

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-5
September 25, 2025
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Government Affairs Director, Chelsea Granell

Public Speaker(s)

Rana Brown

Agenda Item H-5 [Start: 2:05 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission approving the City's 2026 Legislative Priorities in substantially the attached form.

Mayor Lago: Welcome back to the Commission. We have a 2 p.m. time certain. Item H-5, Mr. Manager.

City Attorney Suarez: H-5 is a resolution of the City Commission approving the City's 2026 legislative priorities and substantially the attached form.

Government Affairs Director: Good afternoon, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners. Chelsea Grannell, Government Affairs Director. Today, I'll be presenting our proposed 2026 Legislative Priorities, both our policy agenda and our appropriation request. These priorities are the result of a truly collaborative process shaped through thoughtful input from our department directors, the executive team, and our lobbying partners. Together, we worked diligently to identify projects and policy initiatives that will strengthen our community, improve quality of life, and position Coral

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Gables to meet both today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities. I want to underscore that this process reflects not only the city's immediate needs, but also our long-term vision for resiliency, sustainability, and responsible growth. The legislative package demonstrates our collective commitment to advancing initiatives that directly benefit our residents, businesses, and overall character of our City Beautiful. And if you could please queue up the PDF or the PowerPoint, the PowerPoint presentation, please. I think that's the wrong one.

Mayor Lago: Can you go back to that one, Mr. Clerk? We'll bring that back to you.

Mayor Lago: There we go.

Government Affairs Director: So, before we look forward, let's briefly review the outcomes of last session. We secured full funding for two key projects, the police department's high water rescue vehicle and the Granada Basin sewer rehabilitation for a total cost of \$750,000. While ADA improvements in the downtown Central Business District and roadway safety projects were initially approved, those unfortunately were vetoed by the Governor. This track record underscores both our successes and the areas we'll continue to advocate for. What is the legislative agenda? Our legislative agenda is a roadmap for the city's policy and funding advocacy. It is adopted only by this Commission and becomes the basis for our lobbying work in Tallahassee. This ensures our advocacy reflects both the Commission's priorities and the best interests of the city. The legislative process. So, the process of developing this agenda is highly collaborative. We've engaged department directors, assistant directors, the City Manager and executive team, and we have worked closely with our lobbying team. Most importantly, the Commission's feedback was incorporated. So, thank you all for taking the time to meet with me. Your feedback was incorporated to ensure that these are shared priorities, and these priorities are the result of that collective effort. The policy priorities are very much similar every year. The removal of some of them happened because they're no longer items that are being discussed at the state level. There have been quite a few additions. There are six to be specific that we have added. We've added the sovereign immunity. We've had that in the past, but last year we didn't have that as part of our legislative package. We've added redundant communication infrastructure polls, which is an item that recently came before the Commission. Expanding property tax relief for vulnerable Floridians, an item that the Commission also voted upon. And electric bike and micro mobility safety, protecting cybersecurity information and supporting excellence in education, which was the most recent addition based off of resident feedback and collaboration among members of the Commission. That's what it looks like. You all have a copy of that as well and you can obtain it on the study website with the agenda. And then the second part of the legislative package includes the state appropriation request. So, there are two parts. There's the policy, which we had just gone through, and then there's the appropriation request. So, this year we are advancing six appropriation requests, totaling 3.1 million in state funding. Just to remind you, last year it was 1.4 million, I believe, and we were able to secure \$750,000 of that. These projects have to meet certain criteria,

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which makes it all the more challenging to work with directors and to narrow the list as to how we come through this. So, these are the ones that we selected that are on the screen are shovel-ready. We're able to match them, so money has to be allocated on the budget. And they address critical infrastructure safety and resilient needs. So, as you can see, we have gravity sanitary sewer pipe rehab. We're making a \$450,000 request, \$400,000 for traffic calming and safety, downtown drainage flood mitigation, \$450,000, Ponce corridor waterway \$450,000, generators for the emergency response continuity, that's \$500,000, and the environmental remediation of debris management and trash reclamation. And so, the next steps are, once these priorities are adopted, they would allow us to guide all our advocacy efforts at the upcoming session. Commission adoption gives us a unified voice in the process. We will continue our coordinated lobbying efforts at both the state and federal levels to advance these priorities. Together with continued collaboration, we're well-positioned to build on last year's successes. And I think that it goes without saying that we have to be incredibly grateful to our legislative champions, Senator Ileana Garcia and Representative Demi Busata. They represent us exceptionally well in Tallahassee, and they advocate strongly on behalf of the residents of the city. In addition, I'd like to thank all of our department directors and staff. Their hard work and collaboration have been essential in identifying and shaping our appropriation requests. And I really just want to thank all of you for your leadership and the amount of collaboration and feedback that you have provided me throughout the process. So, thank you for that. And last but not least, I'd like to thank our incredible lobbying team, Jared, Ronna, who's here today, Ronna Brown, and Nelson Diaz for their continued guidance and expertise throughout the process. So, we stand here if you have any questions, but our hope is for you to approve our package for this session.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. What I'd like to add very quickly because I've had the privilege of working with Chelsea for a long time and the Manager. A week and a half ago, there were only two appropriations, correct? Was there two out of six?

Government Affairs Director: A week and a half, sorry.

Mayor Lago: A week and-a-half ago there were...

Government Affairs Director: Oh, yes, yes. It was very difficult for us to actually move forward with appropriations because of the criteria that we talked about. There's specific parameters that has to be done before a certain time. So, because of that, we only had two, but that wasn't enough. We had to find more. And so, the Manager's leadership and his team, the DCM and ACM, were instrumental in addition to the directors.

