as to the issue that was at hand. This has been interjected in between. I think a more thoughtful review needs to be done. I do think there's a benefit to having an appointee from the City Manager. You all get agenda briefings, the City Manager's there so they understand implications of doing things

a certain way. It's one thing to have resident input, but if the residents don't know what it is -- what the impact is of what they're suggesting, they will need someone there to advise them both from a management standpoint as well as the City Attorney's standpoint. You have a representative at every Planning and Zoning meeting from our City Attorney's Office. Because when you're making decisions of such magnitude, you need to understand the ramifications of what you're doing, you know. Discussions are had by each one of us with our City Attorney in order to be able to understand the impact of what you're doing. And likewise, with the City Manager, to know what the ramifications are. If you do this, if you do that, will it affect anything else? So, to remove those two appointees when it has been a time-trusted -- tested tradition that has worked, unlike April elections not working, I think is a mistake. And we shouldn't change that so...

Commissioner Fernandez: Would you like me to answer?

Mayor Lago: Let's give everyone else a chance on the Commission. Commissioner Anderson.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think she asked a question so...

Mayor Lago: If you asked a question, I apologize. I didn't hear it was a question.

Commissioner Fernandez: Regarding the makeup.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, it's a statement. It's a statement. I think you already explained the makeup so...

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioner, do you have any questions or any...?

Commissioner Castro: I -- in Section 3, two town hall meetings to be held with no less than 30 days apart, and to not coincide with religious or federal holidays, I think that is marvelous. We really -- I cannot emphasize more how important it is to have resident input. I think that this is -- congratulations, I love it. It's really good. It's really, really good. That's...

Mayor Lago: Anything else, Commissioner?

Commissioner Castro: That would be all, thank you.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: Just a question for the City Attorney. This comes in for discussion today or a resolution to vote?

City Attorney Suárez: There is a resolution attached to the agenda, so it's an actual resolution item that you could vote on today.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. Will we be voting on it now or after E-3?

City Attorney Suárez: So, there -- E-3 was deferred. Now you're considering this. It's the -- you know, the -- whatever the Commission decides to do. If there's a motion on this, then you will decide on this.

Commissioner Menendez: I prefer to have E-3 go first, and then have this follow in terms of votes.

City Attorney Suárez: So, it (INAUDIBLE)...

Commissioner Menendez: In terms of -- my only comment, in terms of a makeup, and I hear both sides, and I understand, I think a compromise would be to have that Charter Review Committee sort of a reflection of what we do up here as a body. We have the City Attorney, her office, and we have the City Manager. They participate, they're involved, they ask -- or we ask questions. They help us, guide us, but they're non-voting members. So, I'm good with the City Attorney's Office and Manager having representatives there, but a reflection of what we do here. When it comes time to vote, it's the five of us, but we obviously get a lot of guidance from them. So, I think it's important to have the Manager's Office and the City Attorney's Office at the table when the Charter Review Committee -- I think that's a -- I think it's a valid compromise.

City Attorney Suárez: So, I just want to make one point -- to clarify one point. Our office would serve as counsel to the Charter Review Committee under this resolution and it has under the prior Charter Review Committees. An appointee by the City Attorney would be there, and the tradition has been that the appointee of the City Attorney is a current or former city or county attorney and would be part of the committee to make policy recommendations, which my office would not do as counsel to the committee.

Commissioner Menendez: Exactly. And some other city committees, boards, I think you have outside attorneys sit on some of them.

City Attorney Suárez: And that has been the tradition here.

Commissioner Menendez: So, I'm not saying you specifically, but a representative, someone representing...

City Attorney Suárez: No, appointee.

Commissioner Menendez: Your office from the legal side, and then someone from the administrative side that can sort of everybody work together. I think that would probably be a fair compromise.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, if I may. Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: In reference to the other pending issue, would you --? What would you want to do in regards to who would chair the meeting? Would you want it to be the way it's been in the last 30 years, or would you like to change that as per Commissioner Fernandez's request?

Commissioner Menendez: What's the procedure that we've used in City boards or even the Mayor's Council? How -- do we follow a standardized procedure or is it really depends on...?

City Attorney Suárez: So, generally, and without going back and checking every committee or board, generally, each board or committee elects its chair annually as a general matter. In 2004 and in 2015, the Charter Review Committee enabling resolution said that the chair would be the Mayor's appointee.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay. Well, if we're going to go to E-3, it gives me more time to think about that one issue. That's the only one pending issue I have. I can see the arguments for both sides. I'd like to follow what we do in terms of our boards in general. So, a general -- boards in general, the board itself, the members select the chair, right?

