

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-18
August 26, 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

Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Jackson Rip Holmes

Lisa DeTournay

Agenda Item F-18 [4:21 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question and City Charter Amendment to be held on April 21, 2026; providing for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking if the Charter should be amended to change the City's General Election from April of odd numbered years to coincide with the General Election held in November of even numbered years and adjusting the associated qualification and run off dates; and changing all subsequent elections; providing for a mail ballot election; providing for notice; providing for inclusion in the City Charter; providing for related matters; providing for severability clause; and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Item F-18. Madam City Attorney.

City Attorney Suarez: F-18 is A Resolution of the City Commission calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question and City Charter Amendment to be held on April 21, 2026; providing

for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking if the Charter should be amended to change the City's General Election from April of odd numbered years to coincide with the General Election held in November of even numbered years and adjusting the associated qualification and run off dates; and changing all subsequent elections; providing for a mail ballot election; providing for notice; providing for inclusion in the City Charter; providing for related matters; providing for severability clause; and providing for an effective date.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. So, as you all know, there's been a lot of discussion regarding election dates and there has been some litigation recently, none of which is final. We're still awaiting final decisions on a petition for rehearing at the third DCA, but in the meantime, we come to you before with an item sponsored by the Mayor, which calls for a special mail ballot election to be held April 21st, 2026. It sends to the voters of Coral Gables the same changes that were adopted in the ordinance, that is namely moving the elections from April of odd-numbered years to November of even-numbered years beginning in November 2026, changing the associated qualifying dates to match those provided for in state statute and changing the runoff from two weeks after the general election to four weeks after the general election. So those are the three main changes. If we move forward with this question, we will obviously address the previously adopted ordinance prior to consideration of this question by the voters. And just for the record, to be clear, this calls for a mail ballot to be held on April 21st, 2026. We've already had conversations with the Supervisor of Elections. We'd need to formally request that date. So of course it's contingent on that approval, but I understand that that should not be a difficult ask. So happy to answer any specific questions, happy to read the question if you would like, but the exact ballot question language and title are included here as are the strikethroughs that are proposed for the Charter.

Mayor Lago: Will you please read the ballot language?

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Of course. So, the question as proposed, the title is amending the Charter to change city's election and associated dates to coincide with national elections. And the question itself is, shall the City Charter be amended to change the month and day when the City of Coral Gables holds its General Elections from April of each odd year to the date of the national election in November of each even year, commencing in 2026, resulting in a four month reduction of current elected officials terms and adjusting associated qualifying and runoff dates with the intention of increasing voter turnout and decreasing election costs.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. So, may I entertain a motion?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, I'd like to move it.

Mayor Lago: We're going to have a comment after.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah. I also, because this is something that we've been trying to work on for years, I'd also like to be a co-sponsor and ask, you know, while we're doing this, that we don't,

this is going to be the meeting where we don't kick the can down the road anymore. We've been waiting to get out there, the Inspector General issue. I'd ask that that be included.

Mayor Lago: That's a great idea.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And also, the four fifths vote on the reserves.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think both of those items, the electorate would like to speak on sooner rather than later to be able to resolve some of these problems.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's my motion.

Mayor Lago: Perfect.

Commissioner Lara: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Close the...

City Clerk Urquia: We will, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We'll close the public comment. Go ahead, sir.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Got in under the wire. Barely.

Mayor Lago: Go ahead, sir.

Mr. Holmes: Thanks for the leeway. So, you all heard me worry publicly about my financial survival. And when we were talking about the mobility hub, that City Manager Iglesias has said he foresees a future with mixed use buildings on Miracle Mile. If those of you who don't know it, this is my only major source of income. And if Miracle Mile goes mixed use, let's just say seven story buildings, guess who dies financially? Me. So I don't think that's a great future for me. And basically, then getting back to these election issues, I want these matters to be, I want our elections to be fair elections. Therefore, I want them to be in April as I guess have always been when poor candidates have a chance to beat the developer finance candidates. So, I urge you to vote no here.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Holmes: But it's only for survival.

Mayor Lago: Okay, I get it. I appreciate you. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before you move forward, I also have one member of the public requesting to speak on Zoom. It's Lisa DeTournay.

Mayor Lago: Can we close the public comment after? Thank you. Yes, the floor is yours.

