

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-5
February 24, 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)

Manny Sid, Miami-Dade County
Ariane Oliva, Miami-Dade County

Agenda Items F-5 [Start: 1:40 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager to Coordinate with Miami-Dade County to make available the MeetQ Permit Services at the City's Development Services Department. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: We're moving on to item F-5. I'd like to introduce Manny Sid from Miami-Dade County as an amazing staff. Thank you for being here from Miami-Dade County. So, to give you a little background, in our efforts to streamline the permitting process and continue to evolve, we have a lot of irons in the fire in regard to our permitting department. You're going to see a lot of things coming. I had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Sid last week. I've known him for a long time. Mayor Sid, he doesn't like to be called Mayor anymore, but I still call him Mayor, and now he's working at the county. And he brought forth some ideas on how we could streamline the process with the City of Coral Gables dealing with Miami-Dade County. I've spoken to our City Manager and our team members. I wanted to bring this before the Commission so we can have a discussion on it and hopefully implement this simple maneuver which will give us a direct line of

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communication with Miami-Dade County and will streamline the permitting process, making it easier for our residents and business community. Mayor Sid, good to see you. Thank you for being here again.

Mayor Manny Sid: Thank you, Mayor. Thank you, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. Good to see you all. Manny Sid, the Assistant Director for Small and Local Business Development in Miami-Dade County. I'm joined by Ariane Oliva, our Chief, one of our Chiefs in the Regulatory and Economic Resources Department in Miami-Dade County. And also, we have one of our directors, Angelique Bastard, who runs the small business permitting team. She does a lot in the department, but that team is a national model and several others of our members here that do a great job. Angelique runs the, I mean, Ariane manages and created the MeetQ program. So, what we're presenting today is the installation of a MeetQ kiosk within Coral Gables Building Department workflow. This was the Mayor of Miami-Dade County, Daniella Levine Cava's vision for her second term to collaborate with municipalities because we all know regardless of what city a business is in, they're going to need to work with Miami-Dade County. So, for example, Coral Gables does not have their own water department. So, through MeetQ, you can meet through those reviewers, the water department, the WASDE department, through MeetQ virtually, same thing, the reviewers with DERM, and so forth and so on. So, we started off with a pilot program in the City of Miami Beach and saw incredible success. One of those stories and the Mayor highlighted it in the State of the County Address this year was a yogurt shop that utilized the MeetQ kiosk in the City of Miami Beach, and they received their permits even through the environmental process within 16 days. So, we saw that this is a scalable solution. And so far, we have many, many cities, five out of the six largest cities in Miami-Dade County. Just this morning, I was talking to the Mayor of Medley and the City Manager down in Cutler Bay, and there's more and more cities every single day coming on board, but I want to hand it over to Ariane because she runs the day-to-day and she's really the architect behind this program and making sure that there's a seamless process for our municipal partners, but more importantly, our shared customers, right? They shouldn't have to leave your building department to do anything in Miami-Dade County, where we can add this within the workflow, Ariane.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, thank you for waiting.

Ariane Oliva: Good afternoon. So essentially the purpose of this project is to bridge the space between our jurisdictions. Oftentimes, Coral Gables homeowners and business owners are told that they need to go to Miami-Dade County to receive additional approvals as part of their permitting or their licensing process. So essentially what we have is we have an online system that has been well-established for some time. And what we're trying to do is bring those services closer to their homes, closer to their businesses, so that when they hear that they have to go to Miami-Dade County to obtain these approvals, it doesn't seem so daunting, it doesn't seem so scary,