City Attorney Suárez: Yes, again I haven't gone back and checked every single one, but that's my general understanding.

Commissioner Menendez: All right, I'll withhold my final thought on that one issue unless we're going to vote now. If we're going to go back to E-3, I'll come back to it when we bring up this item again.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner. Does somebody want to make a motion?

Commissioner Fernandez: Well, I have a friendly amendment then. The resolution already -- to the resolution. The resolution -- well, just based on what he was saying. It currently states that the City Attorney's Office should sit in those meetings. Why don't we add that the City Manager's Office also sit in those meetings? And the Clerk, I think, is there anyway, because they're normally taking note of the meeting so...

City Attorney Suárez: Yeah, I do just want to clarify. My office sitting in those meetings is as advisor, as counsel...

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct, the same way as it is here.

City Attorney Suárez: To the committee, not making policy recommendations...

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

City Attorney Suárez: Not a voting board member.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct, as you do here.

City Attorney Suárez: As drafted, and then...

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

City Attorney Suárez: That's how it's drafted -- this proposed resolution is drafted...

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

City Attorney Suárez: Which is not what was done the last two times.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

[Later...]

Mayor Lago: The next item on the agenda is F-17, from what I see.

Vice Mayor Anderson: F-17, I circulated some additional language to add to the resolution so that we can make sure that we have a productive Charter Review Committee. With all the wonderful professions that we have in this City, I think it would be best if we try to continue to pick people that like were picked in the past, attorneys, current or previous elected officials, individuals with extensive professional experience in the city and county government, professors and academics, well-versed in local government, historians, and public finance professionals to be the folks in there to help and brainstorm this and having the tools in the toolbox necessary to make it a productive meeting.

Mayor Lago: And if I may add one thing, I ask for my colleagues on the Commission to reconsider doing the same thing we've done over the last three charter reviews where the Manager and the City Attorney have a position on the board and that the Mayor is the -- the Mayor's appointment is the head of the of the Charter Review.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I will move that.

Commissioner Menendez: I was giving some thought -- I know the question was asked of me regarding the Mayor appointing the chairperson and to give it some, you know, some serious thought, and I'm good with that, with the Mayor appointing the chairperson of the...

Mayor Lago: Will you accept that the...

Commissioner Fernandez: Make that as a friendly motion.

Mayor Lago: But will you accept that the Manager have an appointment and also the City Attorney as part of your friendly motion?

Commissioner Menendez: I think in terms of the spirit of compromise, I would like the Manager's Office to have somebody and the Mayor -- Attorney's Office, but to reflect us, that they're there participating, but at the end of the day, the ones that we elect have the vote. But I think it's important that you be able to select the chairperson. I think that's -- it's sort of a reflection of what we do here.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I'll move the motion with Commissioner Menendez's changes.

Commissioner Castro: I second.

City Attorney Suárez: Just for clarity, does that include the Vice Mayor's suggestion about qualifications of members?

Commissioner Fernandez: No. Commissioner Menendez's...

City Attorney Suárez: So, the only change would be that the Mayor's appointee would be the chair of the committee?

Commissioner Menendez: I would like...

Mayor Lago: Correct, but let me...

Commissioner Menendez: To add my own personal -- I would like whoever's elected be a resident of Coral Gables.

City Attorney Suárez: I think that -- I think that's already in there.

Commissioner Fernandez: It's already in there.

Commissioner Menendez: Is it?

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's already in there.

Commissioner Menendez: I...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I had a motion on the floor to accept this language first.

Commissioner Menendez: No, what I was saying...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I thought you did a friendly amendment.

Commissioner Menendez: Resident -- I would like the person who's been around for a while, so like resident 10-plus years, something like that, somebody who's been -- you know, gone through the -- who's lived it.

Mayor Lago: So, let me ask you a question. So, in the previous -- in previous charter reviews, we had, again, some sort of profession be at the forefront. Do you think that that is something that you're willing to compromise on and accept attorneys, previous elected officials, individuals with extensive professional experience, accountants, lawyers, you know...

Vice Mayor Anderson: We have plenty.

