

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

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item K [Start: 2:42 p.m.]

Discussion Items

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, do you have anything that you'd like to say for the good of the order?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Well, this Saturday morning, for everyone that wants to join with the “Pollinator Palooza,” we have that on Saturday morning, starting at nine o'clock in the morning. Bring your kids’ little gloves. We'll probably have stuff there. I have coloring books for the kids as well, compliments of the Garden Club, where they can color butterflies and learn a little bit about butterflies and the importance of bees. That's our first upcoming event. Tomorrow night, we have Inking History as well, for those who are planning on going. I hope to see you there. And we had a wonderful event, too, with the Junior Orange Bowl. Commissioner Castro was there with me. They've got an amazing group, do some wonderful things in our community, promoting the youth to engage in sports throughout the world and come to Coral Gables. So, we have an opportunity to showcase our great city once again, from tennis to golf to many different sports that

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they promote people to engage in. So, I hope you all have a wonderful weekend, and I hope to see you out there planting some pollinator plants.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Fernandez: I just want to thank our team for the incredible work with the Dorothy Thomson Park ribbon cutting. It was an incredible event. The work that was done in that park, if you haven't had an opportunity to go out and see it, you need to see this park. It is incredible, and it's a lot of fun for the kids. I saw there were probably 20 kids there playing as we were already doing the ribbon cutting, and they were just neighborhood kids that were already going and enjoying the park. So, it's nice to see that. The other thing I wanted to ask my colleagues, if we can have two proclamations for November 16th, one declaring Church of the Little Flower Day, another St. Teresa Catholic School Day for their centennial celebrations.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: No. I just wanted to echo the points raised by Vice Mayor Anderson, the Junior Orange Bowl. I couldn't attend that night. I try to be in three places at once, but I sometimes fail. We all were very well represented by having Commissioner Castro, Vice Mayor there. But I would like to put in the days to come a lot more focus on the Junior Orange Bowl, just an amazing organization. Trivia fact, does anybody know that the Junior Orange Bowl used to have an office here in City Hall years and years and years ago, and they were part of a continuous funding that they received in our budget? Who knows? Maybe we'll explore that opportunity in the days to come as well. But in the meantime, I want to just remind everybody that tonight at 6.30 on Jungle Island is the annual Festival of Chefs put on by Easter Seals South Florida, where the funds will be used to support the culinary arts school they have for the young people who are suffering from autism, where they learn amazing skills that make them transition even easier into mainstream workforce. And the greatest chefs locally here in South Florida all will be there. I hope I can see those who haven't already gotten tickets there this evening and come hungry, as they say. Monday, I have my office hours, 8.30 to 11. Hope to see you there.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Castro: So, I want to congratulate the three new officers. We commissioned Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson, and I was there too. There's three new officers and there was one promotion. There's nothing that makes me happier than seeing that we keep on hiring police officers at the end of the day. The other thing is that we have a budget hearing at 5.01. I know everybody's very excited for that, but we need to speed it up a tad bit because I might have to leave early. I have a Brightline to catch. I am on my way to the Florida League of Cities to Vice Chair that committee. The other thing I want to mention is that I've been working very, very hard on

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putting resident focus and resident involvement events together, which really make me very happy as an individual. One of them is a doggy walk. And what I'm trying to do is promote dog adoption, but on top of that, I'm trying to bring neighbors together. I want them to mingle, to get to know each other. And I also want to bring foot traffic to Miracle Mile. I see a lot of vacant storefronts there and that makes me sad. I want to promote our downtown. So, what I'm planning on doing, is every Saturday, every second Saturday of the month, I'm going to bring all this group of people. The dogs that could be adopted are going to have a little bandana that says, adopt me. We're going to start in front of City Hall. It's going to be at 11 in the morning. It's a two-mile run. Not run. You could walk all the way down to Miracle Mile. Coming back, then there'll be a social hour on Giralda since it's a space that is closed off for the dogs and the dog owners and there's outdoor seating. And I'm going to go ahead and promote Giralda as well and bring people that normally don't come to these places to these local restaurants or stores. So finally, one more thing I've been working really, really hard on is my Hispanic heritage event, which is this Saturday from 3 to 6 p.m. I joined forces with Council Member and Chair Member Cristian Mancera, right there, it's on the screen. This is going to be a cultural event. I know it says festival, but more than anything, it's cultural. There's going to be performances from different denominations, from different countries. And then there's also going to be food representing different countries. This is going to be extremely interesting, very cultural and I'm very excited for this. We have a high registration. And I would love for my colleagues to be able to join if they could. This is going to be a very good event. Thank you very much and I will see you at 5.01 p.m.

