

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item K**  
**January 28, 2025**  
**Police and Fire Headquarters**  
**2151 Salzedo Street, 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, Alberto Parjus**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz**  
**Governmental Affairs Manager, Fernando Weiner**  
**Police Chief, Ed Hudak**

**Public Speaker(s)**

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Agenda Item K [12:25 p.m.]

**Discussion Items**

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We have a lot of centennial activities coming up, that's for sure. I know the Garden Club has one, we all received an invitation for that. I don't recall the date off the top of my head, I think it was February 23<sup>rd</sup>, that's going to be at the Merrick House. Look forward to seeing all of you there. And the next bike walk tour would be special as well. Mayor, do you recall the date on that one? No? Okay. That's it.

Mayor Lago: I'm good.

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, no. I just asked if you remember the next bike walk tour, because you were going.

Mayor Lago: No, I do not. The last one was amazing. It was a good turnout.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: We'll send out some notices.

Mayor Lago: A lot of people came out and they were very, very ecstatic.

Vice Mayor Anderson: One last PSA is for folks to re-request your Vote-by-Mail Ballot, because they all were purged from the system. So, I'll ask staff to include that in the E-NEWS so more residents will be aware of that.

Commissioner Castro: So hopefully next Commission meeting we'll have some news or resolution on the resident parking rate, which I'm very excited for and see you guys' next Commission meeting.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez.

Commissioner Menendez: I don't know if the Clerk has the image ready. Okay. So, in the movie series at the Art Cinema, we are showing or bringing it back, Casablanca, with Humphry Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. Its going to be Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m., if I'm not mistaken. Yes, 1:30 p.m. Tickets are available on the city's website, playgables.com. Should be again another packed house. Its an exceptional classic movie that folks are welcome to join us.

Commissioner Fernandez: Just a reminder, Farmers Market season, seen some great turnout, some great weather the last couple of weeks. Hope people continue to come out. Mr. Clerk, what I wanted to ask your office is, if you could maybe put out information the E-NEWS clarifying locations of yard signs. I know some folks have been visited by Code Enforcement regarding the placement of yard signs. Just circulate the information and if you could also circulate the information to the campaigns. I know I have personally received complaints from people, because campaign signs have been placed on their lawns that they did not request. So just put out the information to the campaigns so that they are aware of what the policy is, that it must be re-requested. They can't go out and put yard signs in locations that requested them in the past, just to make sure that it's the current resident, the resident actually wants to support that candidate this election, so just put that information out there.

City Clerk Urquia: So, we don't do that part of it, but every single one of the candidates have received the city's policy as far as yard signs go and I have personally spoken to each candidate and reminded them.

Commissioner Fernandez: Perfect. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Alright. I have a few things.

City Manager Parjus: Mr. Mayor, if I may. I would like Chief Hudak to give you an update on the situation this morning.

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Chief Hudak: This is just an update on the text message that I sent you all as a group this morning. We received a call this morning and our officers responded to, again, the south end of our city, where two vans and an ongoing illegal smuggling operation were stopped by our officers. At this time, we detained 26 Chinese nationals, a Cuban individual and a Puerto Rican individual. Both cases, again, seem to stem from an ongoing investigation that we're working with FDLE, HHS, Border Patrol, that has been some national attention to this again. At 2 o'clock this afternoon, we will be jointly discussing some questions from the media individuals, as well as the people in Tallahassee. As Fernando talked about earlier, there are several Bills, Legislative Bills that affect us here in Florida law enforcement-wise. Again, can't say enough about our officers, within seconds of getting a call, were able to observe it, the individuals, and being able to stop two different places. As of right now, LeJeune Road or Old Cutler is open again, and we will continue to work on this ongoing problem of apparent illegal smuggling operation that are coming in through the south side of our city.

Commissioner Castro: When we were deciding on appropriations, this was one of those appropriations was a request for more resources for your department. I think I had something to do with this. Are we reconsidering our appropriations given the fact that this is happening.

Chief Hudak: Yes. So, as my role for the Florida Police Chief's Association, as the Legislative Chair, Fernando and I have been kind of mirroring it in Tallahassee. We are – at first analysis of the Bills that have come out yesterday, we are in support of that. When I say we, I mean in the Florida Police Chiefs. There are some concerns about what kind of a draw it would put down on our resources of mandating it, and obviously we had some concerns, as an association about holding Chiefs and elected people accountable for not participating in this the way it was written. So, there is an appropriation amount, that's what Fernando was talking about. We would obviously look at if there's an impact on our operations here, the second time in as many weeks. It takes a great deal of resources. And then the potential violence that occurs with this is an issue as well as we've seen it kind of becoming increasingly desperate when we start to shut off these trafficking lanes.

Commissioner Castro: Fernando, would this be a fourth request? I'm asking because I'm going to be heading up to Tallahassee in a couple of days.

Mr. Weiner: So the Bill that Chief is referring to is having to do with the Special Session Bill and, like I said, there is going to be \$500 million dollars of appropriations in that Bill, \$100 million dollars being dedicated to a grant program for local law enforcement to abide by federal regulations and what Chief and I have spoken about is potentially asking for funding for a high-water vehicle or something of the sort to help patrol the coastline and help enforce these immigration policies.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Chief, anything else.

Chief Hudak: No sir.

Mayor Lago: Alright. Thank you very much. So, I'm going to give my comments. I have a few items that I'd like to address today. Mr. Diaz, what are the items that we were talking about, I had it written down, but I didn't check my notes was the temporary speed humps, correct. Since we...

Public Works Director Diaz: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Excuse me.

Public Works Director Diaz: I said correct.