Mayor Lago: People with a certain pedigree that I think will bring a little bit of a different view and a lot of expertise in regards to the discussion of the Charter Review? Since we're doing this - - we're compromising, we're doing this two years before we were to it. It's always done every 10 years. You want to do it now, again, I compromise on that point. So, I think it's willing to have - - we can't -- I mean, having professionals on the Charter Review only benefits the process.

Commissioner Menendez: I think if the -- if I'm not mistaken, Madam City Attorney, in the Planning and Zoning Board, there's reference to certain professions, but it's almost like what we strive to.

City Attorney Suárez: It depends. Some boards have specific professions that should be represented on the board, like Historic Preservation is one that comes to mind.

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Yes.

City Attorney Suárez: I don't recall specifically how much of it's a requirement for Planning and Zoning Board, but there's -- different boards have different rules and...

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Yes.

City Attorney Suárez: Different description...

Assistant City Attorney Throckmorton: Planning and Zoning...

City Attorney Suárez: Of their composition.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll listen to my...

Commissioner Fernandez: I just -- based on what you're proposing, Commissioner Castro and I would not be eligible to serve on this Charter Review Committee.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, you're...

Mayor Lago: Why's that?

Vice Mayor Anderson: You're...

Commissioner Fernandez: Because we don't meet the qualifications of attorneys or previously elected officials, so just -- historians, public finance professionals, academics, professional city and county government experience. I think we're limiting the number -- the residents in saying, if you don't qualify by this, you shouldn't have a say in our charter.

Vice Mayor Anderson: In order to analyze a charter, just like the ability to analyze a financial statement or any other document that has an area that regular residents aren't -- and I'm not trying to be derogatory -- a person without the ability to be able to understand those things, you have to have some idea of what you're doing, okay? And I think it would be a disservice to the community to appoint someone that, you know, plays football fairly, okay? They might be a great person, but they're not going to be able to do the same work level and make the same level of suggestions on a charter review. We're talking about a legal document that someone that has the background and experience necessary to be able to do an effective job. You're going to be putting them in there handicapped and it would be quite frustrating for them. By the same token, when you're, you know, talking about Historic Review Board, you don't want to -- I mean, I wouldn't be putting my hand up for a Historic Review Board. I don't have the background and experience for that. So, you know, I can talk to you all day long about ADA accessibility and how to do it in a historic building without touching the historic features. But I always defer to the experts when it comes around to this type of stuff.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I can commit to appointing somebody who's going to be experienced enough to serve on this board and know enough about our City government to help our City and not hinder it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I don't know about City government, but being able to understand a charter is a totally different thing.

Commissioner Castro: Okay, I could agree to that. So, maybe the Chair, his appointee, should be an attorney with expertise. That wouldn't be a bad idea.

Mayor Lago: So, I think the good thing was, which was done in the past before, which was -- that's why I was saying that it'd be good to have the City Attorney have an appointment was because in the last charter reviews, the ones like we've always done it, has been -- the appointment

of the City Attorney has been a licensed attorney who works at another municipality and has extensive experience, correct, Madam City Attorney?

City Attorney Suárez: So, the last two Charter Review Committees, the City Attorney's appointee has had an appointment, and the City Attorney's appointee has been a city or county current or former municipal local government lawyer.

Mayor Lago: So, I mean, I think when you're talking about if you want experience, that's what you're looking for. Because you want somebody who has extensive expertise in regards to charter reviews at that level. And that's why, like I said, that's the purpose of having the City Attorney's appointment, where they can bring somebody from the county pro bono, but before, we would have to pay for that expertise. It's not about having another vote or having to count votes or anything like that. It's about, you know, having experience. And then in regards to the Manager, the Manager will bring somebody like another ACM from another city that could bring a lot of -- or CM from another city. We have some that live here in the City and that would serve on our charter review and give us a little bit of expertise, guidance, and you know, just again, a little bit of knowledge of what they've done in their city or what they've seen done in other cities. That's the intent of it.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, in essence, we would have two people who are not residents of Coral Gables and who are going to bring in their ideas from other municipalities into Coral Gables and we're trying to protect our city. The biggest concern that residents have right now is that we have too much outside influence in the City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: May I respond?

City Attorney Suárez: So, Commissioner...

