

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item K
October 14, 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

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item K [Start: 1:33 p.m.]

Discussion Items

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, anything for the good of the order?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, I wanted to give you all an update. I did participate this past week in the FDOT Section 6 meeting regarding the, you know, the planning for the next five years and reiterated our city's position on various projects moving forward that you all seen in the letters that have been written to the FDOT and their responses and they are moving forward on that and, you know, this is their public comment period and the priorities will be taken. And the second item, if you didn't have the opportunity to see the wonderful work of Anna Alas from GAA Architecture of the Inking History presentation, there's a nice opportunity to get a black and white drawing of various historic buildings in our city. I picked up one for the Water Tower and one for the Congregational Church, quite beautiful buildings. There are more out there that you can purchase, make nice gifts. They're either matted or framed for the holidays. So, her information is available and if you don't have it, you can let the Commission Aides know and I'll have it forwarded to you.

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The money that's being raised from this goes to historic preservation and they're putting it back into the historic preservation of buildings in our city.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: Mayor, if you could give me just one second, I was going to show something. If you can have somebody else talk.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: Yes. So, by the way, Vice Mayor, I also attended that event with you and I purchased one for the Church of Little Flower. And these are some beautiful pieces of art commemorating our historic landmarks. Perhaps by the next Commission meeting, I'd like to get some support from my fellow colleagues on the Commission to see if we can also have them exhibited at the Coral Gables Museum. I think that the residents will have an opportunity to see them if they weren't able to attend the event at the Biltmore and maybe we can continue to raise some funds for historical preservation along the way. The only other thing, Mayor, that I want to add is I will continue to thump, if that's how I want to put it maybe, I don't know, on continued vigilance and pursue the goal of congeniality on the dais amongst all of us five. I'm going to continue to bang on this point because doing so, it can only be done because all five of us agree to do so, sets the right tone, helps us get things done for the city. It is elevating the privilege that we all hold as elected officials. And the goal here for all of us is to be statesmen and not only in title, but in act and in word. So, bear with me because I'm going to continue to do so at every single opportunity.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: Pumpkin Patch is coming up as is Halloween on the Mile or Trick-or-Treat on the Mile. Hope to see everybody out there. Oh, there you go.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. So, this is a reminder that Thursday, I will be in the League of Cities, but once again, I went over some of the priorities that we are talking about. So, if anybody here, please, on this dais has any comments or wants me to say anything during these meetings, please reach out to me via memo and I will be more than happy to bring that up. The second thing is that every second Saturday of the month, I will be doing a doggy walk down Miracle Mile in Giralda. It just happened last Saturday. And I have to say that I could not be happier with the results that that brought. I was not only able to bring adoption dogs together, community together, but I was also able to display a lot of the businesses that we have on Miracle Mile and talk to them about the Whispering Rock and it was really such a fun, fun event. Can you go ahead and put the video I sent you, Billy, please?

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City Clerk Urquia: If Cable TV received the video, they can put it up.

Commissioner Castro: I hope next time, if my colleagues have pets.

City Clerk Urquia: Now I can share my screen.

Commissioner Castro: If my colleagues have pets, maybe they can go ahead and bring them. I think you'll really enjoy meeting these types of residents that normally don't engage in government. And I think this is such a beautiful video because it shows City Hall right in the back. But I think the turnout was so amazing. I think there were like over 60 dogs. And TD Bank actually just opened an ATM dog treat machine. So, I was able to bring them in there. And it's censored. And every dog gets a treat if they stand in front of the dog ATM. It was really, really a great event. So once again, I invite my colleagues if they have pets and if they don't have pets, I think it's a good opportunity to mingle with different residents.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Three items. Thank you for reminding me about the Inking History. It's a great idea that Commissioner Lara just had about exhibiting it at the museum. I hadn't even given it some thought. I bought a full set at the event, and I have it in my office. So, if you'd like to see it, it's already in my office. They're not framed. They're still in the plastic, but it's exceptional. I wasn't able to attend that night and I apologize. It was a \$2,000 set. I personally bought that. That will be, I'm planning on donating it like I've done in the past with the map and other things that I find here that are interesting in regard to the city of Coral Gables. So maybe I don't know if it's appropriate to donate it to the City of Coral Gables or donate it to the museum. I'll leave that up to my colleagues on the Commission, but I think the idea of exhibiting it at the museum would be something special. I have a, I sit on the Board of the Museum, and I have a board meeting tomorrow and I'll bring it up and I'll say that it came from you, that it was your idea. I think it's a wonderful, wonderful opportunity. So, I recommend that my colleagues, who have not, check out Inking History because again, it's an opportunity to see something beautiful that you can hang on your wall and just pay homage to the City Beautiful. That's number one. Number two, I had a pretty interesting meeting this week at office hours with a young lady who's impressive from Coral Gables Senior High. She brought me an idea, and she presented it to me as part of her projects for class. She wanted to put five little libraries in different areas in schools. I told her I would sponsor them. It's \$5,000 and she's going to be putting them in the schools. I'd like for you all, I'll get you the information to meet her because she was really interesting and she was just exceptionally talented. I was very impressed by her, and I think it'd be worth, she was very ambitious and to bring that project and present before the Mayor or any Commissioner or any elected official, I was taken aback by just how prepared she was and how interested she was in philanthropy and giving back. My final point was the Nativity scene. So, I'd like to bring it before the Commission, Mr. Manager, next Commission meeting in two weeks. There're different options. There's one, the price ranges are 12 or \$13,000 and then there was one around \$8,000. I think the \$8,000 one is

