

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-6
January 13, 2026
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

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Barbara Casanova
Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item E-6 [Start: 12:16 p.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending Chapter 2, “Administration,” Article V. “Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics,” of the Coral Gables City Code to create Section 2-309 “Anti-Kickback and Post-Approval Transparency Requirements,” providing supplemental local transparency obligations consistent with Chapter 112, Florida Statutes, and Miami-Dade County Code §2-11.1; requiring disclosure and public posting of post-approval business relationships, financial benefits, gifts, and campaign /political committee contributions connected to projects that appear before the City Commission; requiring sworn affidavits from developers/applicants and mandatory post-certificate of occupancy sworn certifications by elected officials; providing implementation requirements, enforcement, repealer provision, severability clause, codification, and providing for an effective date. (Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

City Commission Meeting

Mayor Lago: E-6.

City Attorney Suarez: Mayor if I may.

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am.

City Attorney Christina Suarez: Sorry, my apologies. We are on E-6, it's an ordinance of the City Commission amending Chapter 2, Administration, Article V, Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics of the Coral Gables City Code to create Section 2-309, "Anti-kickback and Post-Approval Transparency Requirements," providing supplemental local transparency obligations consistent with Chapter 112, Florida Statutes of Miami-Dade County Code Section 2-11.1, requiring disclosure and public posting of post-approval business relationships, financial benefits, gifts and campaign political committee contributions connected to projects that appear before the City Commission, requiring sworn affidavits from developer applicants and mandatory post certificate of occupancy sworn certifications by elected officials, providing implementation requirements enforcement repealer provisions of ability clause, codification and providing for an effective date.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you very much for reading the ordinance into the record. I have worked on this for the last several months. I've made several revisions to it that the City Attorney's office requested that maybe they would feel a little more comfortable with the language on this ordinance. Also to go ahead and make this a little simpler for my colleagues, I went ahead and I made a presentation to clarify what this is and what this isn't. So, let's go ahead and start off with that. Anti-kickback and post-approval transparency ordinance. Why this exist? Right now, transparency effectively ends at the vote. What happens after a project is approved? While it is still active it can visibly, it could invisibly, it can be invisible to residents. This is where influence can occur. This ordinance closes that gap. The gap. Today the project appears, the Commission votes, project is approved, project moves into permitting and construction. Well after that point financial relationships can form, contracts can be issued, and contributions can be made. The problem. This is a very simple example. An elected official can vote on a project today, later receive work, services, or contributions tied to that project. Even if the agreement was verbal, the benefit appears after the vote. Residents may never see the connection. This is exactly the loophole. Okay. What this ordinance does? This ordinance extends transparency beyond the vote. It creates a disclosure window that covers the first Commission appearance, approval, permitting and construction, and until certificate of occupancy is achieved. If any financial ties arise during that period they must be disclosed. Okay. How the process works? The project appears. So, then there's a covered project identified. Project approved. Disclosure obligations begin. Post approval financial tie occurs. Sworn disclosure required. Disclosure filed. Public and searchable. Final CO is issued. Certification is required. Now when there is a final CO to the project, every elected official that is serving at that time will get a disclosure certifying that at no point of this project you had any financial ties to this project, whether you voted for the project or not. That way we're

City Commission Meeting

closing any loophole and we're providing as much transparency as possible to the people we serve, our residents. What must be done and disclosed? Construction or development work, permitting and consulting services, legal or attorney services, professional contracts, gift or financial benefits, campaign or PAC contributions. Nothing is prohibited. Everything is visible. What applies to elected officials, developers, and applicants? Both sides need to disclose. Both are accountable. What this is not. This ordinance does not ban lawful work. It does not ban contributions. And this is not accusing anyone. It simply adds transparency. Bottom line. Transparency should not end at the vote. It benefits or money follows on approval. Residents should know. My ask. This closes a real loophole. If we support accountability, this should be an easy yes. And that is the end of the presentation. Do my colleagues have any questions regarding this legislation?

Mayor Lago: Anyone?

Commissioner Castro: No? Okay. So then are we ready for public comment?

