

City of Coral Gables
Special City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item B-5
May 6, 2025
City Hall Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro (Absent)

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Alberto Parjus

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Deputy City Attorney, Stephanie Throckmorton

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Jackson Rip Holmes

Agenda Item B-5 [10:18 a.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question and City Charter amendment to be held on November 3, 2026; providing for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking whether the City Charter should be amended to require the convening of a Charter Review Committee every ten years and outlining the composition of that committee; providing for notice; providing for inclusion in the City Charter; providing for related matters; providing for an effective date.
(Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving onto item B-5.

City Attorney Suarez: B-5 is a Resolution of the City Commission calling a Special Election on the proposed ballot question and City Charter amendment to be held on November 3, 2026; providing for submission to the electors for approval or disapproval of a ballot question asking

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whether the City Charter should be amended to require the convening of a Charter Review Committee every ten years and outlining the composition of that committee; providing for notice; providing for inclusion in the City Charter; providing for related matters; providing for an effective date.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney the floor is yours.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: Hello again, Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners. So, this resolution calls for a Special Election to be held on November 3, 2026, putting forth a question to the voters regarding the Charter Review Committee. I think summarizing the ballot question will be instructive. So, should the City Charter be amended to require that the City Commission convene a Charter Review Committee every ten years, beginning in 2035, to review the City Charter and provide recommendations to the City Commission on potential amendments. The Charter Review Committee shall consist of seven members. The Commissioner and City Manager will each appoint one member who is a resident of the city, and the City Attorney's appointee shall be a current or former municipal or county attorney. This would be set forth to the voters in November of 2026, if adopted by a majority of the voters it would be included in our Charter going forward.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I'll entertain a motion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll second.

Mayor Lago: We need to have public comment first. I apologize. Mr. Clerk.

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

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. My understanding was that we do have a Charter Committee working, Charter Review Committee working on this item and I'm a little concerned about, we keep hearing saving money, but now we're asking for a Special Election, which cost money, so I don't understand how you want to save money on one hand and we're going to spend money on the other one, and the Charter Review Committee has been meeting and is supposed to be reporting back. As I always say, I'm a little confused, but nothing should confuse me anymore, because we seem to be already on the campaign trail. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

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Mr. Holmes: Let me see if I can make some of you laugh, an uplifting statement. Going back, if you'll allow me, to the question of public comment, what I had planned to do with public comment, if I felt that it was enough time is to say what I'm about to say.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes, if I may, I'm sorry to interrupt you. What I'd like for you to please respect the rules and procedures and what we're speaking about right now is issues pertaining to the Charter Review. We're not talking about issues that we already talked about in the past.

Mr. Holmes: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Mr. Holmes: Well, it's not really what I wanted to communicate, so forgive me if I'm speaking out of turn. I support the mobility hub and I'm afraid that the recession is going to hit us. I'd like us to squeeze that in and get it built before a possible recession hits us. Back to this question. I don't know enough about the subject. I would have liked more time to study it. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

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

Mayor Lago: May I have a motion.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You do and then we have a second.

Mayor Lago: And a second and I apologize. Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you, Mayor, for bringing this. This brings us back to the procedures that historically were followed and now we'll have it codified once the voters speak and have it in our Charter for future generations of Commissions.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Commissioner.

Commissioner Lara: Mr. Mayor, I echo the Vice Mayor's sentiments, in an effort to be concise. I agree with her, and I think there is much to be gained by having this codified. I believe that without that, it is, the Charter Review Committee may be utilized in a way that it wasn't intended, whether it's bringing it back earlier than it typically is convened, and at least to remove any air of impropriety, codifying it will certainly be a big step in the right direction.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: I do have one question for the City Attorney. Are we setting a date for when it's to begin?

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City Attorney Suarez: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: 2035.

City Attorney Suarez: Convene in 2035 would be the...

Commissioner Fernandez: Just open-ended.

City Attorney Suarez: Correct.

Commissioner Fernandez: Shouldn't we set a date. Commissioner Lara brings up a good point. It's too open-ended, I think if you're just setting it in 2035, you should really have a date, whether it's April, which is the centennial or something that gives us a concrete start date for the Charter Review Committee to be enacted.

City Attorney Suarez: So, Deputy City Attorney, could we amend the ballot language. So, we have to be very careful with the ballot language, we have a word limit, so we'd have to tweak it to see if we can carefully.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: I think we have the flexibility to add a month, we could say beginning annually or beginning every ten years, beginning in 25 every, you could say whatever month, if the Commission has a suggestion and to the extent that it requires deletion or addition of a few words, if its alright with you, we can modify the final version of the ballot language, if the sponsor is amenable to that amendment.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Commissioner Fernandez: Are you amenable to the amendment?

Mayor Lago: No. Please finish your comments.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I think that would be the most important change, because if we're talking about setting a date, we should really set a date, not leave it open-ended. It could be January of 2035, or it could be December of 2035.

Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: And Mr. Chair, with your permission, just to clarify your comment, would you mean the end of the Charter Review Committee or the convening of it.

Commissioner Fernandez: The convening because we're talking about convening, correct. We are talking about convening every ten years, we should really be setting a date or convening it. Regardless, I'm supportive of this measure on first reading.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

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Deputy City Attorney Throckmorton: So, there's only one reading for this item, just to clarify, it's a resolution.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. How did we get here. The Charter Review, the last three Charter Reviews have been held every ten years. There have been seven positions in the Charter Review. Each Commissioner and the Mayor had a member on the Charter Review and the City Attorney, and the City Clerk had a member. Commissioner Lara was too nice, he didn't want to use the word weaponize. The Charter Review was weaponized. Commissioner Fernandez removed the City Attorney and City Clerk's, excuse me, City Attorney and City Manager's appointments for the first time that I'm aware of, the Charter Review was five individuals. That was discussed, myself and if I may, Vice Mayor, correct me if I'm wrong, we opposed that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Correct.

Mayor Lago: And the Charter Review was called, instead of in ten years, it was called in eight years, in an effort to bring significant change to the City Charter, and in my opinion, would have been detrimental, that would have not spoken for the people. What we are doing today is redirecting course or correcting that course to what its always been. It should have never happened. So, you can try to confuse the voters by stating the dates and the months. The Charter Review should happen every ten years and there should be seven appointments to the Charter Review. Bring it before the voters is the correct thing to do. In response to the resident that spoke before, another effort to confuse. Remember, this is a national election, the election is happening anyways. Doesn't matter how many items you have on the ballot. Let's stop making a concerted effort to confuse people. I call a question, Mr. Clerk.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

(Vote: 4-0)