

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C
September 10, 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)

Maria Cruz
Carlos Carta
Jackson Holmes

Agenda Item C [9:46 a.m.]

Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Public comment.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker today in Public Comments is Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Good morning. Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. What a nice, nice, nice presentation this morning. Its very nice to see our people getting recognized and since its such a beautiful day in the City of Coral Gables, let us remember that this is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. I think maybe we need to remember they were here for good things, sometimes not so good things, but after all we should be very happy that we get to be here and live here. Thank you.

City Commission Meeting
September 10, 2024

City Clerk Urquia: Carlos Carta.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Carta: For the record, I am Carlos Carta, 715 Anastasia Avenue. Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, staff, I stand here today as a constituent, a neighbor, and for many of you a friend, to share a few things that are top of mind with my neighbors. Once again, Somerset Academy located at 724 Anastasia Avenue failed to meet its annual obligation under a legal settlement agreement with me, our neighbors, and the Biltmore Neighbors Association. Continuing a pattern of negative behavior. Since the city has decided to review Somerset expansion application without even asking if they have met with the neighbors. I promise you that this will open up a path for Gulliver, Riviera Day School, St. Phillips, Santa Teresita, to come and ask for an expansion. I encourage you here to let Academica and Somerset know that this expansion doesn't belong in the Biltmore neighborhood. The city has had a practice of offering high density building permits without considering the urgent need for schools in areas like downtown Coral Gables. Its not just a missed opportunity for education, but also for our businesses that desperately need more foot traffic. You need to make this a high priority. Don't do the easy thing. Be bold. Think big. Work with Academica and Somerset to build a state-of-the-art school in the downtown area. Leave a legacy, not a scare in our neighborhood. Thank you for your time. Look forward to meeting with each of you, but I wanted to bring that to your attention.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Thank you very much. I was reading through the hearing notes on the assessment Commission meeting you are going to have Thursday at 3 o'clock, and I was alarmed to see an item saying, Miracle Mile Assessment District, which for me could be a resurrection of the massively pro-development Business Improvement District. So, it was suggested to me, maybe its not, maybe its just collecting old streetscape debts, but our very kind and considerate Finance Director Blanca Gomez says, she's not sure, but it may be about resurrecting the Business Improvement District, to talk with our Development Director Belkys Perez. I spoke with her, and she wasn't really sure, so she is going to send me an email, but it obviously creates the alarm that the Business Improvement District, which basically, let them sue me for slander, they stole a half-a-million dollars belonging to the city and to the taxpayers of the Business Improvement District. They stole it. Maybe trying to get back in the game, and they are massively pro-development. They've tried to raise the height of Miracle Mile. A woman told me she was fired as the Business Improvement Director because she wouldn't go along with that, so they fired her. So, I raise this

*City Commission Meeting
September 10, 2024*

concern. I don't know what the answer is, and I think its very frightening to me. I lose sleep over it. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: That's it, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.