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. First speaker, Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. This age of transparency and, what's the other word that we use? You know, I'm not feeling well today. My mind is kind of confusing. I think that this proposal, this idea, if nothing else, will take away all the rumors, all the innuendos, all the stuff that we hear, and we, meaning the people, the residents, the voters, after a project is approved, and then the story begins. Did you know that even though he or she voted no, then they had a contract to do something in the building? Did you know that they were hired for this or that? There's nothing wrong with getting hired. There's nothing wrong with working with the developers, but people need to know to avoid the appearance of something being wrong. This is it. If there's nothing wrong, there's nothing wrong. There should be no issue saying it or writing like we do the finance reports at the end of each year. You know, if you don't have anything to hide, what's wrong with going along with something like this to avoid the appearance of their secrecy, that there's things being kept away from people knowing, et cetera, et cetera? That's my point. There's nothing to hide. There's nothing wrong with doing what you're entitled to do in your professional life but let the people know so they don't think that you're doing it the sneaky way. That's it.

City Clerk Urquia: Barbara Casanova.

Ms. Casanova: Good afternoon, Mayor Lago and Commissioners. My name is Barbara Casanova. I'm National Secretary and State Chair of the Republican National Hispanic Assembly. I'm here today to applaud Commissioner Castro for her courage of conviction and character for introducing this ordinance. I would like to ask you to support this. This Miami-Dade County has been plagued,

City Commission Meeting

and its municipalities have been plagued with a culture of corruption and misinformation for decades, and this would be an incredible first step here in the City of Coral Gables to developing a first step in developing trust, transparency, and reducing costs overall of development and livability in Coral Gables. I propose that I would ask that you all vote in favor of this. This would make the City of Coral Gables a shining example to all other municipalities in the county of an accountable and transparent good governance, and I can't see any reason why any of you would have an objection to voting for this. Thank you very much.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Greetings. Jackson Rip Holmes, 35 Sedona Avenue. First of all, I want to share with you my good news of having just spoken with former City Clerk Walt Foeman. Walt has had some serious medical challenges. He's overcoming them, and he wanted me to tell everyone hello. I really love him, so I'm going to suggest that we invite him to come see us. Now, on this ordinance, I think it's long overdue. I support it. We need to raise the ethics in our city. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. I think the reality of life right here is that a lot of things happen after a vote that a lot of residents are not aware of, and it is not very simple to go ahead and make those connections. Some elected officials have PACs. Some elected officials get campaign contributions after a vote. Maybe, I don't know, and I'm not accusing anyone, but let's say you have a verbal agreement, maybe before a project comes before you. I'm not accusing anyone. I'm just saying that's a great possibility, and then when the construction phase starts, or maybe permitting, since it's my field, you get a contract awarded after the vote has already taken place. So, I think it's extremely imperative that there is transparency, especially in our website, in the way that I propose this, when it comes to contracts, compensation, political contributions, and it should all be in one place for transparency purposes, so that we see what elected official has what connections with projects that we're voting on before or after. Right now, that is not happening. So, I want to give, like, and it's not to pick on anyone, honestly, but I want to give live examples to why I was encouraged to draft this ordinance. So, Billy, if you please would do me the honor. There we go. Okay, so this right here comes from Coral Gables First. This is from 2022, and these are the developers for the Thesis and the Lifetime Building. You can see how a resident would like to know that the Mayor is receiving contributions from buildings that he has approved, or he has voted on. Next, this is still from Coral Gables First, 2022, Garden of Our Lord. This is Sergio Pino. May he rest in peace. This is another attorney that represents developments. Location Ventures. This is Richie Kapoor. Multiple development controversies and, again, a \$10,000 contribution to Coral Gables First, the PAC of the Mayor. Not saying there's anything wrong with