Mayor Lago: First off, thank you, Vice Mayor, for covering for me at the Orange Bowl. I was at an event called PAVE at the Coral Gables Country Club. It's a Jamaica charity, which I hope that everyone gets to know it a little bit better. They do incredible work in regard to teaching young men and women a craft in Jamaica and it's a pretty impressive work what they're doing. A lot of orphans, a lot of individuals who grew up to actually have a trade. And I hope that you will learn a little bit about it because it's interesting. It's a worthy cause. One thing that I've been working on for some time, and I'd like for the Commission to get behind it if they're interested, is a few years ago, I donated a Menorah for the City of Coral Gables. I paid for it personally with my own money. I would like to do something very similar. I'd like to, this year, if possible, donate a nice Manger to put in front of City Hall. I think it would be a nice statement. And we could also do something for other religious affiliations if they're interested. I don't have a problem with that. And I think it would be something nice and beautiful that we put in front of City Hall. And it could be something that, again, brings unity. We have already the Menorah. And as a Catholic, I think it's an opportunity to continue to build on God's grace and continue to talk about all the things that are good with this country. We focus on a lot of negativity. I think this is something positive. Another thing that I'd like, Mr. Clerk, if you'd be so kind, can you put up the Monopoly event, Gablesopoly. I'm using this opportunity to give it a little bit more publicity. We're going to be sending this out. I wish they had another picture of the actual board game. Because I wanted to have you guess what

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item that I personally bought. Personally bought with my own money and it will be the mayor's office. Can you guess what spot I bought? Can you guess, or no?

Commissioner Castro: Go to jail.

Mayor Lago: You knew it. I had to do it.

Commissioner Castro: I did. I did.

Mayor Lago: Had to do it. Had to do it.

[Laughter]

Vice Mayor Anderson: Getting to know you.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, you know. Trust me. You know what I'm surrounded by. So, at the end of the day, all in good fun. This is for charity. It was a \$1,500 personal donation. I ask you to give. Give a lot. If you have an opportunity. The Gables already sponsored, obviously, with their \$10,000. This is for the Mark Trowbridge Foundation. This is a wonderful cause. You have some spaces that are \$500, \$800, \$1,000. This one was \$1,500. I actually had Iggy Alvarez call me. He was upset that I took Go to Jail. He said, "I'm the lawyer that actually would want to have my name and my law firm on. And I said, no, no, no. I'm taking that one for myself. So, it was all in good fun. Office hours tomorrow, as I've been doing for the last 12 and a half years, starts up. There it is. That's what we're going to do. We're going to do something very pretty like that. I didn't want to use my private company name. I wanted to be about the city. So, we did something fun. If you have any ideas of how we can make it look better, I welcome it. I welcome it and I'd love to engage. So, we have some time before it goes to print. And I think it would be something nice. So, I leave it up to maybe the ACM to give me some ideas of how to make it a little more fun. Office hours. We've been doing it for 12 and a half years. It's a great opportunity to get to know not only the Mayor but get to know my staff. Get to know the city. We will go tomorrow from 2 to 5, maybe 5, maybe 6 o'clock, depending on who's there. And I ask you to please come and spend some time. We have today at 5.01 p.m., a Budget Hearing, the final Budget Hearing. We ask people to engage. Please come. Please join us. We'll be here. It's an opportunity. If you haven't had a chance to go over the budget, you can ask questions. You can bring items that are important. I know that we're not talking about the budget here. But one of the things that I want to reiterate again, and I'm asking for my colleagues to provide a little bit of support, is items. For example, funding to do a small study for under the Cocoplum Bridge for a potential path. The other one was obviously ensuring that we have the Flagler area funded. Just looking for small things that can kind of catapult us into 2027, but we can then really push forward on that. I think we had some traffic calming requests, Mr. DCM, in certain areas. I think one of them was, by the way, this is a big one for the Commission. If they could just give me one more second, because I know that you're getting a lot of calls on this. And I've been doing a lot of site visits, a lot of site visits, probably about three a

