

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item G-1
July 13, 2021
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Michael Mena

Commissioner Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Jorge Fors, Jr.

Commissioner Kirk Menendez

City Staff

City Manager, Peter Iglesias (Absent)

Assistant City Manager, Ed Santamaria

City Attorney, Miriam Ramos

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Senator Ileana Garcia

Agenda Item G-1 [Start 4:45 p.m.]

Time Certain 4:30 p.m.

A special appearance by Senator Ileana Garcia which will include a legislative update and presentation of project improvement funds to the City of Coral Gables. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

So, with that being said, I have the privilege of today, I asked the Senator to show up and give us a few words. The Senator has taken a really big position in the State of Florida, not only as our Senator, which is a prestigious position to have and represent this community, but she has decided to go above and beyond. She has implemented office hours here in the City of Coral Gables in our first-floor conference room and she's really been an advocate on behalf of the City of Coral Gables. So, I want her to come up and just talk a little bit about what she's been working on and kind of give us a little bit of a report card on her incredible efforts in Tallahassee representing this community. So, thank you for being here Senator.

City Commission Meeting
July 13, 2021

Senator Garcia: Thank you. Thank you. Hello to everybody, good afternoon. I will give you, an honor for me hello to all the Commissioners and its an honor for me to be here for the first time and to be able to bring back to the beautiful area of Coral Gables that I frequent a lot. So, we had a great legislative session considering we were all coming out of Covid, and it was a difficult and very unpredictable in certain situation. But I am very happy to say that the 2021 balance budget made critical investments to things like infrastructure, child welfare and increasing the state employee minimum wage, at the same time bolstering our state reserves, as our economy continues to restore itself from the pandemic. Once again, we went ahead and we increased the minimum wage for our state workers to \$13.00 an hour, more than three years in advance of the timeline outlined in the Constitutional amendment that passed last fall, and this will benefit over 10,000 state employees. Also, we went, and we modernized a documentary stamped Distributions. Florida will now dedicate a steady stream of funding in three key areas of infrastructure, affordable housing, wastewater, and mitigating sea-level rise, which is very important to all of us. Also, the balanced budget will ensure that our Medicaid program remains fully funded, as well as Kid Care Program, which provides high quality health insurance for over 229 children in Florida. The Legislature also further increased in an unprecedented level of pursuit of funding for K-12 education and it increases our allocations to raise teachers' salaries, which is also very important for us. Finally, the 2021 Budget reflects remarkable investment in Florida's environment, including funding for beach revitalization, Everglade's restoration and expanding our wildlife corridor. These responsible and strategic investments ensure that Florida continues on its path towards an economic recovery and positions our state to address any potential challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Anther great thing that I was able to champion on. For me, it was a great honor to be able to have as my first Bill, my first law passed was the 1177, which was the Biscayne Bay Commission. It is an advisory council to coordinate and advocate for new and existing plans and programs for the improvement of Biscayne Bay and its adjacent areas. Previous Commissions have proven that they needed some help, so we wanted to give them some state oversight and "La pateria de las suertes," we would say in Spanish, and help them finally move forward with what's truly relevant for us, which is coastal resiliency and environment as-a-whole. Also, I was able to co-sponsor the 1954 Resilient Florida Grant Program, which successfully appropriated \$16 million to the program of \$100 million in funding for projects that address risks for flooding and sea-rise, but we get \$16 million for our area, which will address a lot of the necessary needs in general. One of the things that I was also very proud of was that we were able to secure funds for Coral Gables projects. So Coral Way and Granada Boulevard hardening an intersection improvements are here. We secured \$375,000. This will help immensely, everything related to stormwater improvements and water quality as-a-whole; and also, Coral Gables Galiano Street and Madera Avenue, also received \$200,000 in secure funding. And this is a wonderful thing, because once again, all of these stormwater improvements will improve drainage, preserve, enhance drinking water quality, decrease flood frequency damage and preserve Biscayne Bay's

*City Commission Meeting
July 13, 2021*

water quality down the line. I don't want to take anymore of your time. I did it Café Cubano style. Thank you so much for having me and it is an honor to be able to serve all of you in Tallahassee.

Mayor Lago: Senator, if I may, and I know my colleagues would probably want to say something. I want to also thank you. And I'm good friends with a lot of people in Tallahassee over the years. This is the first elected official that text me on a weekly basis to ask me, how are things going? – you have a Commission meeting, how can I help? – what can we engage in? – what can we do? When you talk about responsiveness and I take a lot of pride in being responsive, along with everyone on this Commission, she is at another level as Senator. That's number one. Number two, there are two things that you mentioned that are critically important to this community. We pride ourselves on being fiscally conservative. This is a city that has a balanced budget. You've seen the horror stories of other states that are dealing with fiscal catastrophes, and I'd like to remind people, you have a multi-billion-dollar reserve while not having a state income tax, that to me shows that we have good leadership, that goes to show me. Again, disagree partisanship, whatever that may be, I'm beyond that. I'm talking about people like yourself who are up there advocating on behalf of the City of Coral Gables, who are advocating on behalf of my children's future who are taking leadership positions in regard to the environment. For the first time you are seeing Biscayne Bay really get attention and I've asked the Lt. Governor, along with the Governor to be considered for the Biscayne Bay Commission. I've been advocating for a long time for the half penny in regard to transportation. I even took it a personal matter in regard to the county to ensure that those monies nothing unwinding happen, and we would hate to see the same thing that happened with transportation happen with the Bay, because the Bay is running out time. It's something that is critically important and represents billions and billions and billions of dollars of financial impact to our community, not even talking about the issue of taxes, because if the Bay goes some of our wealthiest most expensive properties that prop up our tax base will go down also. So, I just want to commend you and ask you to continue having your office hours here. I think that's the first time since I've been here as an elected official, I think that Commissioner Fors also brought someone, she's in the State House and also does a great job, hopefully we'll find her a place also. She can use my office if she'd like, and it's a good thing to have Senators and State Representatives coming to our City Hall on a weekly basis, because why, because that means we are fresh in your memory, and when you are advocating on behalf of us, you always remember about Coral Gables. So, thank you for your hard work and I just want to tell you that it does not go unnoticed.

Senator Garcia: Thank you so much. Its an honor. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for being here.

Commissioner Fors: Thank you.

Senator Garcia: We wanted to present the checks for you. We just wanted to show everyone that we brought the checks.

City Commission Meeting

July 13, 2021

Mayor Lago: Very nice.

Senator Garcia: That we can cash them – (laughter).

Mayor Lago: You brought the bacon.

Senator Garcia: We brought them. We brought them.

Mayor Lago: You want to take a picture?

Senator Garcia: So – yes, I'd love to.

Mayor Lago: Thank you Senator.