City Commission Meeting

this at all. I'm just saying this is all a public record, and it should be easy access to our residents. Let's continue. Agave, the Plaza Coral Gables, 2022. I mean, you don't have to write it all down. It's on the record. \$15,000, and trust me, these are just one transaction, because if you really go down all the donations, it is repeated and repeated contributions from projects that come before us. So, my legislation, in actuality, has a five-year limit after the CO has been obtained. Ponce Park Residences. This is something that came before us. Funny enough, April 15, 2025, a \$10,000 contribution. And, I mean, there are so many more, but I did not even feel comfortable putting more people up there. So, a vote no to this would be continuing no accountability. I hope my colleagues indulge me in voting yes, and I will move this ordinance. Hopefully, I will get a second.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Anybody like to say anything?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I have a few comments. You know, sometimes what is written, what is not written is as important as what is written. And what's not included in here are measures where someone brings forth a piece of legislation that encourages more Live Local in our community. There's not going to be a CO on that type of legislation. It will encourage more development in our city to the detriment of our residents. It helps a developer outside of the city that would never fall under the loophole of this particular thing, this particular statute, ordinance. The language is vague. Practicality-wise, it doesn't really work. I'll give you an example. The Villa Valencia project, not far from the City Hall, still doesn't have a CO. It was passed roughly 10 years ago, I think, when it was passed. Some of the members of that Commission are in Portugal. They're retired. They're not sitting here. The information is really useless for anybody, you know, as far as a resident. What is public record is what you showed. Anybody can access what was donated to Coral Gables First. There's, on a legal basis, there's a lot of problems with the way this is written. Knowledge is not clearly in here. It says it shall be subject to prosecution. That's a discretionary decision by a state attorney as to whether something is going to be subject to prosecution or the ethics board. It just doesn't work the way it's written, and it completely misses the boat on legislation that will benefit individuals and their businesses that are sitting here on the dais. I don't think it accomplishes the purpose of transparency. If there is something that the Manager feels that we can do better on our website to make donations readily available for the residents to access, we can do that. But after the vote, all the state legislation points to vote, you know, donations that impact a vote, not something after the fact that may come in five years, ten years. Those COs are not even issued yet. There's TCOs pending, but no COs. So, I don't think this is the vehicle to accomplish what you're doing or trying to accomplish, and in fact, I think it misses the majority of concerns. I mean, and I noted that, you know, although you try to direct it at the Commission, you also add the Mayor. The Mayor is part of the Commission, so reading between these tea leaves, I see mentions of high-value watches and clocks and similar goods. It screams more politics than it

City Commission Meeting

does of actually trying to provide residents with the information they need. I think we can accomplish that through the city's website and making that an easy click for people to access what the donations are.

Mayor Lago: Anything else before I speak?

Commissioner Lara: I'll just say briefly that while the goal of transparency is always going to be laudable, Commissioner, this seems like a great solution to a problem I've never heard of, a problem that after having campaigned for over a year and sitting here since April, I've never heard anybody say that we need to add more legislation, add more legal burden or even costs onto businesses or additional requirements onto people who are serving in a public service capacity. I just don't see the need for it since we already have existing laws that cover things that you're concerned about, which is enforcement and prevention of kickbacks, right? So if what the real goal here is to make it easier for people to see ex post facto, a vote, and whether there's some type of remuneration opportunity that comes the way of an elected official who sat in during a vote, no matter which way I suppose they voted, there's got to be a hundred ways that you can do that and the Vice Mayor just mentioned one, you know, that maybe we can make things a little bit easier. You went to public records to create your slideshow. It's not that it's not out there for those who are interested, but I think it's because it's available publicly that there's not an outcry or a need that I've been able to identify from anybody that would require us to enter into, wade into this world where you're now requiring people to swear that they did or they did not receive something or an opportunity was presented to them. It's burdensome to the elected official. I don't think it advances in any real way transparency. I don't think that it is necessarily a smart idea to shift liability onto the individual when it's the government that's in the investigatory and in the enforcement stage with its existing laws to prevent what I assume is the goal of your proposed legislation to have a chilling effect on people who would be taking advantage of their elected position. So, I don't feel there's a need to put it simply to fix something that ain't broke. So, you don't have my support on this, but I always commend you for trying to think outside the box, but again, perfect solution to a problem that doesn't exist in my view.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: If I may, would you like to say anything?

Commissioner Fernandez: Go ahead, I want to hear.

Mayor Lago: From me?

Commissioner Fernandez: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Perfect. All right. So, I wish our friends from the Republican party, I hope before they leave as a Republican, you read the memo that I put together. It'll give you a little bit more insight and definition of who you're here supporting. What we have here is a Trojan horse. We've had it since the beginning and it's a shame. I'm going to go through a few things. Madam City Attorney, how would you defend this legislation? What is in place?

City Attorney Christina Suarez: So, Mayor, you know, we've gone through this latest version that we received prior to this Commission meeting with the Commissioner and we made, given the time that we had, we made some suggestions to make it, to clarify some of the definitions further. I've told the Commissioner that if this were to be approved on first reading, we would have to go through it again to kind of make sure that it's more clear because there's some areas that still require some further clarification. I think that this still addresses things that are probably already required in a different format, even though it's, it adds kind of like a local requirement, but in a different format, they're already required such as gift disclosures, et cetera. But really, I think it's up to the Commission to decide as a matter of policy whether there's something that you all need to do.

Mayor Lago: So, as you've heard, most of this is already covered and required as per our standards today. Well, this is political theater over and over again. An effort to smear, an effort to run for office from the same person who doubled their salary without having input from the residents. That's corruption. That vote was traded to get rid of the Manager. That's a fact. Let's go over the-- let's go over the contributions. Again, if you'd be so kind, put them up.