Mayor Lago: But wait, if I may, may I respond to you? I never said that the person wasn't a resident. I can give you multiple people who live in the City who are working as city managers. Jimmy Morales, Steve Williamson, these are qualified individuals who have a world-class background, who live in the City Beautiful, and have been -- who are attorneys, who have attended Harvard, and who have been city managers and elected officials in multiple municipalities and the county. So, it's not that I'm appointing somebody that's outside the City. For example, if the City Attorney would like, there's multiple county attorneys that live in the City of Coral Gables. It's not hard to find somebody. I'm just saying, the point of having these individuals engage through the Manager and through the City Attorney is because they'll come and fill that role and then we can fill -- we can backfill the rest of the other roles that we want to find. That's the only reason. If you don't want to have those type of individuals appointed and you only want to have five people on the charter review, I don't have a problem with it. It's fine. We're -- I'm conceding doing this two years early. I'm just telling you that to get the best bang for your buck is to have the most professionals on a board. That's all I'm saying. At the end of the day, the Charter Review is going to recommend to the Commission what they view as important.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right.

Mayor Lago: And to be honest with you, I've been through a charter review already once. It's very limited, the things that we're not doing already. Like literally, it's very limited. What are they going to recommend? Do we do the elections in November? Do we not do the elections in November? There's a lot of things already that we've taken up over the last 10 years in this Commission that have been addressed via previous charter reviews. I'm all for it. I'm more than willing to do it. I'm telling you...

Commissioner Menendez: Who...?

Mayor Lago: Don't lose sight on the fact there's a good opportunity to have expert people engaged.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a quick question. Do we have a list of who served on the last?

City Attorney Suárez: Yes, I have that list.

Commissioner Menendez: Could you read the names?

City Attorney Suárez: Would you like the names? Jimmy Morales, Angelique Ortega-Fridman, Thomas Korge, Mayor Raul Valdes-Fauli, Mr. Bill Bond, Parker D. Thompson, Richard DeWitt.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Pretty exceptional list of individuals on the previous board.

Commissioner Menendez: When I look at the criteria, having too many attorneys, as the saying goes, isn't necessarily a good thing. And having been in the profession, people specialize. And simply because you're an attorney in one area, it doesn't mean you know local government or you know the nuances of statutes and codes and ordinances. It's really a narrow specialty. So, having too many attorneys, I don't think -- there's always a joke there somewhere. One thing I would like to at least consider as we discuss this particular point -- I think it's the last point -- is to include, let's say a number six, someone who currently or previously served on a City board. Because if you're good enough to serve on a City board, I think you're good enough to sit with others to talk about the future of the City.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Would you agree that someone from the Pinewood Cemetery would fill that role? You see my point? You need somebody that can constructively participate. I mean, I know you all will work hard on trying to pick someone, but if you have another profession that you think is applicable, you can feel free to put it in.

Commissioner Menendez: I have no issue about...

Mayor Lago: So...

Commissioner Menendez: You know, I just think if they're good enough to be appointed to boards, then we appointed them because we felt they had the City's best interests at heart.

Mayor Lago: So, Commissioner, if I may, because we have to get to the budget, why don't we do this? We have our next Commission meeting on the 26th, it's two weeks away. This was put on as a discussion item. Why don't you prepare the legislation for the charter review, break it all down, send in a memo to the Commissioners over the next week or so, so that we can digest it and give our input. You've heard a lot of input already in regards to what we think is important and how we can work collaboratively on this front. And we'll put it on the Commission for ratification on the 26th.

Commissioner Fernandez: But the legislation has already been drafted. I did that work. I sent it to the City Attorney. It's already -- it was presented to everybody and she read it into the record earlier today. So, I...

Mayor Lago: That's not what I'm -- Commissioner, that's not what I'm saying. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is there's been changes. We've added certain changes to it, and we're asking you to consider if you will make certain changes and maybe you can think about it over the next two weeks. We have a budget hearing now at -- we're 15 minutes late already. I think everybody needs a bathroom break, maybe get something to drink so we can come back and do this. Gives us two weeks to come back and do it. I don't know why we're in such a hurry to do a charter review. We're two years early.

Commissioner Fernandez: Why were we so -- in such a hurry to move the election? I mean, same thing applies.

Commissioner Menendez: So, before...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Because there's a deadline to file.

Commissioner Fernandez: And there's a deadline for this as well. The City Attorney has made that clear. If there will be referendum questions that come from the Charter Review Committee, we need to do this sooner rather than later.

City Attorney Suárez: So, just to clarify...

Mayor Lago: No, I want to answer that, hold on. Okay, you know, this is apples and oranges, Commissioner. The issue that you're talking about in regards to if an election was held in November or it was held in April is a matter that has to be addressed now because people that are

running, you move the election to November, they have to address the issue. They lose -- you can't just wait six months to make the decision. Madam City Attorney, Commissioner Fernandez says that you stated that this is a time-sensitive issue.

