

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item K
March 10, 2026
Public Safety Building, CMR
2151 Salzedo Street, 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
Discussion Items

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor before we adjourn anything good for the order.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We have another farmers market coming up. We'll have an education table there for the human trafficking issues, sex offenses etc. We also, for the last, I think this is our last Commission meeting in March, remember that we have at the last Farmers Market we have another education table which I'll be joined at with our wonderful staff in the Sustainability Division giving some training on recycling. It's one of the things that residents have asked us to do a little more education on. There's always something new to learn and then we can showcase our composting program at that time. For those of you who enjoy biking and barbecuing, this weekend on Sunday we have the bike and barbecue with Bike Walk Coral Gables. You can sign up to join that. It's a very fun event. We have the escort services from the police department; they're an amazing group. They do a great job of keeping us safe, so that's a great one too. And then we have Earth Month

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coming up in our annual or Earth Month events, including the recycling event with electronics and shredding and so forth. So, I'm looking forward to it. And thank you all.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Castro.

Commissioner Castro: So, as Vice Mayor Anderson was saying, the Farmers Market is March 28th, but March 28th is also my next dog walk, and for this dog walk we're going to go ahead and join forces with Crime Watch and the Fire Department for the CPR for dogs so, at 11 in the morning. I think I'm expecting maybe a hundred dogs and owners, so that's going to be very exciting. The dog walk starts at 11:45 and I hope to see everybody there.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Lara.

Commissioner Lara: Yes. So just want to comment on what a wonderful Carnival on the Mile we had this past weekend. Everyone thinks I went to the beach. I was just walking up and down the streets, that's how I got my tan and gained a few lbs. Oh by the way, the music was amazing too if anybody caught the wide variety of music and I was personally blown away by the School of Rock Kids, who were rocking out to some great tunes. This evening very shortly from now there's the Friends of Gables High Garden Party at 5:30. I hope to see people there; that's at 3700 Granada Boulevard. And with respect to the Coral Gables Crime Watch and the doggie CPR, that Commissioner Castro was mentioning, I'm very proud sponsor of the of the doggie CPR, the masks and that the you know, I purchased those for the Crime Watch> I hope they never ever have to be used, but it's good to know that we got them there and just remind everybody that my office hours continue to be on Monday mornings, but at the new site where we are right now, even I forgot the address. What was it City Manager, the address again on Minorca – 234 Minorca, right on the on the first floor, right next to the driver's license Office of the Tax Collector has right next door to us. Hope to see you all then or by appointment. We can make a time to see each other whenever you're free.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: Just want to thank staff for all the hard work. I know that there was a lot of work that went into this weekend with the Carnival on the Mile and all the events that we've been putting together. Parks with the incredible work that you're doing with the Farmers Market, I've heard that we've had more people than ever participating in Farmers Market, so it's great that people are coming out in droves to enjoy the beauty of the City Beautiful, so thank you for that. Since we won't be back until April, Aid Mubarak to all who celebrate Ramadan, Shag Samyak to all who celebrate Passover and Happy Easter to everybody who celebrates Easter.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. I have a few items today that I want to address. First and foremost, can we have the slide for the City Manager. I want to congratulate our City Manager Peter Iglesias, who received the Government Engineer of the Year Award by the Florida Engineering Society last week. This is a major feat and again, we always knew it. I've known it for many, many years, trust me, I used to have to deal with it at the City of Miami. He is an exceptionally talented professional and resident of the City of Coral Gables and we're blessed to have him as our City Manager. Black and white balls and strikes, you're an amazing person. Thank you for your service. You don't need to be here, and you do it because you love the city. Next thing I want to talk about. I want to talk about two issues that are not as beautiful and elegant as that one. We had a dog park meeting on February 19th and this Commission said we would not Sunshine that meeting because it was going to be a meeting that dealt with staff and the residents of that community. So, they can talk, they can learn, and it wouldn't be politicized. I did not attend that meeting and found out later that Commissioner Castro attended that meeting and I wished then we would have had a Sunshine meeting because I would have gone to the meeting if I knew that we were not going to all conduct ourselves as we had discussed. So, I just want to say that to me again, it was not Sunshined that I did not go to it and then later I find out on social media or in person you know that she said that I was the only one that attended. Well, the reason why you were the only one that attended was because we intentionally didn't Sunshine it so it would just be the residents and staff. So that's one of the things that I think we could do better. Number two, please play the video that I have here. I have a video from social media that I'd like to play. I like to get some volume on that also. Start it from the beginning if possible. Video that was taken from Commissioner Castro's Instagram account, as you can see What she's doing here she's reposting a gentleman who I'm not going to even give the privilege to say his name or his face, he's running for state office. He showed up here and he said that I insulted him. I'm going to show you the video of my exchange with him after, so you see I didn't insult him. I actually call him a gentleman. He proceeds to insult me and all Lagos, when you say all Lagos, he's obviously mentioning my family, my brother, myself, my father, my family, and he was also mentioning the guy who he's running against who is also a Lago, which you have no relationship with. But what's worse than that is the fact that you would even include the way that you would include that on your social media when that guy called us all a piece of feces. I'm not and he didn't use that word so let's play the video please.