Ms. DeTournay: Thank you, Mayor and Commissioners. I would like to first of all, thank Commissioner Castro for her efforts to have a referendum so that there will be a decision by the residents on moving the election date. I do agree that it would be better to keep our election in April. And although I can see the financial benefits to adding it to the federal elections in November of the even years, because of the way that people, I guess, do or don't get involved in elections in this city. And I don't think we're that much different from other cities. I think that it really is important to keep it in April so that the residents and resident groups have a chance to decide which candidates we want to support and make an impact in that regard. And yes, if our election, if the Gables election takes place in November with the General Election, when the ballot's already several pages long, many people will not even get to it. And I think the only Coral Gables candidates who will be at all known to most people will only be the very, very wealthy who could afford television ads to compete with the onslaught of ads that we all endure in October and leading up to a November election. So, I think it's important that we do have a referendum, you know, calling, getting the residents to vote on this change. But I just wanted to state that I think it's not a good idea to change this for the City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right. So, I've put this item on the agenda and it's pretty simple. And I appreciate the Vice Mayor's recommendations. And I'm actually going to add more recommendations for my colleagues to consider. I think we should have the Charter Review Committee meet every 10 years, which is on the ballot already, also on this April election. I also think that authorizing the Inspector General, which as you remember, all of you remember, my colleagues on the Commission said we're on a cesspool of corruption, but they would not under any circumstances hire an Inspector General at that moment. And I said, let's start with my office. Said it costs too much money. But I think you cannot put a price on corruption, stamping out corruption. So that is the necessary, that is the most important item that we could have in the April election immediately. That's why I think that outside of the elections, which are critically important, I think that the most important one by far, even more important than the elections, is getting the Inspector General here immediately. That's number two. Salary increases required by referendum. Move that to April also. I think that people should be the ultimate arbiter. I don't believe that Ariel Fernandez and Melissa Castro should be the ones that decide whether they get 101% raise arbitrarily by putting it and hiding it

in the budget and then forcing Vice Mayor Anderson and myself to vote against the budget based on that one item. And then later saying, hey, he doesn't support Police and Fire because he didn't vote for the budget. Catch 22, correct? That's been used against me. So, I think we should move that one also. Reserve policy amendment requires a referendum. That should also be moved to April. Right now, you can dip into the reserves by just having three votes. Commissioner Fernandez advocated on the public record to be able to use reserves for projects. I'm wholly opposed to that. The reserves are what has gotten us to a AAA bonded rated city. And I think it's what has protected us in reference to our last hurricane, which resulted in the depletion of that reserve. But it sets us apart from every other city because we're ready to address issues. I also believe that we should include April prohibiting changing the election day via ordinance. That one should also be included in April. I think it should always go to the voters as a prime example. And allow appointing Commissioner to remove board members. Right now, we have this funky provision in our Charter, which does not allow Commissioners or Mayors or Vice Mayors to be able to remove their own board members if they are trumped by the Commission. I believe that the Commissioner that appoints a board member should be able to remove that board appointment whether or not you have the support of the Commission. It's your board appointment. So those items should be all moved in my opinion to April, and we should make it a robust mail ballot. So, let's discuss this. Why are we doing this? 28 out of 34 municipalities already have November elections. The last one to do it was South Miami. It works. It saves the city money, significant money and could have three, four, maybe even five times more participation. Certain people in this room will tell you, they want quality voters, not quantity. That's a dog whistle. For control, I want more voters. Every vote counts. Don't believe that type of rhetoric. Another thing that is critically important, the mail ballot hasn't been done before. Another lie. Village of Pinecrest has done it. Town of Cutler Bay has done it. City of Miami Beach has done it. Doral has done it. It's been done by major municipalities. It works. Doesn't mean that it works in your favor, but it works. And unlike what was done here during Amos Rojas, when we went in favor of attempting to do the annexation, this time the city will, will coordinate with staff in an effort to educate and send out as much information to make sure that all the voters are aware of what they're voting for. On the annexation process, they completely and utterly abandoned any outreach. They did not send any emails to the residents. They did not send anything in the mail. They did not put anything on the TV channel. It was an effort to not put any information out there, not educate and not push the vote out. Even with that, we still got over 40%, which I couldn't believe. So, with that being said, I think it's a great opportunity. And most importantly, it gets done in April. And guess what? We can have an election in November. I met with Alina Garcia. The cost is \$80,000. Which by the way, when you think about it, we have an election in April, and the subsequent April, you're going to spend over \$200,000 on the election. So, you still have a delta of over \$120,000. And by the way, unlike the City of Miami, which extended their terms by one year, I'm proposing to shave five months from my term, which I think is appropriate. And that shows true discipline and not a self-serving interest. I do not want to have elections in April. I will put my record and what I have done in this community in November in front of all the voters. I think that is the appropriate way