because we're looking to place these kiosks close to the offices where your experts are providing them this feedback. And with their guidance, they can use this kiosk to sign up for the appropriate service and get a meeting with the experts over at Miami-Dade County to go over any of their requirements and smooth things out so that they can turn around and complete their process right in your offices. Essentially, we hope that this is something that allows people to be less scared about getting this information from Miami-Dade County. And we're just hoping to provide better services to everyone because our customers are your customers as well.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. So, what I'm trying to see is now that we're working on the City of Coral Gables permitting side, and we're addressing many fronts that the Manager and his team, Mr. Ramirez, Public Works, all the teams that are working on this together, it's all hands-on deck to really streamline the process. I'm just trying to bring a solution here from the county because, again, people forget, hey, I got my permit. No, you didn't get your permit, you got to get the county. You got to go to the county, and you got to deal with certain things, and you got to go to the federal level or state level, depending on if you have to health and if you have to, obviously you got to go to DERM, you got to go to WASA. But what I want to try to do is I want to try this out as a pilot program and see how efficient it is, see if we're really successful, see if we can really cut wait times, see if we can really offer our residents and our business community an opportunity to basically say, maybe they don't have to go to downtown. Maybe our reviewer can immediately sit down and have a conversation with their reviewer online through a portal system with the client there face-to-face. So, I think it's a good opportunity. At the end of the day, I don't think it costs really anything to implement, a computer. We have computers in storage. And I think, again, I want to hear from the Manager. I brought it to the Manager. So, what I was telling my colleagues in the Commission, this is being worked on. This is something that you and I met. We sat down; we had a conversation. I met with the Manager. I met with staff. I wanted to have a conversation. What are the benefits? What are the pros? What are the cons? Is this truly viable? Does this really work? That's when you work on real legislation and you try to pass things to help the community, it's proven because at the end of the day, you're bringing something that is comprehensive, robust. Maybe you get a no vote on it, but at the end of the day, why would you vote no on this? Do you understand? These are good things. And I try to get as many yes votes as possible. So, Mr. Manager, what is your opinion? What can we do? And how can we plan?

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we've already implemented yesterday. So, we're implementing this. And if I may suggest something to the county, something that I was working on.

Mayor Lago: I don't want you to suggest one thing. I want you to suggest 50 things, whatever it takes.

City Manager Iglesias: It's something that I actually, I worked with the county back when I was in Miami, running the Miami Building Department and that is to be able to submit simultaneously

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for Coral Gables, WASA, and DERM. And that's something that we need to, I think the county needs to look at their IT issues and see if they can elevate them to actually work with us. And that would be a real savings. We've implemented this yesterday to help certainly our residents, but it would be great if we could have simultaneous. We are now working with electronic reviews, and the idea is to simultaneously apply to everyone at the same time. We weren't able to do it 10 years ago. We weren't able to do it now because there's some glitches between Dade County and Miami at the time and Coral Gables now. So, my understanding is that Dade County is looking at maybe looking at a different solution for their building department and for RER. And that would be great if we could have a simultaneous application, which would be even better than what we're doing now.

Mayor Lago: So, Mayor, so in the point that the Manager was making, as you're aware, just putting it for the lay individual who may not be involved in permitting construction engineering architecture. You can't pull a permit. For example, you can't get a plumbing approval until they see a stamp approval from the county, DERM-WASA. Then that has to come back to the city. Okay, you have approval from the county, perfect. Now we'll give you plumbing approval, even though it's already been reviewed by our reviewers and they said that everything is in compliance, they'll tell you, do you have one comment left? Like it happens all the time. You get a structural, you get electrical, you get mechanical, you get all the disciplines, but then you have plumbing is always the last one. You got to get a county approval, then bring it back. The reviewer here sees it, says, okay, perfect. Remove the county comment, excuse me, remove the plumbing comment as approved because you have your county stamp. So, I think that that's a good idea because we can save a lot of time while we're waiting on that and we don't have to just get all the stuff in the City of Coral Gables done first. Do you have any ideas? Do you have any, are other cities facing that also? Has that been brought to your attention?

Mayor Manny Sid: I don't know if Angelique wants to touch upon that, but I think one of the challenges that we have is that we serve as the largest city in the county, right? It's 1.2 million people, which is unincorporated Dade, plus all the other trades within all the municipalities and every city has a different system, a different process, a different code, but there's a lot that's currently happening. I don't want to speak out of line. A lot that's currently happening internally to streamline the process. Ariane's been, her hand is in all of that and it's really exciting. I think part of what's happening now too is, I don't know if you all know, DERM is now its own department when it comes to the scientific side of DERM, but the regulatory, the actual inspection side is lying within RER. So now you're starting to see that side of it getting all streamlined within our internal processing, which again, Ariane and her team have done an incredible job with that. So, we hope to, with this program, little by little, start that integration with these municipalities in the county. But it's a little bit harder. It sounds easy, but it's a little difficult, especially with the old mainframes and the old systems that exist.