Commissioner Castro: Billy.

City Clerk Urquia: Cable TV, if you could put up the...

Mayor Lago: Let's start with, go to the first one.

Commissioner Castro: There we go.

Mayor Lago: Lifetime Building. I voted no on that project. Okay. Keep moving forward.

Commissioner Castro: What about the Thesis?

Mayor Lago: I voted in favor. I think it was a great project and it was a much better project that would have been allowed there by the RTZ. I'm the one that's getting to speak. I'm not going to be, I'm not going to be cross-examined by you.

Commissioner Castro: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Okay. I haven't voted on a project with the Garden of our Lord. There's no project. I can accept contributions. By the way, all this information you see here is 100 percent public record.

City Commission Meeting

So, moving forward, an incredible attorney who does business here in the city and across the board. What?

Commissioner Castro: You want to talk about this one?

Mayor Lago: Ma'am?

Commissioner Castro: Yeah.

Mayor Lago: I'm allowed to vote in favor or against any project. Location Ventures, Rishi Kapoor. I voted no on this project. As a matter of fact, I recused myself four times on this project. So, I do want to talk about it. I voted zero because I didn't vote. I leased this gentleman one of my office spaces. And I put that on the record that day. And I said, I can't vote for this project. That's what transparency is. I'm going to tell you now what transparency is not. And that's what you're doing. Keep going. Agave. I voted no on this project. That's the largest project in the city's history. Okay. And I voted in favor of this project. I think it's a great project for the city. I have no issues with it. Okay, moving on. I have a quick question for you since we have a Republican party here. One of the items that we have before you that we'll be hearing later is an Inspector General. She voted against an Inspector General. That is the ultimate form of transparency. When you have somebody who's here who could investigate not only an issue, but a person, why would you vote against an Inspector General? I'm the sponsor of that legislation before it was voted down. And her reasoning was, it just costs too much. But at the end of the day, she can raise salaries for the entire Commission, not by 10 or 15 percent, but by 101 percent.

Commissioner Castro: You want me to answer?

Mayor Lago: I'm not done yet. These are all public record. This is clear. Okay. I don't have any issues whatsoever. The blogs, the Herald, you've thrown at me every single time. But let's talk about an example that would fall under what is being proposed today. Maybe one of the Managers or the City Attorney can help me. What was the name of the project in front of Neiman Marcus?

City Attorney Christina Suarez: Was that the Avenue or the Aurora project?

Mayor Lago: That project came before us. The Avenue is a project that required zero parking, and they were going to lease parking from Merrick Park. You voted in favor of that project, and your client is Merrick Park. At that point, you voted in favor of that project, and your client is Merrick Park. So that would be, hold on, you're giving the Avenue zero parking, zero parking from Merrick Park, which is a city-owned building, which you're doing business in. We own that facility. It's a lease with the city. That would be exactly what you're saying here right now, what you did. But let's go a step further. We all know what you do for business. To beat the ethics issue, you started MED Expeditors of Coral Gables, which is still in the same office that you're in, same cell phone,

City Commission Meeting

same email, same everything. And you run permits in other cities with the same situation here, the same thing. And you've done hundreds of permits. You've enriched yourself. As a matter of fact, your mother ran the Agave project and made over a million dollars on that project, and you were involved in that project as a permit expeditor. You're proposing legislation that only serves one purpose, and that is political theater. Like everything else that you do in an effort to get elected, you should put the same effort in serving this community, not just doing political theater and wasting time. That's my advice to you. And you should have voted in favor of an Inspector General. You shouldn't have raised your salary. You shouldn't have given yourself a car allowance. You shouldn't have given yourself an expense account. And you shouldn't have brought an individual here named Amos Rojas that you paid \$365,000 who is not only incompetent but is not qualified to serve as a project manager. And you did it without a process in the middle of a Commission meeting. You could have voted no, and that would have put the city in a much better position. Not in the position you are. You also approved the COLA for \$20 million, which indebts the city to almost \$2 million a year for the next 10 years. Call it what you want, but at the end of the day, it is a massive albatross around the city's neck. So, this is absolutely ridiculous, and I spent too much time on this. It's a waste of time and it's a waste of effort. You've been here three years, and the only piece of legislation you've written is door hanger legislation. Nothing of significant value or actual quality here in the city. So, it's pretty clear.

