

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-6
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
Acting Development Service Director, Doug Ramirez

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-6 [Start: 1:57 p.m.]

Discussion regarding newspaper stands
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Item F-6. Thank you, thank you to our staff. Sir, come on up. How you doing? This is my item, discussion regarding newspaper stands. I sponsored this item. We have a presentation, correct.

Acting Director Development Service: Yes Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you for being here.

Acting Development Service Director: Good afternoon, Doug Ramirez, Acting Development Service Director. We have a presentation. Mr. Mayor, thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk about the Miami New Times racks. We're just giving you an update. As you know this was reported to us by you and your staff some time ago. Code Enforcement - I put a timeline; Code

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Enforcement issued a ticket in September of last year. We were ultimately able to find a contact for the vendor, many months went by while we were working with this vendor. Eventually, in January we were able to actually contact somebody at Miami New Times who had the authority to do additional efforts than what we were trying to do with the vendor. This was then escalated to a NOVI, and we maintain communication with Mr. Breitner through emails, phone calls and in-person conversations. Ultimately, in February the news racks were repainted, some had been removed due to unstable bases and unrepairable conditions. And since they were still not up to our standards at that time, we took them to Code Enforcement Board. On February 11, 2026, the board finding was 30 days, which basically will expire this Friday, to reach compliance bringing them up to our city standards either by removal replacement or restoration. Thereafter, if they're not up to our standards the fines that they ruled would be \$250 every day until they come up to our standards and there's compliance. As of yesterday, there's a total of four racks that have been removed and the remaining nine are still under enforcement. I did provide some representative photos of what we have seen as far as progress. I didn't put all of the remaining ones because it would take too long to show you too many pictures, but here you have before and after. This is one of the ones that they had to remove. We are going to circle back to them, because as you can see, they tried to spray paint the base and there was over spray on the sidewalk which that's not going to be acceptable.

Mayor Lago: Let's talk about that if i may, because Commissioner Castro under her breath said ridiculous. You know what's not ridiculous is that we're held to a standard as residents and they should have to be held to a standard too. Why not? I mean what is the point. If they're not held to a standard, then the other businesses are going to say the same thing we don't want to. Do you think it's appropriate that something on our sidewalks looks like that. Everybody says no, everybody says no. I mean I know that they write unflattering articles about me, but I'm not going to stop. So, look at the over spray, you think our sidewalks look like that. It's a public realm. So go to the next one, go to the next slide. What do you think looks better, the before or the after. I think the after looks better right. So, if you don't paint your house or if you know, your roof is falling down should we give that person a pass to, oh no it's the New Times, they're a liberal media outlet and they like to hit the Mayor, so at the end of the day you know let's not touch it, okay. You have to hold everybody into compliance; everybody's held in compliance. If you have a dilapidated car in front of your house you're going to get a ticket, you're going to get a fine. So, it's not ridiculous. It's upkeep in our downtown and I have another item that's forthcoming in regard to upkeep of our downtown and the key here is 27 percent of our tax base comes from the downtown. We should keep it beautiful. We shouldn't allow it to be run down like this. Next slide.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Let him finish.

Acting Development Service Director: This is another one that has improved. The photo on the left wasn't taken at the beginning, they had already applied some paint to it when this picture was taken, but you could see that it was slapped on. They worked on it some more since then and then the photo on the right is after a little bit of additional effort, due to our efforts.

Mayor Lago: So, for example, look at this one fully rusted, there isn't obviously, you don't see any newspaper stands there. Now they fixed it up, looks much better. Cooperation just like we treat all our residents with Code Enforcement, nothing different. Same thing here.

Acting Development Service Director: So, Mayor, on this one you can see that the glass was broken on the front originally and now that they've repaired it.

Mayor Lago: So, if you want to keep the glass broken and you want to have that broken window syndrome, okay fine. I don't want to see it fixed up, not ridiculous just compliance. Go ahead sir.

Acting Development Service Director: That was all Mayor, I just picked a few representative samples.

Mayor Lago: My point of this was not only to put people to compliance, but also to say thank you, thank you for being our partner and understanding the importance of doing what's right by the community, because it's not just me it's the businesses that were calling me, it's people that were calling me, telling me, Vince, I cut myself on the stand or I leaned up against it and almost fell over and there's graffiti on their, stickers. Why are they allowed to have their stands be like that, but then you're hitting us for fines in regard to Code Enforcement. So that's why we're here and I want to commend the New Times for finally taking action, it only took a few years, but it's a beautiful thing and I mean they hit me with a few articles. I still continue moving forward with this issue and we got them into compliance. Congratulations.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes. So ridiculous not the work you're doing, actually the work you're doing is pretty good; here when you go ahead and you find a roof do you come up here and put pictures, hey this property owner cleaned this roof, let me show you the difference between the two roofs. Ridiculous is the fact that you know they're going to write about you, and you still put yourself in that situation to go ahead and show pictures of the before and after. You're publicizing and you're doing this to yourself, a little more self-conscious, that's ridiculous. You're too old for this, you have way too much experience, stop doing that to yourself.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: In response to the absolutely ridiculous statement that you just made right now. I could care less what the new times or any of the people write about me. I'm going to do what's in the best interest of the city and the moment that I brought it forward to the Commission is when they took action. They had no choice because you have sometimes a little public acknowledgement is what's needed to get things into compliance. So, at the end of the day, again, listen you should want me to bring this up, it benefits you. Yes sir.

Commissioner Fernandez: Could we bring the presentation back up and I think this is going to fall towards your next item as well, but can we get it up. What are the photos next one. Okay, is that grass area ours?

Acting Development Service Director: Mr. Commissioner, it depends on the location.

Commissioner Fernandez: Right, I'm saying in those pictures because all that's weeds.

Mayor Lago: It's going to fall into...

Commissioner Fernandez: That's what I'm saying and if you go to the next one, I guess maybe we can take that one up now, that that area in the post office has come up numerous times and they have done nothing to address the look that sidewalk. That sidewalk has not been pressure cleaned ever and if we're talking about partners who work with us, if the Miami New Times is working on things now, the post office has never cooperated with the city. We have issues with the post office box across the street that's been stolen from, they won't take meetings. We've had issues with the cleanliness of the sidewalk, they won't take meetings; issues with the parking, they don't take meetings. We need to do something. I don't know if we need to go to the Postmaster General or whatever it is, but they're not cooperating partners in the city right now and we need to address it.

Mayor Lago: So, on that point Mr. DCM, would probably come up and tell you. I've sent him I don't know how many photos of the weeds, of the sidewalks, of the building from the post office, so I wholeheartedly agree with you Commissioner, there's no moving that needle. I've tried everything I can.

Commissioner Fernandez: I don't know if the next picture had anything.

Mayor Lago: No, we're going to get to the one you're talking about now.

Commissioner Fernandez: This was my main concern and the weeds and the other one. All right. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: So, I want to congratulate you and your team for the hard work, thank you. I know it wasn't easy over the last two years to get this done, you know some people view it as ridiculous, I don't. I think it's important because it's an erosion of our quality of life and people need to be held

to the same standard. So, I want to congratulate you on that and I appreciate it. Please tell staff, please tell everyone associated with this effort that we delivered. Thank you.

Acting Development Service Director: It was a team effort.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. I appreciate you.