

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-3**  
**January 27, 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)**

**County Commissioner Natalie Milian-Orbis**  
**Tax Collector Dariel Fernandez**

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Agenda Item F-3 [Start: 10:39 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission supporting enhanced enforcement of federal sanctions related to Cuba; supporting State Legislation requiring proof of authorization from the Office of Foreign Assets Control for Businesses subject to federal sanctions programs; supporting the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and the Miami-Dade County Tax Collector's efforts to address businesses engaging in unlawful commerce with Cuba; supporting state efforts in Senate Bill 1176 and House Bill 1397; and directing that these efforts be included in the City's 2026 Legislative Priorities. (Sponsored By Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: I would like to welcome our District 6 County Commissioner and our Tax Collector. Please join us. We're going to have a time certain item that I'm embarrassed to say, F-3, I'm the sponsor of. It was at 10 a.m. and I'd like to welcome these two esteemed individuals to please join us and I'm going to have our City Attorney read it into the record.

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City Attorney: Thank you, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Attorney: So F3 is a Resolution of the City Commission supporting enhanced enforcement of federal sanctions related to Cuba supporting state legislation requiring proof of authorization from the Office of Foreign Assets Control for businesses subject to federal sanctions programs supporting the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and the Miami-Dade County Tax Collectors efforts to address businesses engaging in unlawful commerce with Cuba supporting state efforts in Senate Bill 1176 and House Bill 1397 and directing that these efforts be included in the City's 2026 legislative priorities.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. I'm beyond grateful for the fact that you're here and I want you to talk a little bit about what you've already done in your communities, what you're fighting for, and then I'm going to, you know, put a little bit of context and color into it. Madam Commissioner, ladies first.

County Commissioner Milian-Orbis: Thank you, Mayor. Good morning, Natalie Milian-Orbis. I'm honored to serve as your County Commissioner and represent the City Beautiful in Miami-Dade County. I am here to support Mayor Lago's item, F-3. Thank you, Mayor, for bringing this resolution and for your leadership in the city on this front. It is an issue that directly affects our community and what Coral Gables is doing today matters and it sends a clear signal that this city stands with the Cuban people and not with the dictatorship. At its core, it is about stopping the communist regime from using American authorizations to move vehicles, machineries, and other goods while it jails dissidents and denies basic freedoms. No American license should be enriching a communist dictatorship 90 miles away from our shores. Sanctions have to mean something, and they have to be enforced. This resolution is also in line with Senate Bill 1176 and House Bill 1397, which requires proof of authorization from OFAC before any sanction activities take place, and that is basic accountability and basic national security. I brought forward similar legislation at the Miami-Dade County Commission, and it was approved unanimously last week. So, Miami-Dade County and Coral Gables are sending the same message that sanctions must be informed, and loopholes must be closed, and our community stands firmly on the side of freedom. So, thank you, Mayor, for your leadership on this and I urge you all to approve item F-3.

Mayor Lago: Madam Commissioner, thank you. You've been a steadfast supporter of this effort. You haven't missed a beat. You've been in Hialeah, City of Miami, Miami-Dade County, and now here in City Beautiful, and we're honored to have you representing the City Beautiful. Thank you.

County Commissioner Milian-Orbis: Thank you, Mayor, and this is the time for us to stick together, and I hope that all cities will follow suit and follow the leadership of yours and others

that have been taking this stand. I also want to take a moment to thank you all for allowing me to represent our community and attend our mobile office hours here in the City Hall.

Mayor Lago: That was last week, right?

County Commissioner Milian-Orbis: Yeah, it was this week, Monday.

Mayor Lago: I saw the banner. I saw your team here. It was amazing.

County Commissioner Milian-Orbis: Every fourth Monday we're here at City Hall, so thank you so much. It is our pleasure and our honor to be here in our residence.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, and I apologize, there's so many things going on here in City Hall. Yesterday when I was here, one of your team members was in my office and meeting with constituents and addressing issues here in City Hall, and that's another benefit of having you so close. So, we're grateful. Thank you for spending the time here.