Commissioner Fernandez: So just, and I appreciate I was able to hear everybody and kind of get where everybody's mind is. One of the first items that I put on the agenda when I got elected was an item not close to as thorough as this, but it was about just adding an extra layer of information and accessibility for the information. Yes, it is information that could be publicly available, but as a resident, you shouldn't have to go through 20 different steps, 20 different websites, 20 different departments to try to get the information you're trying to get, especially if it is publicly available information. Now, to me, the back and forth is not necessary. My focus is on what we're trying to accomplish, and I think what we're trying to accomplish is the transparency of the information. And I have to disagree with you, Commissioner. I have heard concerns about this issue, and that's the reason that I put it on the agenda two and a half years ago, and that's the reason I'm supportive of this today. There is a concern about residents about what happens after the vote. Obviously, before the vote, it's a little more difficult, you know, but we've seen it not just in South Florida, throughout the country, where people are gaming the system, and the way that they're gaming the system is by getting the kickbacks after the vote, when the eyes are no longer on them. And I think if the information is already out there, there really is no reason why we shouldn't be supportive of legislation. I had discussed with the City Attorney. I knew she had concerns, and I think they're concerns that could be worked out between first and second reading. Yes, my question, Madam Vice Mayor, you said that it's not formulated correctly. What changes would you make to improve it? I guess would be my question to you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There are way too many flaws with this legislation to vote in favor of it. Number one, it is publicly available information that I believe our city can make it more accessible for folks by being able to click on it. And the timing to provide something on a CO basis is useless information at that point. What matters is when people vote, okay, such as disclosing that you have clientele that have Live Local projects, and you do permitting for them. When you propose legislation and it actually will help your clientele out, you should be telling the community about that. It's a dangerous, dangerous tightrope that you walk when you're proposing something that inures to your benefit, but it's outside the city, so no one gets to see it. So, this does not accomplish the transparency goal that people really want. I think we need to, you know, we have an ethics code. We have financial disclosure laws that we have to file things for. I mean, access, what's access? We have criminal laws that take care of knowledge and kickbacks and so forth, and the U.S. Attorney's Office does an excellent job of that. We have historical cases in which a City of Hialeah where somebody took a kickback and as a result, the United States Attorney's Office made a change to the legislation, so it didn't have to be a quid pro quo for a vote on an item. There are existing laws, but on top of all that, this semi-useless information, because it's going to be so dated, it won't be really useful for the voters, is the cost to the city. I know the memo says it's nothing, but let's be honest with ourselves. How much taxpayer dollar time is going to have to be spent contacting elected officials who are not even sitting anymore by the time the CO issues? Villa Valencia is a good example of that. This anti-kickback measure doesn't accomplish the purpose that the title of the legislation states. I think before you do this, you first have to be aware of what laws exist in the books, and the best way to draft things is by consulting with a City Attorney ahead of time, saying, listen, I'm concerned about this issue. How can we accomplish tightening up things? And it might be just as simple as adding a button to the website for residents like I asked staff to do for development projects right after I was elected. Easy way, you can see little pictures of the development, because I was frustrated, I couldn't do it anymore. Somehow it got eliminated off the city's website. And now you can see the building, you can look at the plans, you can look at all that kind of stuff, because we added a button to the website. What was the cost of adding that button to the website? Minimal for the IT department, because the information already existed on the back end, you just couldn't find it. So that's part of my problem with the legislation.

Mayor Lago: I think you're also forgetting two things that we're not talking about enough. You have a sitting elected official to my right, Commissioner Castro, who has a huge amount of developer clients. And her biggest client, one of the biggest clients, is the owner of Bal Harbor Shops. So, she comes out in favor of Live Local, the only elected official in the entire state of Florida that's come out in favor of Live Local, completely in favor of it. And she comes out in favor of it and says, hey, we should increase the median income, so we make development more accessible. The Commission, which votes 4-1 against her, tries to explain to her and says, you know that if you do that, you're only going to promote development in the City of Coral Gables even more. She can't figure it out; she doesn't understand it. Three days later, in the Miami Herald,