[Video Presentation]

Speaker: I sat here and um i gave my comments. I was happy to be here one of my first times in the City of Coral Gables Commission to share my opinions to try to be more involved in the process even though it's a neighboring district. I was attacked multiple times by Mayor Vince Lago confirming that all Lagos are pieces of shit and that for some weird reason they're afraid of new people getting involved. So please do your part get involved get out there to your Commissioner

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Mayor Lago: Let's watch the other video because I want to put it into context also, I did not attack this gentleman when he came up to speak.

[Video Presentation]

Speaker: Hey everybody, how are you. It's a pleasure to be here today. I see why they call it the City Beautiful nothing but beautiful people in this room really good-looking Commissioners here. I think this is common sense for the City of Coral Gables; I think Coral Gables has always led by example. I'm running right now for District 113, your neighbors over in Miami and we always look up to you guys, because the way you train and the way your personnel executes is just you know it's what public administration is meant to be. Seldom is there a conversation about the police in Coral Gables without somebody saying, remember they're the ones that everybody's trained on the defibrillator, everybody has one in their car. Just great differentiating factors like those make the City Beautiful great. I think this is just one more way to do that and if we want to look at it more selfishly because i have you know lived here my whole life and I'm familiar with the 8th Street corridor because, I go to the McDonald's on 42nd and 8th and then my parents live on 2800 on Alhambra, so I'll go down that road a lot. We can stop the behavior in that corridor if we just lengthen the recidivism pipeline with these offenders. If we report them if we make them go through the programs like this training would help Fire help them go through we can stop them from getting out there and placing that pressure on the business between Coral Gables and Miami I think would make that 8th Street area better and would help with the future plans you have to redevelop the area and take out some of the blights there are with those motels. So, I really think it'd be great if you supported this resolution. I think you know I'm hoping to go to Tallahassee to help bring some funding down for that, but even if I don't there's a lot of great representatives right now in Tallahassee, so I'm sure we could reach out to and they'd be willing to get us some funding because it'd be you know, it'd be below the city honestly, for us not to get more training, more training is always what's made the City Beautiful great and I think it's just one more item we have that can make Coral Gables an example for the rest of the county and while I'm here, because I don't want to waste your time a second time, definitely would be great if we could protect the UDB and keep it from expanding. I think Coral Gables is once again an example of great public planning, public administration planning, and expanding needlessly isn't going to lead us to solve many of the problems we have so thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, Mr. Manager.

Commissioner Castro: Where's the rest. Where's the rest.

Mayor Lago: I'm not done, so let me finish.

Commissioner Castro: Where is the part you attacked him.

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Mayor Lago: I didn't attack anybody, so let me finish, this is my moment to speak. Is this the new normal, is this the way it is. A Commissioner insulting another Commissioner using foul language on their social media, attacking me, attacking my family, smearing and lying. Commissioner Castro did take it down; I commend her for that acknowledging that it was highly inappropriate because people told her that, but it should not have been posted in the first place. We're better than that. Lying and smearing has no place on this dais and in our city. If I write something and I put something up it's under my name or it's under Coral Gables First. I've always said it, and I will continue to say it. Civility Code states all board and committee members shall be professional and respectful in interaction with each other and members of the public. City Code states the Commission may censure its own members for misconduct. Here let me read it out of the rules and procedures from Section 1, Expulsion and Quorum. The Commission may determine its own rule of procedure, censure its own members for misconduct and may compel the attendance of members. Going back to this point. I'm not asking for a censure, it's not worth it. It's meaningless. It has no teeth, it has no bite, it's nothing. We may have a disagreement on the dais. I don't have an issue with that at all, at all, at all. I had disagreements with whether Miracle Mile should be upzoned with Pat Keon, it was professional. I had disagreements whether we should upzone the Plaza, whether we should upzone where Trader Joe's is in the Gable Station. I voted against those projects. I had disagreements whether we should approve the Andalusia Parking Garages. I voted against those too, but it was always professional, it was always robust discussion, but it was not having the insanity that we have here especially when you're calling someone else and you're either slurring them or you're calling them by what this gentleman called me. I would never do that and if somebody came up here and said that even to an individual that I'm having an issue with on the Commission floor, I would never allow it. I would never allow it. So, I'm not even asking for a censure because it just doesn't, it's meaningless already that it doesn't mean anything, but what I am asking is if we have a disagreement on the issues, it's perfectly fine, let it be based on the disagreement on the issues. Yes sir.

Commissioner Lara: Well, you know, I commend you for not Mayor for reaching for a censure, although I haven't agreed with you in the past when you've made a previous motion for a censure. I think that these circumstances maybe would have warranted it. I have to say that I can think of no rational basis for why a Commissioner on this dais would have put that video on her social media page, which has a considerable reach, there's just absolutely no defensible position that you could take Commissioner Castro to put that video up there when all it served to do was a baseless spewing of a vile reference to a family of one of the elected officials that serves with you on this Commission. I recall not long ago one of these Commission meetings where you were quite vocal and quite upset that the mere mention of your mother during a conversation or during a debate that we were having here at the dais, you felt was insulting when the references I recall was that your mother had previously owned and run the permit expediting company that you do now and you took a pretty harsh tone to the Mayor when it was simply mentioning your mother and I must say

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accurately and in context with what was being discussed at the time. Being said it is the height of hypocrisy I must say, the height of hypocrisy to say that then go ahead and put that video up on your social media. So, I suppose it would be overstating it to say I commend you for taking it down, but I certainly can't understand what on earth possessed you to put it up in the first place. Under these circumstances, I think the Mayor's taking the high road by not seeking a censure, but from my perspective I think you owe this man an apology for doing so in the first place.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. Number one, that was a story, number two, those words were not mine okay, and number three, it's very convenient how you show how you did not attack the person that came here to represent me, okay. That person stood up in the audience, you went for him twice, but where you decide to show here in front of these people is something in which you did not even act in and I strongly do not believe that his name is Tony Diaz, he's running for state chair, I believe. I don't think he knows your family. Does he know your family, but why would you go for somebody in the audience, why would you do that to them, that's coming here just to represent me okay. I've never gone after your family and I wouldn't agree for anybody to go after your family, but you cannot tell me what I could repost or not repost, and those words were not mine okay, there's some freedom in what I can do.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: If I may I'd like to respond first and foremost. I think that she doesn't understand. I know what a story is and I know what a post is, very simple. Story stands up for 24 hours and there's a reason why you took it down immediately, because people called you and told you that was embarrassing. So let me explain to you. Those words become yours when you repost that, you're getting behind it. When you repost somebody else's posts, you're standing behind what that person says and that person knows very clearly that I'm Vince Lago and the person that he's running for in regards as a state representative is a gentleman by the last name Lago that's why he said all Lagos are feces. It's very clear and you reposted it. Number three, I did not attack that gentleman. I called him a gentleman multiple times. I did not attack him at all. I don't even know him, why would I attack him. He came up and gave his opinion and that's fine, that's what we do here. We allow for opinion, free speech as long as he's respectful, but the idea that you're going to tell me that it was a story versus a post okay, it's a story congrats, but you took it down because you knew it was inappropriate; and number two, immediately when you repost that you're giving credence to that to your followers to see what this gentleman's saying and you're standing behind that commentary, that's classless and that's undignified, in my opinion it's par for the course Madam Vice Mayor.

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Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I was going to comment too on the words are not my commentary. We have one of our unions co-signed on a letter from another union one time and I had a conversation with the president of that union and that was the defense, the words are not mine. Once you sign off on it, you own it, it's yours, you endorsed it, you believe in it, you posted it, You published it and publication has consequences okay, is it the truth. You owned that one when you published it. It was a mistake; you took it down. So, I understand that you've acknowledged that, but you need to understand that when you post you, own the comment, okay, you've now endorsed it and you're wearing it. There are people that have said words in our city, you know, and they will follow them forever, but when you repost it it's yours. So, I think enough has been said about this and we should move on and move forward and move in a positive direction because we can agree to disagree all day long on stuff just like I've disagreed with the particular members of our Commission on matters before. They're just issues, let's move forward. Let's try to move in a positive direction.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Madam Vice Mayor. Did you have anything you want to say.

Commissioner Fernandez: I mean, I think.

Mayor Lago: I didn't want to cut you off.

Commissioner Fernandez: No, no, no, I appreciate it. We need to leave politics at this table. It needs to end here. When we get out of here politics should have been left behind. You look back and hear the stories about you know congressional leadership and you had some of the most polar opposites in the Whitehouse and in Congress for many years, yet Thursday evenings they were sitting at the Whitehouse playing poker and having a drink together, talking about their families, having dinner with their families, because politics was something that was left behind. We need to be the ones that bring that back because we're seeing a trend, I guess you could say, where politics is all consuming, where you're on social media and all of a sudden your friends are no longer your friends because you disagreed with them on one issue, you agree with them on everything else, you disagree on one issue, you know, even up here. If you go back on our votes as a Commission, I think the last number I got from the Clerk was 92 or 93 percent of our votes were unanimous because we agreed. So, let's move past that. We're the City Beautiful, let's be beautiful.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Moving on. I'd like to give a recap of our Town Hall. It was incredibly successful. Thank you to staff. Do we have any pictures or any, I don't know if we do or not. The event was very well attended. I want to thank Alina Garcia, our Election Supervisor, for attending, also Dariel Fernandez, our Tax Collector, who was there. We reviewed all eight ballot questions and mail-in ballot process. I want to thank the City Attorney and her team for really going into depth and explaining to the residents exactly what they're looking at forthcoming and when they start receiving these ballots pretty soon and I want to thank Martha Pantin also for her efforts in ensuring that we have a good marketing strategy to get people educated on the voting process and how important it is for them to return the ballots. Again, if you have any questions, you can find

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that information online. We also have a dedicated phone line where people can call in and they can have their questions answered and if not, you can just reach out to the Commissioners or to myself and we'll provide you with all the necessary information. With that being said, I think we've covered enough ground today. I want to thank staff. I want to thank everyone for being here, all the residents, all the business owners. Thank you for your time today. Thank you for making so much progress. Our next meeting is next month, correct, we have a little bit of a time off. We will be having office hours this Friday starting at two o'clock till five o'clock. I look forward to seeing you. Thank you and God bless. A motion to adjourn

City Attorney Suarez: Can we get a motion to adjourn Mayor.

Mayor Lago: I said motion to adjourn second time.

Commissioner Castro: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Second.