County Commissioner Milian-Orbis: Thank you. Thank you, Mayor. Thank you, Commissioner.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Tax Collector, welcome back. Welcome back.

Tax Collector Fernandez: Morning, good morning. So first, I wanted to say thank you to all of you, you know, for the opportunity to work together. At this point, we have already taken care, we already make like 20,000 transactions in the new office of the Tax Collector here in Coral Gables. So, I wanted to say thank you to all of you for the opportunity to work together. As I mentioned, we are here always to continue to put people first and bring the service to our community. Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager, and residents of Coral Gables. My name is Daríel Fernández, Miami-Dade County Tax Collector. I'm here in support of Item F-3, sponsored by Mayor Lago. This resolution improves coordination and sanctions related to the Cuban communist and socialist dictatorship and reinforces the requirements that any businesses operating under federal sanctions programs must have proper authorization and proof of compliance. For 65 years, the Cuban communist dictatorship has controlled the people of Cuba, has spread fear across the region, and has stayed alive only because of the money and support from other countries. No community understands that reality is better than ours, and it is why sanctions enforcement and accountability matter. This is not just talk. Yesterday, I sent a letter to President Trump informing him that two businesses with Commerce Department licenses have those licenses taken away. This shows the risk is real. The Federal Government is watching, and we all need to work together. It shows this is a national security issue for the United States of America. Item F-3 also aligns with pending State legislation that I am supporting, including Senate Bill 1176 and House Bill 1397, which require businesses to submit to federal sanctions to show proof of proper authorization. The item also recognizes ongoing efforts by my office to ensure that businesses are compliant with the law. I want to thank Mayor Lago and the Commissioners for considering this

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item. My office is ready to help make sure everyone follows the law and to keep serving the public with professionalism. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and thank you for your consideration. God bless the City of Coral Gable, God bless Miami-Dade County, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Well done, Mr. Tax Collector. I want to thank you again for being here. You are steadfast, like I mentioned to the County Commissioner. You are a voice of reason, and you are an unwavering voice on many different fronts, accountability, transparency, but this issue of Cuba hits home. Let me tell you why it hits home. It hits home because while I was born in this great country, to immigrants who came, Peter Pan, our blood is Cuban. My heart is American. I love this country more than I love anything else. This country has given us the opportunity to live an exceptional life, one that we would never have anywhere else. So, we have to make a decision. We know people who are dealing in commerce in Cuba, people who are making money. It's not an easy task to do what we're doing today. This is not going to be ceremonial. We will continue to put pressure. Like I mentioned before, I am a member of a directorio in Cuba Alcide, two entities here that are fighting for a free Cuba, for a democratic Cuba, human rights, and we need to come together. And the message sent by the Tax Collector, the County Commission, Mayor Calvo, Commissioner Rosado from the City of Miami, is a strong coalition, one that will pay real dividends in regard to our Secretary of State, which we have immense pride for, Marco Rubio, and President Trump. The changes in Venezuela over 20 years in the making are a godsend. Like I said before, when Maduro was removed from power, over 30 of the individuals that were providing protection and intelligence were Cuban regime members. That is a clear indication that Cuba is not only the largest destabilizing force in this hemisphere, it is playing a major role across all sectors. China, Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba. Cuba needs to be free. 65 years. I have never gone back to Cuba. I have never believed in dialogue with Cuba. I am a staunch hardliner on this issue, and I mentioned it before. I will not change my ideology on that front. So, the idea and the time and the commitment that Commissioner from District 6 and that you have spent along with Calvo and Rosado is to be commended because not many people are willing to make this commitment. And this commitment is not for our cities. This commitment is for my grandparents. That is why this commitment exists. My grandfather was a doctor in Cuba, a proud founding member of Los Autenticos, was a congressman in Cuba, and came to this country with nothing, and became a doctor in this great country. Imagine that. Coming here, starting from the bottom up again, in this country, allowing you the privilege and honor to become a physician. They lived on Minorca, two blocks away, right over there. And that's where I grew up. That's where I learned about Cuba. That's where I learned about my heritage. That's where I learned about Tarara, about Havana, about the pride that it is to be an American. My grandparents were the first to tell me the honor and the privilege that is to live in this great country, and we should never take it for granted. And that's conversations that I've had with you, along with Commissioner Orbis. So, I wanted to bring this up, and I want to talk to the City Attorney, because this is something where I'm going to