City Commission Meeting

comes out an op-ed from that developer who she has almost 60 permits with that she's making money on, by the way, when they weren't permits of clients within, they were actually Bal Harbor Shops, stating that he supports her legislation to make it easier. It's a fact, it's all there, you can shake your head. The Commission on Ethics says that you cannot do what you're doing with MED Expeditors in Coral Gables. What do you do? MED, you build MED Expeditors in Coral Gables, and you give it to your partner and now she runs it in the same office with the same phone number. It's a shadow. When you look at what I've done here in the past, everything is accessible. Everybody who gives me a donation, you go look at it at the PAC, the PAC has my name on it, or you look at it at the county website, it's very simple. I took it one step further. Every single item that you see on agenda has a lobbyist name on it. I wrote that piece of legislation. It requires you as a lobbyist to put your information there. So, you know who the lobbyist is. You can easily look it up and say, did that person donate to the individual here or not? So, we can go back and forth and argue about this. It's all political theater at the end of the day. It's not about any of this stuff. It's about as simple as just trying to smear another person in an effort to stop them. But at the end of the day, it'll all be addressed at the ballot box like it's been addressed before.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. Well, let's go ahead and start number one with the Inspector General, since you were bringing that up. The Inspector General, I went ahead and I had concerns of how much it was going to cost the city, okay? And my recommendation to the Inspector General was to send it to the Charter Review Committee. So no, it wasn't voting no for the Inspector General as much as you love to say that was the case. In fact, what I just did right now is that I went ahead and I moved the recommendations of the Charter Review Committee, which is supporting the Inspector General at a limited capacity, having a lot of fiscal responsibility. That's what a good Commissioner does. Number two, okay? Permit expediter for the Plaza. Let me just inform you because you love to fill your mouth with, I'm a permit expediter. I have practiced psychology my whole life. Mayor, okay? While you said I was a permit expediter, I was treating children and young adults with developmental disabilities for over 12 years. So no, I was not a permit expediter for the Plaza. And please refrain from mentioning my mom. May she rest in peace. Don't mess with her, okay? Number two, MED of Coral Gables is not mine, okay? And it does not have the same phone number. And to put on the record, I have no indirect or direct financial implication or compensation for that business. I know this is all in a measure to try to bring me down. I guess I'm a huge threat to you, which is such a shame. You should just focus on you instead of me. You wake up every day thinking about me and posting about me. Now, as far as Bal Harbor, that's very interesting because I haven't replied to that. And I wasn't going to because I didn't think it was appropriate. But I really wish, I really wish this video goes out to who is it that made that article?

City Commission Meeting

Matthew or Michael, I don't know. Someone from the Whitman family. I want to put on the record, I've never met the individual, number one. I've never spoken to the individual, number two, okay? And Shops at Ball Harbor, they were my client three years ago, okay? So, I know now you're looking to see what projects I have because you're trying to attack my livelihood, which you've been doing since day one, okay? The projects that I have in Bal Harbor are sub-permits. You keep on writing notes. This is on the record. You don't have to write notes, okay? They're from tenant projects of a mall. Keep on looking for ways to attack me. You just have to understand one thing. I am nowhere close to being like you. Nowhere close, okay? There's one huge difference. And I'm not even going to say it, not to get censured, honestly, because that's crazy. Now, I want to go ahead and address something Commissioner Lara mentioned. And he said it's so easy to put on a website that he doesn't understand. I worked on this legislation. It's like seven pages. If you go down to the last pages, you're going to see that the whole point of this is to put it on a website so that people have easier access to the contributions. I went through your contributions. But you know what? You've been here so little that you really haven't voted on projects, even though a lot of your contributions were from developers. So, I wasn't even going to put you on the spot. But it's really amazing that almost \$800,000 comes from developers. No correlation there. Just an interesting point. Now, Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson, if you go through the legislation again, you will notice that there's different points of disclosure that the last loophole to be closed is the CO. Okay. But during the whole process, there's different points in which either the elected official or the developer or the applicant has to fill out an affidavit or a disclosure so that there is no loophole to transparency, basically. But the whole point of this is to put all the information on our website. You can look it up by the developer. You can look it up by the elected official. I see no reason whatsoever why this Commission should object to that. This is just letting residents know, hey, I'm getting this much money from this project that is before the Commission. That's not a big deal. If you are an honest elected official, just vote yes. Stop putting excuses. This was very, very detailed. Very detailed. Now, if you have some concerns with some of the language, I'll work with you. I'll absolutely work with you. I'm open to working with you. But to vote no is really shady, I'm sorry to say.

Mayor Lago: If I may respond.

Commissioner Castro: And I'll move, well, it's already moved.

Mayor Lago: If I may respond. I think we have a first here today where the word shady has been used in a Commission meeting by a person who voted against the Inspector General, which is the ultimate measure, the ultimate measure of accountability. Okay, let's talk about the Inspector General to remind you and the residents here. When you and Commissioner Fernandez said that you didn't want the Inspector General because of cost issues. Remember, the Commissioner said, "Why don't we go to the county? Let me come back and I'll go to the county. And Madam City

Attorney, do you remember when we went and spoke to the County Attorney and we asked him if we could potentially use the County Inspector General to lower costs and they came back and it was a fraction of the cost?

