

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-6**  
**October 22, 2024**  
**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, Amos Rojas, Jr.**

**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item F-6 [ p.m.]

Discussion regarding the procedure and conditions for the issuance of cease-and-desist letters by the City of Coral Gables (Sponsored by Commissioner Menendez)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item F-6.

Commissioner Menendez: This is regarding, I've had a lot of residents approach me, all you've got to do is drive around the Gables these past few months and you see a lot of road repairs, a lot of construction, and a lot of street closures.

Vice Mayor Anderson: F-6 – wrong one.

Commissioner Fernandez: Cease and desist.

Commissioner Menendez: That ones good too. F-6 – Basically, we're in a hyper sensitive time, I think in our society, you know, now with the proliferation of AI, a lot of people on social media are creating images and creating websites and creating things that give the illusion that its one

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thing, when in reality its not, and I met with the City Attorney and her team about, there's no particular case or particular matter, its just that you can see it all around the country how things are just getting out of hand. What the procedure is with the City of Coral Gables in terms of how we issue cease and desist letters, when we have issued cease and desist letters. Mostly the concern would be, for example, hypothetical, somebody uses the city's seal or the city's design to make look like their website or something, is an official city page. Its not talking about the language, its not what they are saying, its like a trademark. I know like a lot of sports franchises have sued or sent cease and desist letters when people sell their merchandise that's not official merchandise. So, I'd like to talk about that.

City Attorney Suarez: So, my office says, we do have authority to issue cease and desist letters when necessary, and certainly, if someone is using one of our trademarks or the city logo, city seal, etc., without permission, we can certainly take action to protect our marks that's very important to us, but in terms of if someone is using the similar font or something like that, we can't control that and we can't restrict that, and certainly we are very cognizant of the First Amendment and free speech protections and we do not intend to censor speech, but certainly we protect our trademark, absolutely, yes.

Commissioner Menendez: We've all read cases and hopefully not impacted us personally our families or friends, but people send you an email, you click on the link and it takes you to Bank of America and its not Bank of America, they recreated Bank of America, you put in your PIN number and all of a sudden they have access to your account. That's just growing more and more and it's becoming more creative and with AI it's a major problem that's only going to get worse. So, I just wanted to have that discussion put on the record that the city has the necessary legal tools when and if the problem ever arises within the city to take the proper action. I appreciate your response and the information. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I've done blocking one from the U.S. Postal Service that wasn't from the U.S. Postal Service.

Commissioner Menendez: They basically take the same images. Its amazing how they do these things.

Commissioner Castro: I was just in a meeting, probably an hour and-a-half long meeting last week regarding cyber hacking and its really unbelievable how the whole United States really is facing this issue right now. A lot of the threats are really coming from places like – my mouth was open when they were explaining to me from Russia, China, and then they were giving examples of the actual websites that look exactly the same. These are issues we are facing every day. Let's hope that we don't have to go through that here in Coral Gables, but if we do.

Commissioner Menendez: I had the opportunity to be at a conference this summer, there were representatives from different countries and at the conference was a young man whose a specialist in cyber attacks and he works for a consulting firm, but he worked for the federal government and he was explaining that he was behind his screen, computer screen, he stepped away to get a cup of coffee and when he came back his bosses wanted to see him. And he goes, what happened, he goes, when you walked away the report that you were writing about, I think it was about Russia, the report that you were writing started deleting the sentences and new words were added. But he went to get coffee, somebody had access to the computer and rewrote, was rewriting the report to benefit whoever was behind it. So, we are in a very, very new world.

City Manager Rojas: Can I just mention that its very comforting to know that our IT Department is top-notch, and they are on top of those issues day in and day out. I'm very impressed with our IT.

Commissioner Fernandez: Chief de la Rosa was telling me that during the hurricane, the number of cyber attacks on municipalities that were being impacted, because they figured that the municipality wasn't focused on the cyber-attack, they were focused on the response to the hurricane, so they were cyber-attacking the municipality.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That happens all the time with folks who commit crimes. This has been happening for a long, long time. I know the City Manager is fully aware of that. I had some very talented clients that always thought that law enforcement was asleep, Christmas, New Year's, times like that, but cyber attacks has been going on from Russia for decades.

Commissioner Castro: And expect this to increase even more just to make us doubt our democracy now coming close to the election period. They are just going to want to input so much misinformation to make us weaker.

Commissioner Menendez: I'll just leave you with this one war games concept. The same person I met who's from Washington said that if the Chinese wanted to go after Taiwan and make a military move, they could cyber attack the U.S. Government to lay our reaction, our response. They have the capability to delay us by jamming our systems. Hopefully it never comes to that, but again, I appreciate actually everybody's input. I think its important for the community to hear it. So, thank you.