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week that I've been doing with the DCM and with staff. One of the areas that's really giving us a lot of trouble is the area in front of the Coral Gables Country Club. They're very concerned about traffic calming. They're very concerned about the runners. They're very concerned about the amount of people that are running there. We're going to have to face something, okay? I've requested a study to be done, and also in the Country Club Prado area. Let me tell you first, before we adjourn, let me tell you a little bit about the issue we're facing in the Country Club. And you know it. I don't need to tell you, but I want to put it on the record. And we need your support on this. We're going to have to build a running path there, no matter what. Because I was there this morning, after I finished the groundbreaking of Publix, I had another meeting, and then I rounded about in that area. The amount of people that are running on the golf course or on the street is, I know it's very difficult, but we're getting these calls that people want enforcement. We have to push people to either get on the sidewalk or get on the grass. There's way too many people running on the street. We're going to have a catastrophe. So, we have to come to the understanding that we're not going to make everybody happy, because certain people don't want a running path, because they feel that it invites people. By the way, I don't know who you're inviting, because they're already here. Everybody wants to run in the Gables, the canopy, the civility, the beauty, you know, cleaner air, it smells better, it's nicer, it's prettier, you know, so they're coming here to run. If it's people from West Miami, South Miami, City of Miami, Coral Gables, they like the scenery. So, I really think that we need to focus in on, as a Commission, and say, we're going to offer some sort of running track. When I mean a running track, we can do something where it's a material that is, you know, soft, that kind of blends in with the grass, but there has to be something.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor. But that's that you're suggesting, so you take people off the street?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Okay, and then on to the edge of the golf course?

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Right.

Mayor Lago: I'm just talking openly here, this is the opportunity, we have a moment to have a conversation, we can't talk about this anywhere else. What my vision was, is to spend a little bit of money, \$25,000, \$30,000, whatever it may be, maybe it's \$15,000, to do a study and just kind of get a little simple design, where you have the edge of pavement that meets the grass, then you have some sort of running path, and then you have trees. So, the trees block the golf balls, you already saw that we planted a bunch of beautiful oak trees, staggered, to stop kind of the intrusion of the golf balls, they have to grow, obviously, but think about how pretty that would be. You know, it's not perfect, because you maybe want the running path on the other side, but at the end of the day,

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it gets people off the street. But we got to have a real conversation about this. We've been talking about it for way too long, and sometimes, for example, like the windows here in City Hall, we talked about it for a long time, it's not perfect, but let me tell you, it's a lot better than we have right now. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I did meet out there with staff about that, as well as ADA issues, and the ability to get from the current asphalt path to be able to cross over. That was one of the issues. So, I'm going to tie this in also with the Biltmore Hotel, the tennis courts, the pickleball courts, we have invasive pines there, and we also have our finest out there blowing their horns, doing their job, so I'll wait for one second. I spoke with our staff about bringing in some trees to stage and screen the golf balls, because it was brought to my attention the Australian Pines serve that purpose. They're invasive, they need to be replaced, they fall over during hurricanes, they're a problem that way. We do have opportunities with some projects coming down the line, that instead of losing healthy trees, that these trees can be brought in and substitute in for some of these items that are missing. We have diseases impacting the palm trees right now, so we need to look at a transitionary stage. Green Buttonwood makes a really nice tree for screening; there happens to be some on a future construction site that we may want to encourage a developer to donate to the city and bring it to where we need it. The height's already there, the movability is something that our staff can evaluate along with a qualified tree mover. These are some of the things that we can do. If they're using them for screening, trees are being used for screening at the Biltmore, we can use them for screening here too. So, the path, whether it's a rubberized surface or some other surface that we put along there, I think it's a benefit because we're not going to be able to get people off of the street otherwise. The bicyclists, the walkers, there's not enough room on the sidewalk alone, you have walls along the way, so it makes it difficult for the homeowners to be able to back out of their driveways with that many people there. I think it's time to look at a broader solution.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I think that there was a discussion, it was probably 10 years ago, about this and there really wasn't a resolution because I think everybody wanted something different. There was even a discussion about making both North Greenway and South Greenway one way to take that other lane and make it into a bike path and a walkable path. I think we really need to revisit all the things that were discussed back then and start considering what options we have at the table. I think Mr. Fadel actually brought up today the issue with the golf balls on the Granada golf course and we've seen it. My neighbor was hit by a golf ball and had issues for a few months because of it. I think it's about grabbing the bull by the horn and trying to figure out a solution that will work and solve the problems.