to lead. You lead from the front. You don't lead in April where you're trying to get less voter turnout so you can control and manipulate the voter turnout. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So very good points. And with that, I'd like to amend the motion to include the Charter Amendment process over 10 years. Salary increases by referendum and prohibiting the changing of elections without it going before the voters and the provision you mentioned regarding board members. You know, appointing Commissioners should be able to remove board members. And I just wanted to add a couple of comments because there's been some information or I should say comments made that, and it's, I think, confusing for folks when you say, well, you're not going to reach the end of the ballot. There are certain things that people don't vote on because they're just not familiar like judicial candidates. I've received the calls on behalf of friends that don't know which judge to vote for so a lot of them will skip over it. I usually refer people to the Miami-Dade County Bar site that provides excellent advice, but they'll reach the other questions that they understand. Three more bubbles is not going to be very difficult for this community. They came out and they were in this past election. No one had difficulty with the questions. Everybody comes out in November. They don't have difficulty with the questions in this jurisdiction. We are blessed with very highly educated individuals that live in our city. So therefore, this notion that people in our community cannot discern the difference between issues is just a non-starter. People came out this past time because they wanted the elections moved because they supported the candidates that wanted the elections moved. They supported the candidates that didn't believe that salary increases should be done by the Commission for the Commission and without any input from the community. The voters, they believed that we needed an Inspector General because the City of Doral had this matter come before them and they came out fully in favor. And there's been other locations as well. And I know the Mayor knows them off the top of their head but let's let the voters decide. And that's what this is about. I don't think I have anything more to add. Do you have something to add?

Commissioner Castro: I do.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: I would add, I echo what the Mayor and the Vice Mayor have said. And to kind of put it in context for me. So, I'm hearing for the first time what I think is a fantastic idea of adding additional items to this, assuming the Commission votes for this April mail-in election. Because I've heard, you know, wow, we're going to do a Special Election for one question in April, but now we're going to be taking care of, if this carries, all kinds of important issues. And we're going to do it so that you drive even more interest and hopefully even more participation in the mail-in ballot process because we've put such critical items for a referendum that they were already scheduled, but we're just doing it in the most expeditious way. And for those who say, it should always be in April because that's how we vote here in Coral Gables. Well, if we carry this, that the

mail-in will be in April, right? So, we're not even throwing a weird month, like we're not doing something, let's say in January, okay? It's going to be in April. And I agree that every vote counts.

Mayor Lago: That's good, that's good.

Commissioner Lara: Every vote counts. And there's nothing prohibiting somebody who would want to vote in April from voting in November. So, there's no impediment, but we see that there's some inexplicable or obvious, take your choice, reason why we have over 80% turnout in November and rather paltry less than 20% in April. I think I would characterize it a little bit differently, Vice Mayor. I think it's insulting to say that the electorate doesn't have the bandwidth or the interest or the capacity to vote for their Commissioners or for the special items that affect their everyday living here in Coral Gables when it's put to an election. So, I think this has been a fantastic turn of events to hear that through a collaborative process, this particular item is now going to be more robust, draw more attention, and I'm highly supportive of it as a result.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. Number one, let's not confuse the people. Let me go ahead and clarify what this item is about. This is not about a November or an April election. This is about when the ballot is going to go out, the mail-in ballot is going to go out, and the proposal here in this resolution is for April 21, 2026. This is not about choosing April or November right now. This is about the date that there's going to be a referendum, just to clarify that, not to confuse anybody who's viewing this. Now, Billy, I have a presentation ready. Would you do me the favor to please put it on? Beautiful. To not confuse people and make sure that everybody's on the same page because everybody's talking different things that have nothing to do with this resolution. Item F18, Special Election for April 21, 2026. What's being decided? The Mayor has proposed a costly, unconventional, all-mail Special Election to ask residents if they want to move our elections to November. Commissioner Castro, me, has proposed a ballot question in April 2027 during our already scheduled municipal elections at no additional cost to taxpayers. Okay, facts residents should know. For nearly 100 years, Coral Gables has held municipal elections in April of odd number of years, separate from partisan races so residents can focus on local issues. That's what's important in Coral Gables. We pride ourselves in April as we have for the past 100 years. So, let's get to the juicy part here now. Cost to taxpayers. By adding the questions to our actual election, it's going to cost us \$0 because it's already on our scheduled election. To add the two questions on the November election, it's going to cost us \$18,000. Now for this standalone Special Election, it's going to cost us \$80,000, just as the Mayor said. Now if the whole intent here is to save money, why are we paying \$80,000? Why are we spending \$80,000 if there's already another alternative to spend zero? Well, before I tell you why, let's go to the next slide. Mail-in only elections for her voters. I know that I think there's two Republicans here on the table, but Trump himself has called

