

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item C**  
**January 13, 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**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Maria Cruz**  
**Jackson Holmes**

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Agenda Item C [Start: 10:24 a.m.]

**Public Comment**

Mayor Lago: Moving unto Public Comment.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. First speaker this morning is Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Good morning, Mrs. Maria Cruz, no surprise that I'm able to do this. Somebody gave me some mints. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. I think I forgot my address, 1447 Miller Road, since 1976. We keep hearing the phrase, "winter is coming," anytime we talk about money, especially finances. We are told that we have to tighten our belts and of course, we couldn't grant the one percent COLA to the retirees. It sounds very good, but we didn't always remember what we say or mean what we say. What about changing requirements, the legal requirements so that somebody we want to promote can meet the criteria and then make a promotion before the end of the fiscal year so that person can benefit with the COLA based on

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the new salary. What about the employees that were paid after they had resigned and were told that they were working getting reimbursement from the city. Nobody has heard if that happened. I guess we forgot. On the other hand, I commend the City Manager for his creativity; we save money by keeping high level positions open, some for months, some for years, and then we have money to spend for pet projects. That's very creative. I think that when I look at the 4 percent COLA that everybody got, and I see what the low paid people get, pennies on the dollar, and then the people at the top get thousands of dollars, because 4 percent of somebody who makes over \$100,000 or 200, is a lot of money. But yet for the people that make 40, 45, 50 – 4 percent is pennies. So, I think that we need to think about how we what we do and what we say, and make sure that what we mean is what we really – what we say is what we mean, and don't forget that people take notice and people listen and when you over pay people by making changes that is wrong. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mr. Holmes: Greetings. My name is Jackson Rip Holmes; I live at 35 Cedonia Avenue here in Coral Gables. I'm taking up this public comment to raise to you all my deep distress as to what's going on with efforts to, in my opinion, revive the corrupt former Business Improvement District. There is a matter coming up before the Commission and I want to show you what I'm for and the overwhelming aspect that I'm against. So let me start with what I'm for. The Business Improvement District was terminated in 2022, and the city has picked up the bill for Christmas lights, which is substantial, let's just say its \$300,000 a year approximately, and for Halloween. This is something which directly benefits Miracle Mile which is where I have my retail property. There is no free lunch. I think that there should be a special taxing district to pay for our own success on Miracle Mile, that is to pay for the Christmas lights and for Halloween, what the city has been paying. But what I'm against really is all the rest, because the history of the former Business Improvement District is really, in my opinion, criminal. They ran elections that were illegal and violated state law. From the very beginning they were taxing business condos which they were not allowing to vote, whereas state law requires that anyone who is going to be taxed in a special taxing district has the right to vote and you must get a majority of the people taxing themselves in order to even have a special taxing district. Then they tried to and did actually corrupt the Commission vote on the legality of what they were doing when they were trying to get renewed. Then, they absconded with half a million dollars, and I don't know about you all, but I wouldn't want to be a person who stole half a million dollars of taxpayer money. I know how to spell the word Leavenworth, most of us are afraid of that, yet somehow, they got away with it. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

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

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Mayor Lago: Okay. We'll close the public comment.