

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item I-1
November 14, 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

Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item I-1 [Start: 3:15 p.m.]

Charter Review Committee update

Mayor Lago: We'll take item I-1, City Attorney Items, Charter Review Committee update.

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor, I need the Deputy City Attorney for that one, can we pass until she's ready. She was helping them with resolving this.

Mayor Lago: We'll come back. What's left are Commission items.

City Attorney Suarez: Oh, she's here. She's here if you want to do it.

Mayor Lago: No worries. No worries.

City Attorney Suarez: Sorry.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: We've got a lot of things happening today. Thank you all. So, this is just a brief update on the Charter Review Committee. So, as you all know, you adopted
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this resolution in September. At the last board meeting you all brought your appointees. Thank you for doing that. The Clerk's office has reached out to them to welcome them to the city. Based on the discussions, in September we were looking at a very ambitious timeline of getting this done before the centennial in April of 2025. There would be a referendum in November of 2024. We have a presentation with some proposed deadlines. Like I said, it's very ambitious. It would require a meeting of the first Town Hall in like the next two weeks, which hasn't been advertised yet, but we just wanted to make sure that you all knew that we were working on this process. Those are some proposed dates. I know some of them, Charter Review Committee members have reached out to the City Attorney with some proposed alternative schedules a little bit. So, I'll let her address those.

City Attorney Suarez: Yes. So, we did propose just like the Deputy City Attorney said, this very ambitious schedule, and we communicated this new schedule as well with the members of the Charter Review Committee. Mr. Mayor, the Chair, Mayor Slesnick reached out to me, and he had a suggestion. He said that prior to the Town Halls, he would like the Committee to meet with our office so that the committee can be educated as to really what their function will be, what they can and can't do with the Charter, what the Charter actually does. He thinks that would help guide the process and be very fruitful. The resolution didn't contemplate that, so if you all feel that that's something you'd want to incorporate, we can do that today as well. He also thought that the Town Halls should really be before the Charter Review Committee. In other words, for them to receive the comments of residents directly at the Town Hall. He says he's happy to take the burden of the Town Halls off of the Commission and have the Committee kind of run those as well. So, I say all that to you so that we can do all that. Of course, it would make the timeline change and we can just kind of let it organically flow, if that's what the Commission wants to do.

Mayor Lago: Again, I appreciate the Mayor for saying yes to serve and I think they are great ideas, as long as the Commission is willing to move in that direction.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think those are great ideas. If they are curious about the process that it would be important for them to meet with you, and absolutely, I think the intent was always for them to be present at the Sunshine meeting, so if they are leading the Sunshine meeting that's even better, because they'll be a little more engaged.

City Attorney Suarez: So then, we'll take direction or maybe we should have a motion that basically or adds to the process, the first meeting of the Charter Review Committee with the City Attorney's office and then the Town Halls to be lead by the Charter Review Committee, following the same 30-day timeline in between the Town Halls, I should say, the same 30-day period of time.

Commissioner Fernandez: Well, I'll move that amendment.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Just a moment of clarification. If we don't have that same deadline at the end, do we want to defer to the Charter Review Committee on their timing for a

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potential referendum. Do you all have any direction to them. We had discussed that centennial, but we are open to any suggestions, like I said that would be very ambitious.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think the word centennial, I'll put it in there, was just talking about the city going towards the centennial. After I drafted that, I spoke to the City Attorney, and she told me the last one took over a year to complete. So, I think it should take its course. I think there are going to be questions that will come from the community or from the Commission that they should really discuss thoroughly. And the point of the Town Halls was to make sure that we got resident input and the 30-day period in between was to make sure anybody who was travelling we didn't have those meetings too close together. Personally, I think we should probably start the process so that it runs contiguous, instead of doing November, then having a break for the holidays, having the second one in January. I would think starting in January with that first meeting.

City Attorney Suarez: Well, you're saying the first meeting with the committee.

Commissioner Fernandez: No, not the committee, but as far as the first Town Hall. It gives plenty of time to advertise as well.

City Attorney Suarez: Well, certainly if we're going to have the first meeting with the committee, then we could do that. I think maybe even the November 30th date, if that works for the committee, we can sort that out with the committee as to their availability, of course, but then the Town Halls, yes, because of the holidays, it just wouldn't happen until the beginning of the year.

Commissioner Fernandez: And it gives them plenty of time to schedule, because I'm sure they have things on their schedules already to make sure they are available.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Of course. And so, I just want to reiterate then that there is no hard sort of backstop deadline that we're aiming with, and we will just go with the Charter Review Committee's thoughts on, if there are even any potential referendum questions, things that can't be done via ordinance when that would occur.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think we can get their feedback. I had an aspiration of finishing the Mediterranean design thing by September and having it presented and finish it by the end of the year, but as you can see that did not happen.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Good intentions all around.

Commissioner Menendez: September of which year.

[Laughter]

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: So, I think we had a motion.

Mayor Lago: And a second.

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City Clerk Urquia: All in favor.

All: Aye.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Thank you all very much and thank your appointees as well.