Commissioner Castro: Point of order, return to the agenda and to the items being discussed. I call for a vote.

Mayor Lago: Ma'am, ma'am.

Commissioner Castro: Point of order.

Mayor Lago: With all due respect, I let you speak, I didn't interrupt you.

Commissioner Castro: This is out of the agenda, okay?

Mayor Lago: This is not about the agenda.

Commissioner Castro: This does not pertain to the ordinance.

Mayor Lago: I know you want to get into an argument in an effort for the blogs.

Commissioner Castro: I call for a vote.

Mayor Lago: But Commissioner, let me finish my statement. This is not a dictatorship.

Commissioner Castro: Please follow Robert's Rules.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, an Inspector General, an Inspector General...

Commissioner Castro: An Inspector General is not part of the agenda. Point of order. I call for the previous question.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, an Inspector General deals with transparency and corruption.

Commissioner Castor: City Attorney, can you please explain to the Mayor what I have just expressed?

City Attorney Christina Suarez: I think that the Commissioner is making a motion to call the question.

Mayor Lago: But I'm allowed to finish my sentence.

Commissioner Castro: No, you're not.

Mayor Lago: Yes, I am.

City Commission Meeting

Commissioner Castro: I think we need a little review of Robert's Rules. I can go ahead and offer that for you.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner. Commissioner.

Commissioner Castro: Point of order. I'm calling for the previous question. He is out of the actual item agenda we are talking about.

Commissioner Lara: Commissioner Castro, let's try and move along. But wouldn't you say that you kicked the door down and off its hinges when you referenced the Inspector General and you said that you even voted a few moments earlier in the meeting in support of what the CRC's proposal was when it came to things like the Inspector General? It seems to me the Mayor is only responding to the issue you placed squarely before us. I could be wrong, but I think that's exactly what you did is you raised the issue of Inspector General.

Commissioner Castro: Point of order. I ask for the previous question to be called.

Mayor Lago: At the end of the day. Let me finish my sentence.

Commissioner Castro: City Attorney, can you please intervene?

City Attorney Christina Suarez: It requires a second. It's a motion, it requires a second.

Mayor Lago: There's no second. Okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: Because I have comments myself that I want to make.

Mayor Lago: There's no second, okay. So, let's just take a step back. Let's calm down and let's do things the right way, okay. Let's go down through the issues. In the Inspector General that I proffered, when you voted no, you said it was because too expensive after you had raised your salary by 101 percent and the entire Commission, the Vice Mayor and myself did not want our salaries raised. We voted against the budget. And you later used it against us saying that we weren't in support of police and fire, okay. So, you're playing a lot of politics, and I understand that's the way it works with you. But at the end of the day, you voted against Inspector General, very clear. Mr. Commissioner Fernandez asked me, hey, from what I remember, let's see if we can find a better option. I went with the City Attorney. We spoke to the county. The county says you can use our Inspector General slashing the price by almost 50 percent. We brought it back. You were still against it. That's number one. In regard to Agave, MED Expeditors was the permit expeditor on that project, and it was over a million dollars in fees, okay. Now, while it may not have the same phone number, it has the same address, MED Expeditors and MED Expeditors of Coral Gables and it has the same website and has the same email. Why?

Commissioner Castro: It doesn't have the same email.

Mayor Lago: Yes, it does. So, I'm not done yet, okay. Now, when you talk about Bal Harbor and you say, no, none of them have to do with the actual entity, that's a lie. They do have to do with the entity. The majority of them, 95 percent of them are with the Bal Harbor shops owner, which came out in support of your legislation for Live Local, where you wanted to increase the reimbursement, which would have hurt our city, and this Commission voted four to one against you. So just because you say something here doesn't mean it's the truth. The facts are the facts. You have a developer, which is your client, came out in support of your legislation. Don't be blind to that. At the end of the day, we may disagree on issues, but at the end of the day, you're basically lying on the Commission floor. So, this is simple, bottom line. There's a motion and a second. Commissioner, would you like to say your words? You have a few items you want to discuss.

Commissioner Fernandez: Just a couple of things. The Inspector General, I spoke with the Inspector General, and he told me they did not have the bandwidth to take on any additional work. And second, there was a point that was brought up about not sponsoring enough ordinances and legislation. And I've heard it before. I'm a firm believer in Ronald Reagan's philosophy of the government that governs best is the government that governs least. The more we over-legislate our city, the more we over-create ordinances, the more restrictions we're putting on our residents to really effectuate their lives as residents of this city. So those are my two points. I would like to move forward. Let's conclude this, let's take a vote, and move on to the next item on the agenda.