all mail-in elections a disaster and an invitation for cheating. I think most of the Commission here has been well aware of what's happening with this. Donald Trump and many Republicans have consistently opposed expanding vote-by-mail, argued it increases risk of fraud, ballot harvesting, and undermines election integrity. However, you guys are already here going to vote to do a mail-in for the whole electorate. Conclusion. Nationally, Republicans and President Trump have fought against all mail-in election because they are expensive, less secure, risk disenfranchising voters. Yet here in Coral Gables, Mayor Lago is pushing a costly mail-only election that directly contradicts those Republican principles. And you ask yourself, why?

Mayor Lago: Are you done?

Commissioner Castro: No, I'm not done, but it's not coming off. You could go ahead and remove it now.

Mayor Lago: No, I don't want to remove it. Can we bring it back? Okay. I'd like to mention some comments on that if we can. Can we go back a few slides, Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Castro: Yes, let me go ahead and finish and then I'll give you the floor if you want. You have this little thing too. The reason that the Mayor wants to change the election is because he wants us out of office five months before. That's basically it. He wants me and Ariel out as soon as possible. It is not okay just because you have a personal vendetta against me, I don't know for what reason really, for you to have to put this burden on the taxpayers. So that's it. I will not be voting on this. This is not fiscally responsible. The best way is in April. And if you want to move the elections to November, I'm okay with it. If people are voting for November, let's move them to November. But do it the right way. Don't do it just because you want to get me out of office. You told that to Kirk Menendez. You said it to several people. In fact, I have you on video. I have you on video.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Commissioner Castro, when you're done, I'll go through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I just want to respond.

Commissioner Castro: Here you go.

Mayor Lago: This is the perfect slide that I want. All right, so I want to be very clear so that Melissa Castro understands me. I'm going to use her own slide.

Commissioner Castro: Go for it.

Mayor Lago: She wants to have elections April 27, April 2027, so that she could have another election where there's less people voting. The gentleman standing up here, if you read Aesop's today, there's a video of him saying that in the election two years ago, when Ariel Fernandez and Melissa Castro won, Ariel Fernandez asked him to not run against me for Mayor, so I wouldn't be on the ballot. I was on Aesop's Gables today. What they want to do is they want to have another

election on April 2027, less voter turnout because people will not, you get maybe 10, 15, 20% versus a national election, which gets a massive turnout because people turn out for the Governor. They turn out for the President. So, the goal is, of course, it costs zero because you're already spending \$200,000 for that election, which you wouldn't have to spend if you did it in November. So, what she would like to do is let's move elections to November after people vote in favor of it in April because I've polled it and over 70% of people are in favor. And as we walk door to door, everybody asks the same thing. Why are we doing, why are we not doing elections in November? So, she could buy another four years in office. If you can win in November, then you deserve to be in public office. But at the end of the day, you do it now in April, a mail-in ballot costs \$80,000, which is still less than the \$200,000 you're going to spend in April. You save the city \$120,000. And you have the election in November. And I will shave five months off my term. But let's go back because I'm happy Melissa is so interested now in fiscal.

Commissioner Castro: Please, please, please address, address me formally.

Mayor Lago: I'm so happy that she's in favor now of being fiscally responsible. I put forth a memo that I made it a public record, and everyone here should have got a copy. She has encumbered the city with her votes to the tune of \$27 million over the next 10 years. When you mention about fiscal responsibility, the number one cardinal sin that you cannot commit is raising your salary. Thank you to the leadership of the Vice Mayor and Commissioner Lara, who repealed that, along with an increase in personal expense accounts and car allowances. So please, don't talk to me about fiscal responsibility when you jeopardize a city and you bring in an incompetent individual to run the city like Amos Rojas and you hire him based on his LinkedIn profile. You don't run a \$300 million city with over 1,000 employees based on that. You also don't do a \$20 million COLA. You also don't break procurement standards and give out a \$40,000 check to the theater. You don't hire in one year the amount of people you hire that's going to cost the city over \$10 million, \$11 million over 10 years. This is on your record. It's not on my record. This is your record. So, when you want to claim fiscal responsibility, the memo is a public record. We worked on it for over three weeks. I presented it earlier today. Having elections, a mail-in ballot in April allows residents to address all these concerns, saves the city \$120,000 and ensures that we have a November election within months. That's the right thing to do. The voters should make the decision. And this is a trigger, this is a trigger, Madam City Attorney, that if today or tomorrow, I think it was the last day or two, prior to the Supreme Court having to make a decision whether we're going to pick up the City of Miami case or not, correct?

City Attorney Suarez: You're saying that you would like this to be triggered by that?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Attorney Suarez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, but I mean, we should be waiting. We should be hearing any moment whether they pick up that appeal or not, correct?

City Attorney Suarez: So, the response by the appellee to the City of Miami's motion is due today. So, I'm assuming there will be a reply by Miami and then I don't know when we would expect the decision.

Mayor Lago: Obviously. If they pick it up, we'll hold.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, this is on a petition for rehearing.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's still before the 3rd District Court of Appeals.

Mayor Lago: Well, my point is that we have this ready to go and we move forward in April, and we use this opportunity to also do all the different Charter Review Committee, authorizing Inspector General, salary increases, reserve policy amendment, prohibiting changes to election date via ordinance and allowing appointing Commissioners to remove board members. It's pretty simple, straight up, and it's transparent.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: If I can, Mayor, Vice Mayor, I understand the amendment to the motion. I would just like to note, we will likely need to return with those official ballot questions. There are some timing requirements we have to fulfill. So, if that's the direction of the Commission, we will return likely in early January with those formal questions, again, setting that Special Election for those additional questions.

Mayor Lago: So, in closing, don't make this about being fiscally responsible. By having this in April, you're going to save \$120,000 than having the following election in April. It's just simple math.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, through the Mayor. I was going to go through the math as well. But before I do that, I'd like to note that our Governor spoke about our Department of Elections and our mail-in ballot system is secure and trustworthy. And every state is different, I understand. And there may be some states out there that don't have a good and robust mail-in ballot system that is trustworthy, but the state of Florida does. So, no additional cost as shown on the first slide was incorrect because there is additional cost. You have the cost of the April election to deal with. You have the additional cost to put it on in November, these questions. So, subtract the 18,000 to put it on November. The additional cost, there is no additional cost in this ballot. And the net cost will only be \$62,000. So, and in the meantime, we'll be able to have a decision on the Inspector General and the way that the question is framed. It is not a costly item and is as a as needed. We'll have more discussion about the language later. I'm totally in favor of this. Thank you again, Mayor, for bringing this. I've been working on hoping to have this done two years ago. It wasn't about shaving anybody's term. It was about shaving my term as well. We all have to take a cut. You know, we made a decision to do the right thing. We made a decision to reduce our terms in order to bring to

the voters the opportunity to make the choice. So, if you would like to speak, I will yield to the floor to the esteemed Commissioner Lara.

Mayor Lago: Counselor Lara.

Commissioner Lara: Thank you, Vice Mayor. Briefly, I will not repeat ad nauseum what I and all of us who ran this past, the issues of the profound and tangible benefits of moving the elections to November. But I will say that since I've been absolutely loud and clear, I want the elections to be held in November, right? That's not... And I want it as fast as practical. So, you know, there's an old saying, justice delayed, justice denied. Well, I believe delaying the decision on whether or not the voters want this to go to November is denying the opportunity for people to vote. So, I don't see it as a cost analysis because as it's shown, it's actually we can save money if we do it the way that's been proposed by the Mayor. And we increase the number of people who will be voting on this issue by virtue of the mail-in. Stephanie, this is different than other kinds of proposed mail-in, right? This is not if you've only registered for mail-in. Could you just tell us a little bit about that?

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Correct. My understanding, and the Clerk has been speaking with the Supervisor of Elections as well, is that this is a mail ballot only election. So, ballots would be sent out approximately four weeks before the deadline of April 21st to everyone who has registered by the day prior to the sending out of the ballots to everyone who has a registered address. If the address, if the person is no longer there, you cannot forward those mail ballots. They don't go on elsewhere. And then they are returned via mail by that date, either via USPS, or they can be dropped off in person at the Doral headquarters. So, there are not drop boxes or early voting sites, but there is the opportunity to mail and drop off at election headquarters.

Commissioner Lara: So, everybody who's registered to vote-

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Every registered voter will receive a mail-in ballot. Correct.

