

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-9
January 27, 2026
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro (Absent)

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-9 [Start: 2:45 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission urging the Florida Legislature to establish due diligence and reporting requirements for organizations and entities leading municipal recall efforts pursuant to Florida Statutes § 100.361. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Mayor Lago: Item F-9.

City Attorney: F-9 is a resolution of the city commission urging the Florida Legislature to establish due diligence and reporting requirements for organizations and entities leading municipal recall efforts pursuant to Florida statutes section 100.361.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney.

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Agenda Item F-9 – Resolution urging the Florida Legislature to establish due diligence and Reporting requirements for organizations and entities leading municipal recall efforts

[Date]

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Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Good afternoon. This item is sponsored by the Mayor. As you all know, Florida statutes govern municipal recall petitions and the municipal recall process. This resolution, excuse me, would urge the legislature to enact additional legislation to establish due diligence and reporting requirements for organizations involved in recall efforts, including obligations to ensure that all personnel have proper work authorization. And also encourage the Florida Legislature to enact legislation that would require members of recall committees, which are a term of art in that Florida Statute, as well as employers of those employees or subcontractors engaged in the process of procuring signatures on behalf of the recall committee, be held accountable for the illegal actions of those contractors or employees engaged by the recall committee. And this would add this to the legislative agenda and urge the legislature to enact such.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Wow, man. The first time Maria Cruz doesn't have a public comment. All right. Well, let's talk about this. And I'm going to put this on the record. So, there was a recall that was headed by Maria Cruz against me. And the very interesting thing about it is that over the last two years, there's been a full onslaught investigation by FDLE. And now there's been a criminal referral to the State Attorney. The people who were involved in that recall, one of them is going to go to prison soon, as you probably read in the AESOP's article report. And the other for a separate case that deals with fraud and the other recall members are being pursued, but they're illegal immigrants. So, they fled. These are all the people that worked under the auspice of Maria Cruz in this recall effort. The recall effort was funded, this is a proven fact, with a \$100,000 contribution by Billy McAllister and the Miami-Dade County Fire Union. How do I know this? Because Jeff Garcia told me and he ran the recall. I'm putting all the names out there, hoping that somebody writes a story. So what we're requesting today, and I'll be speaking with Danny Perez and the Senate President and the Governor, and I've already spoken to Byron Donalds, and I'll be speaking to the Lieutenant Governor, that there be accountability all the way from the top, not just the people who were on the ground, who they're searching for now. These signatures were fraudulently collected. They were falsified. People like Jim Cason's signature were falsified, and a litany of other individuals in this community under the auspice of Maria Cruz. So, while we sit here and we giggle, we laugh, and we have a good time, in the back room, there are consequences, and people will pay the consequences in regard to these illegal acts. These people are on the run now. One of them, who was a gentleman who ran the signature effort, if you read the Aesop's article, he's going to go to prison for a separate fraudulent activity. So, my point is that this is a good piece of legislation to clean up the antics that you see happening here from, for example, the Miami-Dade Fire Union, who paid \$100,000. Where did that money come from? Came from union dues. What PAC did they use? How did you fund it? At least when you guys talk about Coral Gables First, at least you

know my name's attached to it, front and center. So, while people sit in the back and laugh and giggle, and try to destroy people, look where that recall ended up. Now you have people that are wanted, you have people that are going to go to prison, and you have people whose reputations are tarnished. So, I ask you to support this because recalls are important, they're important, but at the end of the day, it should be done rightfully so, legally, and all the process should be followed to a T, okay? So, at the end of the day, that's all I have.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor. I agree wholeheartedly.

Mayor Lago: Yes ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I also agree wholeheartedly that the bottom line, we need to prevent election fraud. And that's what's at the root of this. So, I'll move it.

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: All right, we have a second. All right, Mr. Clerk, you have no public comment, right? None, like you said, that's closed. So, for once, Maria Cruz doesn't want to say something, except for giggling like she always does in the back. Yes, sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay, I agree. I think that every process of signature collection should have accountability. Recalls are no exception. I know the legislature has made a concerted effort to tighten the ship when it comes to recall efforts over the last 10 years. So, I think this would be a no-brainer for the legislature, and I'm happy to support.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Manager, would you please do me a favor? I request that this resolution be sent to every state representative with a letter addressed to the Speaker of the House, Mr. Perez, the Senate President, to the Governor, to the AG. I'd like a copy of it sent to our State Attorney, Kathy Fernandez-Rundle. I'd like a copy of it sent to the Commission on Ethics, both local and state, requesting that this be placed into law at the state level. There has to be accountability. You cannot cast the blame on the people underneath you when you're the person leading the ship. And that's very simple. When you hire illegal immigrants to do the work, and they go out there and they falsify people's signatures in this community, it's very simple just to throw the blame on them, and then they run off and hide in the shadows, and no one is left held accountable. The money was spent. The reputations were ruined. It was failed. But it was all a calculated effort to obviously remove me from public office.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

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Commissioner Lara: Well, another concern that I have, and I echo your sentiments, is that this has all been dangerously moving into business as usual, people making a career out of destroying other people's names, besmirching them. So that long after the recall fails, the damage continues. And that may be actually where they consider it to be a no-lose situation to get involved in that particular type of business, right? So to the extent that you'll have this communicated to all the elected officials that you just referenced, if there's an advocacy letter that will be provided that you will be signing, I'd like to offer my signature as well and urge my colleagues in the dais to all sign off on the same letter.

Mayor Lago: I appreciate that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Absolutely.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Thank you. And I will not rest as I did not rest with the Actualidad Radio program, which Commissioner Fernandez was on. All I requested was an apology letter. They didn't provide it. I got the apology letter. I got the guy removed. And I won a massive settlement. That's number one. Number two, we beat the recall. We got reelected by almost 19 percent. So, at the end of the day, people are not dumb in this community. They know who's here to serve. And they understand who's here committed to serve on behalf of them. Just like the laws were changed at the state level, excuse me, at the county level to mimic the state in regard to the ethics complaints, no more anonymous complaints, no more Mickey Mouse complaints. You have to now follow the state, which is something you're unaware of. So, we move forward with transparency, true transparency, real transparency. We move forward in a way that has true accountability. And I will always invest my time and my personal treasure to ensure that transparency is at the forefront and that these kinds of situations like what happened with my recall never happen to anyone ever again. Because at the end of the day, these are the kind of things that put stress on a person's career, their family, and this is public service. We have a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir, we do.

Mayor Lago: And we have a request by Commissioner Lara, which I think would be a great idea. I hope that all my colleagues sign on this letter. Mr. Manager, please make it available. Even Commissioner Castro, who's not here today, so she can sign on the letter.

City Manager Iglesias: Will do, Mayor. Thank you.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

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Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 4-0)

(Commissioner Castro: Absent)