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need a lot of help. We have to coordinate on multiple different fronts. And I'm going to use the City of Hialeah as an example. They've created a preliminary list of businesses based on BTL, and we'll send them a questionnaire requesting information on services provided to determine if a follow-up is required. Madam City Attorney, that is one of the things that I want to really understand, because my team, Lora and Nicole, were trying to figure out ways to find entities that are doing business in our city with Cuba. We reached out to OFAC, and I think that what we have to do, from my understanding, is get that list directly from OFAC. And that's what you're working on also, correct, Mr. Tax Collector?

Tax Collector Fernandez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Can you give us a little background about what you're doing, and would you mind, along with Commissioner Orbis, working hand-in-hand with my City Attorney and my City Manager, to be able to find this list and get the information?

Tax Collector Fernandez: So, what we already accomplished in the last two or three months, when we started, is coordination between the Department of Commerce, OFAC, Department of State, state level, and countywide. We are the entity in Miami-Dade County that issued the local business tax. We cannot close the business. We started the process to see if the business is in compliance with the local business tax. After that, we communicate directly with the Department of Commerce, and they make the decision. That is why, in the last couple of weeks, we received this letter, a revocation of some of these business licenses. Those are the things that we already accomplished. Also, we communicate with different municipalities. If that business is in your municipality, you need to move forward with the other requirements they need to provide to you.

Mayor Lago: So, what I would like, Madam City Attorney, through the Manager and my colleagues, to agree, I would like to start working on this. And I also want to have our Vice Mayor, who has an extensive legal background and actually played a major role in a Posada case, which is a legendary case here. She was the lead on that case, and it was an amazing opportunity. It is history here in South Florida. I would like to see how we can work on this together, District 6, Hialeah, City of Miami, the Tax Collector, and really move forward. I don't want this to be just ceremonial and symbolic. That is not my intent. I want to send a message to these businesses that that type of behavior is not acceptable. How can you be living in this country and doing business with a socialist country that is, at the end of the day, extinguishing democracy, mistreating individuals, putting them in prison, to me, you know, that's a counter narrative to what we believe in this country and certain things that we take for granted every single day. So, I would like our City Attorney to please work hand-in-hand to figure out how we can get the same list that Hialeah's got and the Tax Collector got.

City Attorney Suarez: So, Mayor, I've had conversations with the Manager and the Finance Director on this issue, and we think that it would be helpful to have ongoing or recurring meetings

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or communication with the Tax Collector's office so the information that he obtains and the list of businesses that the City can then review its records and take appropriate action as necessary.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor?

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson: So, I absolutely support this item, and I will make a motion for this to be pushed forward. But before I do that, being a child of the 60s and having lived through the Cuban Missile Crisis and having seen and having participated and defended Posada in El Paso, learning a lot more detail about his role in Venezuela, in Nicaragua, to stop the spread of communism throughout those areas, the risk is real. People now don't realize just how close we were to being struck in the United States, 90 miles away from us, and having collected a judgment, having to get that list from OFAC in order to be able to collect the judgment. I know how difficult it is. I know how detail-oriented it is. But doing the research into each one of those entities is eye-opening, just eye-opening. Things that you didn't think were related in funding the government of Cuba are absolutely overfunding the government of Cuba. And the torture? We had a witness come in testifying in court in El Paso who had been tortured, absolutely tortured by another witness who's now sitting as the current president of the government of Cuba. It's real, folks. So, I'm very proud that you have brought this and I'm proud to make the motion to support it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Manager?

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we've already taken action on this. We will be working with, and I completely appreciate the Commission's support on this item. We are already taking action, those BTRs and those CUs that are for businesses that are working with a communist country that's hurt so many people, including my family and our families. We take that very seriously and we are already working on that, and I truly appreciate the commission's support on this item.

Mayor Lago: You know, something that I want to mention, and I'm taking this from the Tax Collector, you said this the other day, I go, you know, some people think about its democracy, human rights. Democracy is incredibly fragile. When you think about what is the intent, the intent is to protect our hemisphere at all costs. What's happening on multiple different fronts in regard to China, in regard to Russia, they're in our backyard. They're in our backyard on multiple different fronts. So, to me, to me, to me it's not only about our grandparents, and at the end of the day I say that all the time, and to me I miss them dearly, dearly. But for the first time in 65 years, I feel that we're so close. And I talk to Venezuelans who live in our city and they're over the stars in regard to this moment in history. And they all say the same thing. You know, Cuba has played a major role in the suppression of democracy in Venezuela through intelligence, through a litany of other things. And now it's time, now it's time for us to do our small part. This is a small gesture, but it combined sends a strong message to the Federal Government that it's time, it's time to protect our

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hemisphere, to protect our democracy, to do what we can. And also, I was speaking to our legislative director in regard to this issue. I'd like to add this if possible. She recommended that we add it to our priorities, our legislative priorities, which again sends a message to our state leaders, you know, this is important, you know, and consider everybody who's in favor of democracy should want to protect our interests.

Tax Collector Fernandez: You know, one of the most important parties that I wanted to leave this very clear from the beginning of my -- when we took office 365 days ago, we say that we are here to protect the Constitution of the United States of America. We are here to protect this beautiful country that gives us everything for me in my case. This is a national security of the United States of America issue. This is not just about partisan. You know, this is about saving the United States of America. I came from Cuba because I wanted to be free. I wanted to, to live the American dream. The American dream is not just to buy a car, buy a house, it's the freedom that we have in this country. And this, that is the freedom that we need to fight for, for every single day of our life.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I applaud all of you for working on this. Mr. Mayor, thank you for bringing this up here in our City Commission. Cuba is struggling. The Cuban government is in a position right now that Russia no longer has the ability to support them because they're fighting in Ukraine and they haven't been able to get themselves back to the footing they were in. China has internal struggles right now. They're purging their entire military because of corruption, internal corruption that they believe to be happening or who knows what the real reason is behind it. Venezuela is no longer going to be aiding Cuba. Now, who does Cuba rely on? Unfortunately, Cuba has been relying on these companies that have been here in the United States, helping them fund their operations there. So, there's nothing more timely. And Mr. Tax Collector, I must applaud you for bringing this up because this is one of the keys to the demise of the Cuban regime. And when Cuba is free, they'll owe it to you because your work has been integral in ensuring that the Castro government isn't able to continue, that the Escanil government isn't able to continue, and our Cuban families can finally live in freedom. And this is extremely important legislation. We need to start cracking down on all the companies that are aiding that government and keeping it afloat because this is their only lifeline right now. And we're seeing it, you know, Cuba, if you look at the videos from Cuba the last few days, they've had 40 hours without power because they no longer have the oil that's coming from Venezuela. That's just the first step of what's happening. People are on the streets calling for freedom, just like they are in Iran, just like they are around the world. And, you know, we hear a lot in the media about process, how we've gotten here. The Trump administration and our Secretary of State, as the Mayor stated, have been integral in ensuring that freedom is finally starting to reach many of the countries that, regardless of what

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political party, every president has promised that they're going to help freedom, they're going to bring freedom, but today we can finally say there's a President in the Oval Office who's working to bring freedom around the world. And key leaders like yourselves, like the members of this Commission who are ready to fight that fight and stand up for freedom, we stand next to you, and we commend you for the step that you're taking and I'm happy to second this motion from the Vice Mayor.