Commissioner Lara: I'll just finish by saying one thing. This is the commentary, Commissioner Castro, that in your presentation, you raised the issue of a benefit is it reduces partisanship if you do this in April, the way it's been done versus if you move it to November. You raised the reference to President Trump. You alluded to two colleagues of yours on the Commission as being registered Republicans. I would ask that you do not introduce partisanship onto this dais or into its deliberative process because I don't want that. This is a non-partisan body. We do what's in the best interest of Coral Gables, not for red or for blue, but for the residents of Coral Gables.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. And that's exactly what I want to avoid, 100%. That's why I put that up there. I really never touched those subjects, but moving forward, I'll take that into consideration. I'm never really going to mention that again. Okay. When I was referring to the cost, I was referring to the cost of ballot questions, okay? I wasn't referring to elections. Now, if we were to do it in April, it would still cost us less if you're combining \$80,000 together, then again with a November election. When I'm talking about fiscal responsibility, I'm just going based

off on what you guys campaigned because you said higher voter turnout and the city will be saving \$200,000. That's what I'm addressing myself to. I'm trying to reach your goal with what you guys have promised. You promised a savings of \$200,000, but then again here, not even compromising, you are putting more expenses, which is the \$80,000, and then a November election, which is even more than an April election altogether. Okay, so don't try to confuse people. They're not confused. I think people are seeing straight what it is.

Mayor Lago: Okay, I'd like to answer. And let's go through this one more time for the record, okay? Elections in November do not have an added cost.

City Clerk Urquia: So, Mr. Mayor, just to be clear. Last year when we ran the question for the annexation, piggyback on the Primary Election, it cost the city less than \$5,000.

Mayor Lago: Okay, so besides that, let's just get away from that. Let's just get away from that. No, no, but you're right though. So, I don't know why you're laughing because the bottom line is that it doesn't cost the city anything. So, listen, if you have elections, if you no longer have elections in April, you save the city \$200,000, okay? By having this mail-in ballot, next April, it's going to cost the city about \$80,000. I had a meeting with the Elections Department.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, sorry to interrupt again. I have the estimate from Miami-Dade County Elections officially, \$77,205.

Mayor Lago: So, I was off by 2,800 bucks. Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We're in the ballpark.

Mayor Lago: We're in the ballpark. If you don't have that election and you continue to have elections, the subsequent April, which would be April of 2027, which is what she wants to do, the election will cost the city \$200,000. When you deduct \$200,000 from \$77,000, you get a delta of \$123,000. That is a savings because we will not have an election in April of 2027, God willing, because people will say, we want to have an election in November. So, you have an election, a mail-in ballot election, April 2026, and then you will have an election in November of 2026. So, your election in April 2027, that you mentioned there, will never happen.

Commissioner Castro: We'll see about that.

Mayor Lago: Hold on. Let me finish. And it'll happen. And it'll happen. By the way, it's not just one year. It's subsequent years and subsequent years. It's an annuity that'll keep paying back. So, it's not just one time. It's in perpetuity. So, you're saving money. That's being fiscally sound. And also, not being afraid to go in front of voters and your record. So that, let's not confuse people. Let's stop confusing people and using fuzzy math, okay? Please, the facts are the facts. So, we have a motion and a second on the floor. And we have also, let me finish. We have a motion and a second

on the floor. And we have an amendment, a friendly amendment by the Vice Mayor in regard to the additional referendums.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: And we will bring those back at the appropriate time.

Mayor Lago: Those will all come back. And especially depending on what the City Attorney tells us as a result of today's findings by the state of Florida Supreme Court, okay?

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Correct.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, go ahead.

Commissioner Castro: You said that I would not win an election. To begin with, you don't even know if I'm going to run again. I don't even know if I'm going to run again. Okay, but I could guarantee you one thing. If I'm going to run, I'm going to win. There's no fighting that. So don't be so worried and so preoccupied if you think I cannot win an election. I would never go into something I can't win, okay?

Mayor Lago: Okay, well, that being said, I just hope you don't run your poll numbers like I have on five times. You're below 15%. You're upside down two to one. So, we have a motion and a second. Let's move on. You already spoke about this item, sir. It was closed. You spoke about it. You spoke in public comment.

Mr. Holmes: No, no, no, it's just the two items. No, it's not. Okay, I get that, sorry.

Mayor Lago: We have a motion and a second.

Commissioner Castro: No

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Commissioner Fernandez: Absent)

(Vote: 3-1)

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.