Mayor Lago: So let me answer your question and your statement about the Inspector General. Number one, that's not correct because the City Attorney and I spoke. They said they had a lot of work. They had a lot of work, but that they would accommodate us because we were not in a situation where at the end of the day, we had an Inspector General needing to work on the city every single day. So, it would be as required and that we would address it at that moment, but it was not an issue that they would not help us, okay? Yeah, so that's number one. Number two, I take pride in the legislation that I write at the end of the day. And as you know, let's use the low-speed vehicles. That was not brought to me first. That was brought to you. That's just one example.

Commissioner Fernandez: It was a conversation we had in your house for 10 years.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, but you didn't do anything about it for three years. So, at the end of the day, I brought it forward. And if you think that's over legislation, I don't think it's over legislation. I think it's doing things that are in the benefit of the city. When I bring legislation forward, it serves a purpose. It serves a purpose. It's not about over-legislating. I love Ronald Reagan and I appreciate that. And I'm happy that you turned a new leaf because don't forget the last two years that you were here before there was a change in administration here on what happened here and the behavior

that was conducted here. So, I'm excited about the fact that you're a peacemaker now and that you want to be a consensus builder and a bridge maker. And I love it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I try. I try.

Mayor Lago: And I love it. I think it's great. I think it's great. Everybody should turn a new leaf. But at the end of the day, we all know the beating that I took here and that it was at your hands.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, we've all taken the beating. The beating went both ways.

Mayor Lago: But the beating, you love to have that.

Commissioner Fernandez: No, and so do you. And so do you.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner. Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: And so do you. We'll agree to disagree on that one.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, we disagree. But at the end of the day, I'm proud that you're up here and you're conducting yourself in a new way. I wish that your colleague that used to follow along with you would do the same thing instead of political theater in an effort to get elected. So, we have a vote. We have a motion and a second, Mr. Clerk. Can we have a vote on this, please?

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: No

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, for the reasons previously stated and I'm going through this legislation, and I see many different issues with enforcement that this would be challenged and challengeable and a substantial cost to taxpayers to try to implement this.

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Mayor Lago:

Commissioner: Billy, I haven't even finished talking. Give me one moment, please. Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson. There are no penalties that we will be implicating as a city, okay? Everything, nothing's being changed as far as that. It goes to the departments it generally goes to. If you keep on going down my legislation, it clarifies that, okay? Number two, once again, it's a point of clarification. So please, Billy, City Clerk, I want you to put this on the record and correct the record. Whoever he's talking about, the developer of Bal Harbor is not my client, number one. Number two, and I'm putting out on the record, I do not receive money from him indirectly or

directly. So, if he's watching this, I suggest, since he's dirtying your name, that you seek legal repercussion against this individual next to me, to my left. My vote is yes.

Mayor Lago: My vote is going to be, before I vote, because again, my eyes are not that good. I'm asking my colleague here. What does that say? Bal Harbor Shops, 420 Lincoln Road. What did I show you? Who owns that? The Whitman family, correct?

Commissioner Castro: Who's my client. It's a contract.

Mayor Lago: That is her. Stop. Stop.

Commissioner Castro: You know, to be in the construction--

Mayor Lago: I'm speaking. I'm speaking.

Commissioner Castro: No, I'm speaking too. I'm speaking too.

Mayor Lago: You had your moment; I didn't interrupt you.

Commissioner Castro: To be in the construction industry and to try to dirty my name the way that you are doing it every single day, you should be ashamed of yourself, okay?

Mayor Lago: My vote is a no.

Commissioner Castro: Number one, you know very well how the construction industry works.

Mayor Lago: We'll take a little bit of recess for a break. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Fernandez: Can we just take lunch?

Mayor Lago: Yeah, we'll take lunch. Sounds good to me.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I do have one question of the Clerk.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, go ahead.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Who pays for the redactions of documents? If you're obligated to redact documents, the Clerk's office?

City Clerk Urquia: If it's through a public records request, the person requesting it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay.

City Attorney Christina Suarez: I think it would be in conjunction with the requirements of this ordinance is what the proposed--

City Commission Meeting

Vice Mayor Anderson: In conjunction with it, yeah. The redaction obligation is upon the Clerk's office.

City Clerk Urquia: We would have to do it as part of our job.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right, and it costs money. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: All right. We will be back in an hour. Thank you very much.