Tax Collector Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

County Commissioner Milian-Orbis: Mayor, if I may, I wanted to expand that. So, the policy, the urging that I did last week urges President Trump to suspend any licenses for businesses that are doing business with Cuba. However, it's not just an urging. It directs our administration, our County Administration, to work with the Tax Collector because the Tax Collector does the local business taxes to the local business licenses to give us a report as to the findings if they do find businesses that are working with Cuba. So, along those lines, I do urge you to write to President Trump on this and continue, you know, the steam that we have behind this right now, wright to our other elected officials that can support this mission. And I'm happy to share that information once I receive it back from our administration.

Mayor Lago: So, I'd like, we have a motion, a second. I'd like to add a friendly amendment to my legislation to include both those points, like you said before, working with Tax Collector, which is, it's already in there, but I want to tweak it to make sure it's very clear because again, I think he holds the keys, a lot of the keys to really being able to drill down on this information and find out the right information from OFAC.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I second the amendment.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Lara: Briefly, so very proud of all the comments made by the fellow members of the Commission, but especially to you, Commissioner Orbis, and to you, Tax Collector, Dariel Fernandez, you know, and I know all of us here, like so many of the residents of the City Beautiful, have been personally affected by this illicit regime going back some 50 years. I'm sure I'm not speaking out of turn, Tax Collector, that when you were living in Cuba, you went hungry.

Tax Collector Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Due to the repressive government, relentlessly attacking and harming its own citizens to line their own pockets and push their own interests.

Tax Collector Fernandez: Yeah.  
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Commissioner Lara: So, I applaud you for coming to this country and stepping up and making a change, a meaningful change along with the County Commissioner to better this country, because myself as the son of Cuban exiles who came to this country with nothing to escape a totalitarian regime, I know firsthand why these federal sanctions exist, right? They're not abstract. They exist to deny resources to a government that represses its people. So, I think that I join with my fellow colleagues here on urging the passing of F-3 because we cannot tolerate and we will not tolerate businesses in our community that are funding these illicit government, and it exists to protect our moral and national security interests. So, I also echo the Commissioner's request that we reach out to our President and to our fellow members of Congress as well to continue the momentum that has already begun, first with the ousting of the criminal that was illegally serving and acting as a dictator of Venezuela. And with that momentum, I hope that it extends further to topple the government that is at its weakest in Cuba in 50 years. I think that the resolution is clear, it's responsible, and it's long overdue. So, I would urge a yes vote.

Tax Collector Fernandez: You know, I just wanted to end with this. I wanted to say thank you to the Commissioner. It's important what you say. If you read some of these general licenses or these licenses from the Department of Commerce, it's crazy who have money in Cuba to buy a jet ski, who have money in Cuba to buy a Mercedes Benz, who have money in Cuba to buy a Toyota. So, this is not humanitarian. I think it is the time to tell the federal government they need to end this, and that is why we are putting this over there, because first we need to put the people of the United States first. This is a national security issue. Sometime the that these people generate from the United States, after a couple of months, they go back to the United States to create issues, you know, fund different organizations against to the United States of America. That is why we are here, and we're going to continue our best.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right. We have a motion and a second.

City Clerk: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: Just a quick question. The two friendly amendments were

Vice Mayor Anderson: Accepted.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right, but did we include adding it to our legislative priorities?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay. Perfect.

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City Attorney Suarez: So just so if we can clarify, that was already part of the resolution, so we're adding, what part are we adding?

Mayor Lago: To contact the President, and obviously to work with a Tax Collector, was the second point that was proposed by Commissioner of District 6.

City Attorney: And that was already part of it but certainly contacting the President.

Mayor Lago: I want to highlight that, because again, like I said before, we need to show that we are standing strong as a community on this front. And again, it's not just about Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, it's about democracy in the hemisphere. It's about protecting our interests, our interests, our Constitution, what has made this country, the country to be emulated.

City Attorney Suarez: Yes. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: All right. So, we have a motion and a second and some friendly amendments.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Commissioner Castro: Absent)

Mayor Lago: Yes. Once again, thank you to all of you.

Tax Collector Fernandez: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: And I appreciate you spending time. God bless.

Tax Collector Fernandez: Thank you.

County Commissioner Milian-Orbis: Have a great rest of your evening.