Mayor Lago: I'm telling you now, someone's going to get hit by a car out there. The amount of people that are out there is growing by the day. So, I think that we really have to do something, and you have to come to terms that you're not going to make everybody happy. You're not going to. And I remember that Matt Nehan, they had even, him and his partner had said that they would

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fund, from what I remember, they were considering funding doing some sort of path on the golf course. They live right adjacent to the golf course. So, I think we have to, just like we did with the golf shelters, where we were able to build some consensus, we called that meeting, I called that meeting, we sat down, we went over everything and now we're moving forward and replacing those dilapidated shelters that were there. It's not what we designed preliminary, but we found some common ground and we're moving forward. So, I think that we're going to have to do something and you're going to have people who are detractors, and I understand that, and you know who they probably are. But at the end of the day, if we can truly push people off the street and get them onto a path, then you're going to have room for the bikers, and you could potentially do something like a one-way street. I mean, that would be amazing. That would be amazing. But again, you also have detractors to that. And by the way, let's be honest for ourselves too. Have you driven on that street when you have a car coming onto you? It is so tight. That has to be one of the tightest streets outside of the one in North Gables, the one that we wanted to do one way. Yeah, Phoenicia, we're still trying to figure out how to put a sidewalk on that street. It is so necessary.

Commissioner Fernandez: So actually, now that you bring that up, there's also been changes since then, because now we have the traffic circle that's going in on Anderson and Coral Way, which would facilitate a one-way street there. Because the issue back then was a one-way street, you're going to have traffic ending on Coral Way in a very difficult to cross intersection. A traffic circle now facilitates the flow of traffic.

Mayor Lago: So, I'm just telling you, I hadn't even thought about the one way. I asked you to please talk. I would just like to figure out a way we can kind of start working on that now with some minor design, bringing in maybe a consultant to have a conversation about this. I think we really need to have this discussion so that we're ready for next year's budget cycle, so we can say, okay, what's it going to cost?

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor really quick. So, I think that what you're proposing is really, really spot on. And just to give you sort of my preliminary support going down this path as we explore it, because as a person who walks that golf course every single night, it can't be that it's the norm that you're always kind of thinking of yourself as the player in a game of Frogger because you're walking, and then you see the car, you hopefully are hearing a car come from behind you, and you're the one going momentarily off the road. But you also have bikes that could be going in any direction, people walking their dogs, people who are way beyond just the residents, because it's an attractive type of nuisance where so many people come because it's such a beautiful place to walk. That if we just, if we just leave it alone and hope everybody will kind of take care of themselves, it's like you said, I hate to say it too, it's a tragedy just waiting to happen. So, safety is always number one. It's got to be first thing of all. And it'll be a benefit for everybody if the study turns out the way that we anticipated it would, it'll serve to greatly reduce the likelihood of

injury or death, consistent with the Vice Mayor's vision plan, as well as if we do it right, it'll be something really, really good looking.

Mayor Lago: And by the way, there's already a path. It's a path that Mayor Cason brought it to my attention saying, let's extend it beyond the circle, beyond the circle, which comes down, you know, the path goes down Coral Way, and then it goes right behind the fountain, and it just stopped there. We extended it all the way down to country, not country club.

Commissioner Lara: Granada?

Mayor Lago: Yeah. And we extended it right there, and it just dead ends.

Commissioner Lara: That's beautiful. That works nicely, you know.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, but if you just continue, you're all the way, you know, up, you know, you continue to Burger Bob's, and then, you know, you have something that's actually, you can use it.

Commissioner Lara: Well, somebody who knows how to do the studies, get them on board.

Mayor Lago: So, we'll see each other at 5.01, but I'm sorry, go ahead, Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to add one more thing. It's not if it's going to happen, it has happened.

Commissioner Lara: That's true.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Back when I was, you know, campaigning, what, five years ago, knocking doors, there was a professor that was hit and killed because when her head hit the ground, her skull fractured, and that, she was hit by a bicyclist, a regular bicycle, you know, and I've, I had some detailed conversations with our Director of Legislative Affairs about just how fast a regular bicycle can go, and how fast I've even gone on a bicycle. We need to separate the pedestrians from the bicyclists, from the runners, and the cars. There recently also was an accident where an architect was hit while walking on the grass on the golf course, because a vehicle veered off. That's another issue. Do we put intermittent curbing? Is that going to be acceptable? There are going to be people against it but curbing at least will get people back on the highway, as opposed to hitting an individual. And the reason I came up with the curbing is as I bike down to Black Point Marina, you have that intermittent curbing, it helps, it allows the drainage to occur but yet prevents vehicles from easily and always being able to veer off. You put them in the most vulnerable areas where people are most likely to veer off. So, thank you all.

Mayor Lago: All right, we'll see each other at 501. Thank you.