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appropriate. As I said before, I'm going to be paying for this myself. There's no need to put it on the city and it's a donation to the city just like we did with the Menorah. I think it's a beautiful gesture in support of faith, God and bringing people together. I would like your input in regard to whether you think it's appropriate in regard to the beauty of it. I think they're exceptionally, just aesthetically, very beautiful and I think they'll be well received. I have two individuals in the community who have come forward already just by mentioning it that they are going to donate \$1,000. Personal, private businesses, individuals in the community. If not, I'll pick up the other remaining \$6,000 to deliver for the city. I'm going to have Lora send an email through the Manager's office so you can look at the Nativity scene and give me your thumbs up before I put it on the agenda so we can get the approval. I'd like for the approval like we did with the Menorah by this Commission. I think it's important. I don't want to buy something, and you tell me you don't like it, or you think it's too big, you think it's too small or you have a different idea. If you tell me you're not happy with it and we can find something else that's in that price range that maybe is better quality or that maybe aesthetically makes you happier, I'm more than willing. I just want to get this done before Christmas so we can order it and have it here for the festivities.

Vice Mayor Anderson: A couple follow-up items. The two prints that I purchased were framed. There was a correction being done on one of the prints and that'll be delivered here. My intention was to give it to the city whether we hang them in City Hall, whether we hang them somewhere else. I appreciate the input of my colleagues.

Mayor Lago: This is the problem with the Sunshine Law.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, no, it is the problem with Sunshine Law.

Mayor Lago: So, when she came to present to me and told me to come and get involved in that, I said, listen, I'll buy a set personally and I'll donate it to the city in one form or another. You, Lara, same thing. Couldn't save money. Sorry.

Commissioner Lara: No, no, no, it's all for the good.

Mayor Lago: Just kidding. It's for historic preservation, but I'm just saying we could have come together.

Vice Mayor Anderson: It's true, it's true. So I met with, on the second item, I met with the same young lady and I also had a follow-up conversation with Mitch Kaplan who has a foundation and he's happy to facilitate and assist not only with the library, the libraries, but we need to put some money into the little libraries to purchase them, but he will supply the books.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, will you do me a favor? Will you speak to the Manager and speak to Lora? She has the contact for the young lady. Maybe you can schedule her to come in on Friday.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: I did speak with her.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's why I ended up speaking to Mitch Kaplan about it.

Mayor Lago: Maybe he can help me fundraise this, so I don't have to put the whole bill myself, but I'll do it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, and I wanted to add a couple more of them throughout our city because we have some areas where we can put some good materials in there, such as we're going to have a micro forest. Some information can be put in there as to why we're doing a micro forest. People learn and understand why we do the things that we do if we provide the information behind it. And with the books that Books and Books has agreed to supply, it makes it a wonderful thing. So yeah, that is the problem with Sunshine. Even simple stuff like this it's hard to collaborate on. Yep, that's it.

Commissioner Lara: All right, one follow-up, Mr. Mayor. One follow-up on what the Vice Mayor was saying. I have spoken recently, you might have as well, with former Mayor Jim Cason, and one of his ideas has been to coordinate the donation of books around town. And maybe we can collaborate on this with the little libraries, you know? It seems to me, based on my conversations with Mayor Cason, that he believes there's quite a bit of availability of books in homes. They just don't have the best outlet or facility to donate them. So, you know, I'll speak to the City Manager and see if there's a way we can coordinate. Any ideas you all have, maybe we can make this all come together quickly.

Mayor Lago: Anything else for the good of the order? All right, well meeting adjourned. I hope everybody has a wonderful week. And enjoy the pumpkin patch. And we'll see each other at the next Commission meeting. Thank you, and God bless.