Mayor Lago: No, I apologize. Since we are moving forward with the additional purchasing of these speed humps. I met with the residents, I did a walk-through last week of the Flagler Section, Zully Pardo's residence and neighbors, and I think that area, we've been talking about it for some time, has a lot of cut-through traffic, people are speeding. It's a straight shot. Its one of the areas that I think is a big concern. Could you do me a favor, through the Manager's office, would you see if we can potentially, if my colleagues agree, give this area a little bit of a priority. There isn't really any traffic calming in that neighborhood that I've seen, and I've driven it pretty extensively. I just recently walked all those homes, and I haven't seen any traffic calming. And you have different areas, like for example, 8<sup>th</sup> Street, you have 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and there are always people cutting through there. So, it would be a great area if we have temporary speed tables available, maybe that area could be considered for an option.

Public Works Director Diaz: Absolutely. We do have some data from that area, which Melissa still needs to review to doublecheck which sections will qualify for traffic calming and those places that will qualify, we will definitely be happy to prioritize that area for the temporary speed tables.

Mayor Lago: If you could please speak through the Manager on that issue, it would be important.

Public Works Director Diaz: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Moving on. Mr. Clerk, would you mind presenting. I put forth a memo that I've been working on with my team over the last two months and it was a memo that was sent to my colleagues on the Commission, detailing as we celebrate our centennial that's forthcoming, we've been working on trying to make it as good as possible, put our best foot forward. We have, obviously, La Fabia Sevilla, which we worked on in my office, worked on for two years and its happening now in March, so make sure people go out there and get their tickets, but we are trying to take it to the next level. So, one of our Sister Cities, Exon Provance, we reached out to them, and they would be more than interested in engaging with us here as we prepare for the centennial.

So, they sent us a letter and then we also invited the Spanish Royalty, the King and Queen of Spain,  
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and we've been going back and forth in regard to letters, and there seems to be an appetite to join us for our centennial. They haven't clearly defined the dates, but they've been invited, and they've responded. Can we go to the letters. I wanted to put this on the record, because I think it's important and I want to give Karelia Carbonell a lot of credit. I mentioned her here in the memo. We've been working hand-in-hand with her, with my office and this is from the King and Queen from Spain to our office here in the city, talking a little bit about the opportunity to join us for the centennial and they are going to try to coordinate schedules to see if they could be here or potentially send somebody, an envoy on their behalf, but the goal is to get them here, to get them here. And if you keep going, they sent us one in English also. You'll see the letter from Exxon Provence that's here. I think its another good opportunity, again, to just heighten awareness, make the event even more special and potentially deliver on a centennial that would be memorable in all fronts. So, if anybody has any ideas in the community that they want to help out, my office, please reach out to me by email, by phone, we are more than willing to listen to you if you have any ideas, please feel free to get in contact with us and we'd love to meet with you. We are available, if you just want to walk in and talk about your ideas on Fridays, open office hours starting at 2:00 p.m. and this past week we were there till about 7:30 p.m. We had so many people at the office. Another issue that I'd like to talk about. Today is a very special day. As a Cuban American, today, January 28<sup>th</sup> marks the birth anniversary of Cuba's greatest patriot and a global symbol of freedom and human dignity and human rights, Jose Marti. Marti's writings, speeches and tireless advocacy for Cuban independence have transcended generations, inspiring not only the people of Cuba, but freedom-loving individuals around the world. Here in Coral Gables, a city deeply intertwined with Cuban American experience, Marti's legacy resonates strongly. His ideals of liberty, justice, and the power of education holds special meaning for many families, like my own and those of so many here, who fled oppression in search of a better life and have enriched this community with a resilience and contributions. In Coral Gables, we are fortunate to have a bust of Jose Marti. If you haven't had a chance to visit it, it's a beautiful bust. I've gone there many times, especially when we have, we convene our organizations like....we come together there and we have great events to celebrate Cuban independence, to urge for human rights, democracy. Jose Marti stands as a testament to his enduring legacy. It was reminded of the shared values and sacrifices that unite us as a community. To honor Marti's memory in a more tangible way and to ensure future generations understand the profound significance of his life, I propose that the City of Coral Gables institute an annual tradition of laying a wreath at Marti's booth, excuse me, bust on January 28<sup>th</sup>. This simple gesture, though simple, would symbolize our respect for Marti's ideals and our community's deep connection to the fight for liberty and justice. It will also provide an opportunity to educate and remind us all of the enduring power of Marti's vision. Let us join together and recognize Jose Marti, not only as just Cuba's national hero, but as a universal champion of freedom and equality, by laying a wreath each year. Coral Gables can reaffirm its commitment to these timeless principles and honor the contributions of our Cuban American community, which has been an integral to the fabric of our city. So, I would love to make a motion, if my colleagues will

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support me that every year, we lay a simple wreath at the bust of Jose Marti which is here in the city to come together, because its not only about Cuban ideals, it's about Latin-American ideals. When I'm out there and we've had issues where we've had groups that believe a little differently than I do, in regards to going to Cuba, having dialogue with a Communist regime that oppresses people, especially people who are in the minority, we've been supported by Venezuelans, Guatemalans, Chileans, Argentinians, Nicaraguans, they have all come out and see this bust as an opportunity to show support, not only for Cuba, but for democracy, human rights, and equality. So, I'd like to make a motion to every single year on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January to put a beautiful wreath on that bust in remembrance of Jose Marti and democracy.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Second it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I think it's a great idea, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Menendez: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 5-0)

Mayor Lago: With that, I don't have anything else. Meeting adjourned. I just hope that we can address the issue of the Flagler Section that's important. I would like to have that on the next agenda, if possible, so that we can make sure that we deliver for those residents that all of us have been contacted in regard to the importance of traffic calming on that straightaway, in between 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Yes sir.

Chief Hudak: