

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C
June 10, 2025
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
Police Chief, Ed Hudak

Public Speaker(s)

Joseph Fadell
Zarah Khan Rizvi
Maria Cruz
Natalie Milian Orbis, Miami-Dade County Commissioner District 6

Agenda Item C [9:39 a.m.]

Public Comment

Mayor Lago: Moving onto public comment. As I've stated before, I'd like to welcome everyone to the Commission. I'm going to ask everyone who comes up to state their name and address for the record. You have three minutes to share your thoughts with the Commission. As a reminder, these comments are limited to those items on the agenda within the scope of the City Commission's jurisdiction. If you wish to speak on an item that is on the agenda right now, please remember that you will not be given an additional opportunity to speak again once that item is called. All comments should be directed to the Commission as-a-whole. When the three minutes are up the

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timer will beep. I will ask you to please wrap up your sentence and leave the podium when you are done speaking.

City Clerk Urquia: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. First speaker this morning is Joseph Fadell.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Fadell: Good morning. My name is Joseph Fadell. I live at 905 Sorollo Avenue and I'm here to discuss or talk about leaf blowers. I'm just going to read what I sent you guys earlier. I think it's pretty clear of the significant environmental impact leaf blowers have. They say that these, some gas-powered leaf blowers produce enough sound that they emit more than 23 times the amount of carbon monoxide than a pick-up truck. Anyway, the issue here is, there's a ban, apparently it's not being, the city is not moving forward with it, because I understand state law, but things are changing soon. I've looked a little bit into what has worked and what has not worked in other municipalities and one of the most important factors, some of the most important factors are enforcement. You need to have enough people on staff that are trained with decibel meters to go out and know what they're doing. I think you have to first give violators a warning, that later could be followed up by a fine, that would incrementally increase per violation and not just come up with a \$500 fine. One other factor transitioning to electric is the expense that's involved. Because these electric machines that are available now require numerous battery changes, the lawnmowing companies are going to need some kind of financial support. I don't think that's available here in this city and I think the outcome is going to be higher lawn maintenance costs for most residents. One guy told me 30 percent higher. I don't know what the experience has been in Miami Beach or Key Biscayne, but another factor is that the ban should be phased out or rolled out over a period of time. Maybe there should be an educational period, followed by a warning period, followed by then full enforcement. This will give landscape companies time to adjust to set aside funds for the investment. Another informed factor is public outreach is very important. It's important for the city to lead by example. Just so you get an idea, one battery pack leaf blower with the number of battery packs required to continue to work four to six hours a day could cost up to \$4,000, and most of these companies are small, they are immigrant owned, they are not all SFM, and they don't have that kind of money. But I think it can work because I think the city is distinguished by its greenery.

Mayor Lago: Finish – just last ten seconds.

Mr. Fadell: And by how well it protects trees and I think doing something with regards to the impact on the environment of leaf blowers is important. I don't like to think of Coral Gables as the fumes and the noise of leaf blowers which if you work from your house, they are everywhere.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Zarah Khan Rizvi.

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Mayor Lago: Good morning. Good to see you again.

Ms. Khan Rizvi: Good morning. Nice to see you again. Honorable members of the Coral Gables City Commission. Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Zarah Khan Rizvi and I reside at 1525 Palancia Avenue. Firstly, I'd like to extend my deepest gratitude to those members of the Commission who recently took the time to meet with me to discuss their involvement in my initiative LEAP or the Learn Environmental Advocacy Project. The Commission's support means so much and I'm sincerely grateful for their engagement in this program. LEAP was born out of my two passions for environmental advocacy and law. I believe that our planet is facing immense challenges and one of those affective ways to tackle these challenges is through policy. So, with the support of the social impact movement, LEAP was created as a youth-lead, youth-run initiative, designed to empower young people to engage in environmental advocacy through legislative processes. LEAP was formed to show the youth that they have the capability and the responsibility to work towards a greener future beyond individual habits, to show that though they may be small, their voices most certainly are not. Currently, we are preparing and are excited to launch our inaugural summer program beginning on June 14th. Throughout the program, high school students will identify specific environmental issues prominent in their communities and will learn to combat them through research, policymaking and collaborating to write a bill. Once these bills are complete, we plan to present them to members of this Commission who can help carry their ideas forward. It is with the utmost appreciation that I recognize the extraordinary support LEAP has already received from the Coral Gables community. Multiple members of this Commission have generously agreed to join us for a few sessions of LEAP summer program. Their willingness to share their time, experience and wisdom with our students is nothing short of inspiring. As LEAP prepares to begin on June 14th, I must express my gratitude for the city, its leaders, and for the incredible opportunity to work alongside so many bright and passionate people. Thank you once more for your time, support and your belief in the power of the youth. I look forward to soon standing before you again with more grand voices of the young. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us be rejoice and be glad in it. I'll be remiss if I didn't bring up the fact that today is June 10th and June 14th is Flag Day. Flag Day in this nation and I guess we forgot. Our patriotism failed today. The second item I have, first of all, I'd like to thank the Commissioners that were paying attention when the firefighters and the police officer were recognized. I'd like to apologize to both Captain Fajardo and Firefighter Mosqueira and Sergeant Zaccheo, because the Mayor did not think it was important. The Mayor missed all of the first presentation for the firefighters completely. The

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Mayor missed most of A-3, which was the second one and I hate to say it, but while the police officer was being recognized with the highest award in this city for a police officer, the Mayor was on the phone and walking around. I am so sorry that in this city we do not respect the people that keep us alive, and you've heard me say this many times. I'm very grateful for the police officers that keep an eye on my house, because I have a police watch on my house because my daughters requested me to do that because they are afraid of what could happen to me, and the firefighters that so many times kept my husband alive, the firefighters that came to the hospital for the last time before he died, and I'm ashamed that the city Mayor does not think they are important enough to pay attention to them. Well, he's not paying attention to me either, so I should not be surprised, but I apologize to the firefighters and the police officers because your Mayor, the one that you all elected does not care about them. Thank you.

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

Mayor Lago: Thank you. We'll close the public comment. Thank you very much. We'll move on. First and foremost, I'd like to welcome our Commissioner from District 6. Thank you for being here with us. Welcome to the City Beautiful. If you will indulge me, one second with the Chief. We have some good news that I would like for you to be apart of. Chief, good morning.

Chief Hudak: Sir. Yesterday we had talked about our stats in our briefing, and we are happy to say, admit, I guess, I've never really been one to talk about statistics.

Mayor Lago: But I think its important to also showcase your hard work, your staff's hard work and the reason why I ask you to come up before the Commission meeting was because this is something that again, doesn't get enough publicity. We want to talk about all the negativity, we want to talk about everything else what's wrong with the world, but I think its time that we continue to try to shine a positive light on, for example, your employees that are doing such a wonderful keeping us safe every day. So, this is an opportunity, this is why you and I discussed before the Commission meeting why we should highlight this.

Chief Hudak: So, as you said from my eleven years plus, I don't necessarily like to talk about statistics as the Chief of Police only because a drop in crime is good, but if you're the victim of a crime, crime's up 1000 percent. So, if I stand up here and I tell you all, you know we're down 14 percent, which we are, and we are happy and we're proud of that, the fact of the matter remains that this body, this Commission through the Manager's office as well, has been supportive of our initiatives going forward and continues to be. The nimbleness of any Police Chief is being able to incorporate one, your personnel, which is most important, but also the technology and the nuances that help continue to let us get into the neighborhoods, because I can't quantify for any of you, as I've said on many occasions what a police presence in the neighborhood does to lessen crime. I can't. But I can quantify by thousands of emails over the years has been how our residents feel about the presence of our police department. We have done unbelieve great job in the last two

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years of trying to get our vacancies back down to where they're at. Our actual vacancies right now as I sit here before you is, of the budgeted positions there are 9 vacancies, not including the 15 additional bodies that this body gave us. So, we're still 15 vacancies for those, but we're closing the gap, so to speak, on where we're at. The reason why our numbers continue to go down in the last two years, even with those vacancies is the hard work of the men and women of this department, working mandatory overtime, being able to continue to answer the call, the Communication Operators that are answering the calls. So with the technology, with what lies ahead for us with the work with IT. I'll be honest with you, I know that you know we have one of, if not the best government IT Department in the world. It is not lost on the fact that Raimundo's office is about 30 paces away from my office, because we need that kind of information. This body has allowed us to enhance our communications system. Last Saturday, we started the text to 911. I continue to see the increase in the shortage of times of us solving crime. Our criminal element does not live within the City of Coral Gables, and it isn't for the hard work of our detectives, but also our Crime Suppression Team. You have met many members of that Crime Suppression Team. They do things that allow us to continue to patrol the neighborhoods. We continue to look at other avenues, whether it be through technology, through drone use. I know most of you heard the other day that the SWAT team was able to safely take somebody in custody who was breaking into cars and threatening somebody, but we went into the building to get him, but we sent the smaller drones in to find the individual and take him in without custody. That's the kind of technology that you all have allowed us to do, to continue this overall 14.26 percent drop in overall crimes. One caveat that I will give you is, prostitution and drug use is not up. It is a fact that we are now aggressively working it. We are working with human trafficking partners; we are working with our federal agencies as well. So, we continue to do all of this with a measured sense of propriety, and we prioritize what we need to do, and I can't be prouder of the men and women. I'm honored to be their boss, more honored when I get a chance to recognize them in front of you, but our mantra still is that everybody they touch needs to remember them for the rest of their lives because that's the authority that they have, and they've continued to do that. So, we are very proud today. I know we usually don't do it, it came out today, I guess, again, I try to shy away from talking about statistics, but we continue to do a great job. We are still focusing on traffic or working on traffic. There is technology coming up to give us more resources in the neighborhoods, as we go forward into the next school year, but that's our partnership as a city and an administration.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Chief.

Chief Hudak: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: I appreciate your hard work and send my best to all the troops. Thank you. Commissioner Orbis. Welcome to the City Beautiful. We are blessed to have you.

Commissioner Orbis: Thank you, sir. Good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commission. It's a pleasure to be joining you here today in the City Beautiful this morning. I wanted to come by and formerly introduce myself as the new District 6 Commissioner. I wanted to let you know that my team and myself are here to help you, we're here to join you as we move forward. I also wanted to let you, and your residents know, I am your voice on the County Commission. I'm happy to be here for you and I look forward to working with all of you to accomplish the goals of the city and of our community. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner. Just a few points. Maybe my colleagues want to say a few words. I want to make sure that you are aware that we are extremely proud of your hard work. You've hit the ground running. We want to welcome you to the City Beautiful. Make sure that if you need office hours, if you are in the neighborhood and you'd like to use the conference room, you can use my office, whatever you'd like, you are more than welcome to meet with your constituents here. I know you are always on the ground meeting with residents at their homes, at their businesses, but we want to make sure that this could be home base for you. It was something that the previous Commissioner used. We also have our School Board member which also uses the facility and we are hoping now, pretty soon to add a state representative to that list which will be calling City Hall their home base. Please, we implore you, please consider the City Beautiful your home so that you can meet people here. We'd love to have you. We'd love to collaborate and continue working on projects with you and this is just an opportunity to be even closer to you and your incredible team.

Commissioner Orbis: Thank you. I absolutely do. I'm very proud of the friendship and the relationship that we already have with the city and I look forward to continuing and I will take you up on that offer. Thank you. Have a great morning and a great rest of your meeting. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you so much.