Mayor Lago: So, what I wanted to say was about two weeks ago, I had met with the Manager, the ACM and the DCM, and we were talking about the fact that there were only two items as a result of them being shovel-ready, which is critically important. We can make 100 asks, but if they're not shovel ready or they don't meet a certain criteria, I'm not going to talk about that here. I think the

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Commission understands what I'm talking about. Certain things are within the wheelhouse. Some things are not within the wheelhouse of the state legislature, but I want to commend you because you with Rana got us from two to six. You worked incredibly hard. You found in the budget, combing the budget, looking for ways to match. You figured out which are the best opportunities for us to present with the help of Rana and her team and Jared and our other gentleman who helps us out. I forgot his name right now.

Government Affairs Director: Nelson.

Mayor Lago: He's going to kill me. Nelson, to put us in a position today where we have six, over \$3 million of appropriations. Not saying we're going to get them all, but I will task you with hopefully getting us all that money with the support of the Commission and our lobbyists, but then at the end of the day, we wouldn't be here without your effort and your leadership on this, along with Rana and the whole team, the ACM, the DCM. It's been a lot of work over the last two weeks, and I commend you for that. I thank you because I know you've met with all the Commissioners multiple times, and all the directors, interested stakeholders. Kudos go to you.

Government Affairs Director: Thank you. It truly was a collaborative effort, and may I add that I've learned through this that every word counts. I think I had this conversation with Commissioner Fernandez. The level of strategy that goes behind this, that's an understatement. Every word matters, especially when you're playing to the tone of the current state of affairs in our state. So, thank you. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And I just, again, want to applaud you and City Manager's office and City Manager's team. Not only is it a beautiful package this time, I mean, really word smithed well. I wasn't happy last year. Some people really knew that I wasn't happy last year, but I am thrilled this year with the work product that we've gotten out of this. So, thank you very much for all your efforts and the timeliness. I mean, it's not even the end of September, and we have this ready to go.

Mayor Lago: And if I may add another thing, and I know that my colleagues have other items that they want to discuss in regard to this. We put ourselves in a position to truly take it to the next level. What do I say? Why do I say that? You know, inviting Demi, something that we worked on for the last three years to get her here, she's finally here on the premise. She has her office here. We've really worked hard on that. That to us is, again, it's not saying we're going to get anything, but imagine our director can literally meet with Demi whenever she'd like or her staff. I know that she's met with a Senator, all the Senators over half a dozen times, all their state representatives. So, to have her here in the building is a really big deal, to be honest with you. My understanding is that we're the envy of a lot of other municipalities. And again, it's just another opportunity for us to just constantly be leaving our fingerprint on hopefully next year's legislative session.

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Commissioner Fernandez: I think that being the envy of other municipalities is always our goal. We're very good at it. And I appreciate the work that you put into this. We talked about the wordsmithing. It is incredible work because just having two words out of order automatically will have somebody click and say, oh, I'm not interested in this project. So, I appreciate the work that you put in, Rana and Jared and the teams up in Tallahassee, guiding us through the process as well. Representatives Busatta-Cabrera, Garcia and Calatayud, who were also instrumental in getting us funding last year. We appreciate all the work that has been put in. I'm optimistic. I think that our asks are in the silos that are important to a lot of members in the legislature going into this year. And, you know, if there's anything I can do to help, let me know.

Government Affairs Director: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. Thank you very much, Chelsea, for everything you're doing. Last year the recommendation was that we should bring in probably two to three appropriations. I know we brought in six. What's the direction this year?

Government Affairs Director: I think Rana can chime in on that. I'll let her chime in.

Rana Brown: We felt that while last year there was quite a lot of vetoes, and we certainly expect the same this year, we felt that going through these projects, such as we did with Chelsea and Chelsea's extensive work with the department heads, putting these together, we wanted to be sure that the projects that we had are exactly what they're looking for. Second, give them some options as far as you know, if an appropriator doesn't want to fund this type of project, we have other options. And so, I feel good about the entire list, and we'll work towards getting all of them. Keep hoping on that. But I do want to restate, though, that we do expect it to be a tough session. The Governor has made it known that he would like to further reduce the state budget. As you know, the previous budget was less than the previous year, and we expect that trend to continue. But we feel that these are very strong projects.

Commissioner Castro: I was the one in the Commission that went up there, I think, three or four times, and I want to thank you because you are so supportive. But I think we're in a great situation, especially last year, compared to other municipalities, that we at least got two appropriations from the four. Two of them were vetoed, but \$750,000, I think, is comparing ourselves to other people, or no other people, but other municipalities. A great job, and I want to congratulate you for that, and thank you so much for your support.

Rana Brown: Well, thank you. It was a team effort, and you're right, it was a very tough year for a lot of municipalities. And I think it's reflective of this city and your values and the legislators that represent you, who worked extremely hard on getting these into the budget.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

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Rana Brown: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Congratulations. Do we need to make a motion? Mr. Clerk?

City Attorney Suarez: Yes, it's a resolution.

Commissioner Castro: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Do we have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right, we'll close the public comment. We have a motion and a second.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: I'm going to vote yes, but I also want to add that it was my first time working through this process as we prepare for going up to Tallahassee, and I'm absolutely spoiled, because I have no reference, as the Vice Mayor does, to something that she wasn't happy with before, but I'm very happy to hear that you're very happy with things today. But that's how I launched into this. It was not only educational, it was inspirational, and I also had a lot of fun doing it. So best of luck to all involved. Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes. Thank you.