

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-2
February 10, 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
Acting Development Service Director, Doug Ramirez
Public Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item F-2 [Start: 1:02 p.m.]

Discussion regarding tree protection, construction fences, and silt barriers at construction sites.
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: F-2.

Acting Development Service Director: Hello again. Doug Ramirez, Acting Development Service Director. Thank you, Mayor, for giving me the opportunity to talk about tree protection and construction fences and silt barriers. It was very interesting to see something that had so much overlap between Public Works and Development Services. Once you start asking around, trying to figure out who's doing what, it was very enlightening. I have some answers for you. I will try to be as brief as I can with the presentation so we can get to your answers. All right. I'm waiting for them to put it up for me.

Mayor Lago: It's familiar.

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Acting Development Service Director: I picked that picture because someone else used it in a presentation not too long ago.

Mayor Lago: I love it. Look how beautiful it is.

Acting Development Service Director: Okay.

Mayor Lago: I'm proud of that. It's how you do the little things.

Acting Development Service Director: This is an example of how they should look. It's like kindergarten. That's what we want. Okay, so all joking aside, required by Section 8232 of the Code, the protective barriers, among other things, shall be a minimum of four feet above ground and shall be constructed two-by-four wood posts, crossmembers, et cetera, which shall remain in place until development is completed, and the Tree Preservation Agency has authorized their removal. There's a lot more to it. I shortened it just so that it would fit on the slide, but with regards to what we're talking about here, we want to make sure that they are in good condition, that they're made out of two-by-fours. We found that sometimes people use metal steaks, and that's very dangerous. A child riding a bicycle can impale themselves with that if it's done incorrectly. And of course, within, you're only supposed to have hand digging and hand grading so that you can protect the roots and not damage the tree itself. So, construction fences. There was another item earlier that Jennifer presented, and we realized we had some overlap today in that as well. But this part we're not changing. A construction fence shall be covered with a visual dust barrier. They shall be kept clean, undamaged, and without graffiti. And all information shall be prior and current as determined by Development Services. We have some pictures there. One of our residents and one of a very large commercial property a block away. So, in Coral Gables, most demolitions, new construction, and additions do require a construction fence. It needs to, it's there to keep people and the general public out of what might be a very dangerous working job site. The Building Official ultimately determines what is required based on the type of construction project. And then in addition to that, we wanted to mention pedestrian protection. It's an unsung hero. It keeps people safe when they're walking near these job sites. And Chapter 33 provides pedestrian protection requirements that account for the height of the construction that's taking place and how far from the property line it's occurring. And I put a couple of pictures up there so you can see what it looks like. Sedimentation and silt fences. So, they're needed when there's a potential for runoff. This goes from the federal government, Section 402 of the Federal Clean Water Act. Then it's also, thank you, Hermes, for joining us. Then it's also in the Florida Statutes, which references that. The NPDES, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. He's here on cue. And it's also in our city code regarding waterways and stormwater management systems that it shall be unlawful for any property owner or entity performing construction activities to cause, let, allow, discard, permit, or suffer runoff, erosion, and sedimentation into any stormwater drains, inlets, catch basins, all of those other things designed to convey stormwater runoff within the city. We did include a detail

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there so you can visualize what that is when you're at a job site. If there's a potential for runoff, they will put this at the bottom of the fence in a manner similar to this detail shown here. Okay, so now that the educational part is done, now I can answer your question, Mr. Mayor. Hermes and I discussed this with staff in both of our departments, and we discovered that, yes, there is indeed an overlap of responsibilities here for permitting and inspection of these items. What we decided to do, working together, is that inspectors from both departments will inspect the condition of installed fences and tree protection and withhold approvals in cases of noncompliance. So, yes, you get called out for an inspection, we see that it has deteriorated. As it was pointed out earlier, it starts out really nice, but then as time goes by, it might deteriorate and deteriorate and deteriorate to the point where now it doesn't look right. We will fail the inspection, tell them, hey, you need to fix this, it looks terrible, and until they don't fix it, we won't approve the inspection. In addition to that, obviously, Code Enforcement, it is their daily duties to patrol their zones and to discover this sort of thing and to address it appropriately. And they do have tools in their toolbox for that as well, proactive patrols, education, citations, and in extreme cases, they can even bring in the Building Official, and he could use his authority to motivate them to fix the construction fences and tree protection. In addition, in the interim, since the last time you brought it up, we've prepared some handouts to educate applicants, and what we're going to do is we're going to send these handouts with the permit out to the applicants so that when they obtain their permit, they'll get the handouts for the construction fences and the tree protection, and they will also be aware of what the requirements are that I kind of went over in the presentation. I don't know if Hermes wants to add anything to that, but that's essentially what I have here.

Public Works Director Diaz: The one thing, one of the things that we found through the exercise, there were some gaps between, you know, their job and ours when it comes to this, you know. Like, for example, you know, generally speaking, Public Works, we look at the right-of-way, the folks look at the inside, especially when it comes to single-family homes, where maybe some of the tree protection might be happening on the outside, but Public Works might not necessarily be invited to the place until the last minute, so I think we kind of worked something out that we provide coverage for each other, so moving forward, you know, we should be able to do a better job at this.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect. Thank you. All right. I appreciate how it worked. Thank you for collaborating. This is the key. That's a good sign. Thank you very much, gentlemen.