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To make available the MeetQ Permit Services at the city's Development Services Department*

Ariane Oliva: If I may, in order to maintain a consistent process and services delivered to all the municipalities that we have to service, there is some nuance to that. But I believe that a lot of the optimizations that you speak of can be also achieved through simple business process changes, or maybe even approaching the process in better timing. We already have an online system at Miami-Dade County for building permitting. It's actually a system that I created. It's available to be expanded as necessary and we have the opportunity and the ability to do that as needed. And so perhaps it might be something more achievable through a discussion about whether or not we can have your staff or your experts shepherd the process over to us in a specific way. As other municipalities have already embarked on doing, I believe that City of Miami is currently shepherding all of their permits over to us through their staff and they've achieved great gains with that because they are first and foremost involved in the process and then receive all of the communications and then have access to all of the stamped approved plans themselves that can be then seamlessly incorporated into your plan set as well. So that's something that we can talk about.

Mayor Lago: Perfect, perfect. Well, we implemented already through the Manager's office. If you want to codify, do you have any other further comments? I'd like to have a motion.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment? All right.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker, Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mayor. I appreciate you for being here. Thank you so much.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, 305-323-2154. I'm fascinated by the way we do things here. Last meeting, two weeks ago, Doug Ramirez, who I believe is the Acting Development Services Director, came here, presented the Improvement Plan for Development Services two weeks ago. I guess nobody talked to him because two weeks now we have something else that we can do to improve Development Services. Well, we criticized all the people for not talking. I guess he didn't know you were going to present this today because had he known, he would have included to his Improvement Plan, and we wouldn't be talking about it now. You know, it's amazing what, some of you who are very good at smoking mirrors, we need to work together. You know, did you talk to this one? Did you talk to that one? Did you talk to Police Chief? Did you talk to a Fire Chief? Did you talk to the Manager? Well, did anybody talk to Doug Ramirez before you brought this up? Oh, no, because had you talked to him, it would have been on his plan. Hello, don't use double talk here. This is not 1984, 1964, whatever the name of the book was.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

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Mr. Holmes: Greetings. Sorry about that. Jackson Holmes, 35 Sedonia. I generally support Manny Sid. I supported him for Mayor of Miami-Dade County. So, I hope you all will give him the benefit of the doubt as you consider this. I did, unfortunately, miss the item that came up H-2 earlier, because usually the City Manager items are at the end, but this came up midway. I just want to say amen and bravo for getting this moving forward, the construction of the mobility hub. My concern is, and I'll quit here. I'm not trying to change things. My concern is let's not let a recession overtake this. There are people who would be glad to derail the mobility hub with the excuse of a recession. So, let's see if we can break ground and before any recession hits us. Thank you.

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

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

Mayor Lago: All right. Mr. Ramirez, would you mind coming up here, sir, for a second, through the Manager, just to clear the record as always. When did you find out about this?

Acting Development Service Director: Doug Ramirez, Acting Development Service Director. I heard about it Thursday evening or Friday morning when Mr. Manager Iglesias called me.

Mayor Lago: The reason why, because I met with Manny Sid. I met with Mayor Sid, I think it was on Friday or Thursday. That's when I met with him. So, at the end of the day, this is a county program that's being offered. It's being offered. It's complimentary to what we're doing to the plan. And the whole purpose is to streamline our conversations with Miami-Dade County. Do you object to this, sir, in any form or any way?

Acting Development Service Director: Absolutely not.

Mayor Lago: I would have brought this to you earlier, but Manny, I'm going to throw you under the bus. Manny only brought it to my attention last week, and I thought it was a good idea. And by the way, I want to bring good ideas forward to help save as much time as possible for our residents and our business community. I want to thank Mayor Sid for offering that information to my office. So, thank you for that.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: I just wanted to say that we've always had a great relationship with RER, and we will continue to have that. And I hope we can work together and just streamline the process even more. So, I look forward to working with all of you. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much, my friend. Appreciate you. Mr. Clerk, we have a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mayor Lago: We're going to take a lunch break. I want to thank Mayor Sid and his amazing staff. Thank you for being here. I wish you the best of luck with your endeavors. You have a lot of work before you, and I want you to please continue working as you were. Thank you very much for graciously sending us the information in regard to this county project. All of you thank you for that. I send my best wishes to Mayor Cava for allowing this program to happen, and I hope that it helps us streamline the process for our residents and our business community. So, thank you very much. And also, keep tabs, please. Mayor Sid, keep tabs with the Manager because we're revamping our entire permitting system on multi-different levels. And any guidance or any advice similar to what you sent me this past week is always warmly and greatly appreciated. Thank you, sir. We'll be back at about 2.30. Thank you.