City Attorney Suárez: So, if -- the Commissioner indicated he wanted the Charter Review to complete its work and have any proposed ballot questions on the November 2024 election. If that is the case and the will of the Commission, then time is important, of course, because we're already actually behind the schedule that was done in 2015. We're about four to five months behind that schedule. So, I do think it would be ambitious, even if, you know, it's adopted today to complete this. But as you know, Mayor, and as you stated, there's no requirement that this be done by November 2024. It's really at the will of the Commission. You all can decide.

Commissioner Menendez: I have a compromise. And the sponsor, I presented to my colleagues that of the criteria that was presented to us, you know, professionals, architects, that at least three of the five have to -- three of the five on the board -- on the committee need to fall under this category. We've done that in some other boards, a certain number have to be this, or a certain number -- not all of them, but I think that's a compromise. I think it gets everybody where they want. Three of the five have to be architects, experts in county government. I think that's the expression splitting the baby or something like that.

City Attorney Suárez: So...

Commissioner Fernandez: I can live with that.

City Attorney Suárez: -- forgive me, who was the movant?

Commissioner Fernandez: I moved it.

City Attorney Suárez: So, then it would be up to Commissioner Fernandez whether...

Commissioner Fernandez: I can accept that as an amendment.

Commissioner Menendez: Okay, he accepts that.

Commissioner Castro: I'm sorry, would you work --? I mean, would two be better? Because sometimes it's hard, and then we'll be kind of fighting if we want to appoint this one or this one. I don't want to see us in that situation.

Commissioner Menendez: I'm comfortable with three.

Commissioner Castro: Three?

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah. I'm comfortable with three. I think it's...

Mayor Lago: So, you have a...

Commissioner Menendez: I'm trying to find consensus. Even though it's not an easy topic, we've had a difficult day, a long day, but I think it gets everybody in a place that's comfortable. Nobody's backed into a corner. Everybody -- you know, the Mayor gets to appoint the chair. We split the baby so -- a little bit. I mean, it's so...

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah.

Commissioner Menendez: I think we've reached a point where I think we're all in agreement enough that we can move forward.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, if there's no further comment from the Commission.

City Clerk Urquia: Sorry. Commissioner Castro, will you still be seconding the item?

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay, Mr. Mayor, before we take a vote, we have a member of the public who wants to speak on the item.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: Ed Santamaria.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Santamaria, the floor is yours.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay, one second. Mr. Santamaria, I'm asking to unmute.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Ed Santamaria: Yes. Can you all hear me now?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mr. Santamaria: Good evening, Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission, all others on the dais. I think that this is a very rash move right now. I think that when we're talking about the charter, you're talking about one of the fundamental documents that guide the City throughout the course

of its actions and the trajectory that it creates is fundamental to the City's processes. And I think to make decisions like this at this time, to change the makeup of the board and to make decisions as to who should be on there, who should not be on there, whether they should be, you know, the City Attorney's appointment that has a voting responsibility, should there be a City Manager's appointment that also is able to vote, I think that this is something that was baked into the cake previously because these are concepts that are workable in other municipalities and have worked for many, many years throughout the course of governance here in Miami-Dade County and other municipalities, et cetera, et cetera. So, I think this is something that we need to deliberate on -- further on and to make this decision at this point in time is probably not in the best interest of the City. And I think you should consider that as you make the decision. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Does anybody have any comments or like to add anything further, especially after Mr. Santamaria's comments?

Vice Mayor Anderson: They're valid comments. It wasn't a lot of research or thought put into the makeup of this board. I mean, you know, I -- again, I don't think this Charter Review Committee is going to be able to do anything about the election at this point, because by the time they get around to it, it's not going to make a difference. You all made your decision. So, very valid points. My purpose for adding this language was to make sure that we have the individuals with the tools in the toolbox to do the job and not put any resident in there that has a disadvantage of having productive contribution because they just don't have the background.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Vice Mayor. So, we have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: All right, moving on. Mr. Clerk, did I miss anything at all on the agenda?

City Clerk Urquia: No, sir.

Mayor Lago: All right, so I'm going to take a 15-minute break, and we'll be back at 5:45, and we can commence working on the budget hearing, the first budget hearing for the City of Coral Gables, September 13, 2023. Thank you.