

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-7**  
**January 27, 2026**  
**City 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, Peter Iglesias**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Community Recreation Director, Fred Couceyro**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Maria Cruz**

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**Agenda Item F-7**

A Resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager to direct City Staff to conduct a community meeting to obtain public input regarding the proposed dog park on the city-owned property located at 520 University Drive; providing for a report back to the City Commission. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: We're going back to F-7, right?

City Attorney Suarez: F-7 is a resolution of the City Commission directing the City Manager to direct city staff to conduct a community meeting to obtain public input regarding the proposed dog park on the city-owned property located at 520 University Drive providing for a report back to the City Commission.

Mayor Lago: Reeling you back in. Reeling you back in. All right.

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Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson: Switching departments, sir.

Mayor Lago: Reeling you back in. Mr. Director, how are you, sir?

Community Recreation Director: Hi, how are you?

Mayor Lago: Good.

Community Recreation Director: Good afternoon.

Mayor Lago: Good. So, it's pretty self-explanatory, correct? You want to give us a quick synopsis?

Community Recreation Director: Yep. We are upon the passage of this resolution; we'll move forward and have a community input meeting similar to how we do our community input meetings for all parks. We're trying to get it done within a month. So, we're looking at near the end of February. And we should have information on it coming out in the next couple of days once we get an approval on a resolution here.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. May I have a motion?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll move it.

Mayor Lago: May I have a second?

Commissioner Lara: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do you have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: All right. Let's hear it. Thank you, Mr. Director.

City Clerk Urquia: Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. At first, I was not going to talk about this because I thought it was the people that live around there, the neighbors, the people that are going to be affected should be the ones giving their opinion. But then when I came to the previous meeting and I heard people from Kendall, from faraway places expressing their opinion, I figured mine was as good as theirs or better because at least they live in the City of Coral Gables and fairly close to the place. So, my issue is when you're talking about obtaining public input regarding the proposed dog park, is there an option that says we don't want a dog park? Because that's what the neighbors were saying. They were not talking about how we're going to set up the dog park. You know, are we going to fence it or not fence it? They were talking about we do not want a dog park. And if that is not an option, then we're not, what's the purpose of meeting to decide how we're going to

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set it up if we don't want it? That's my concern. It was very clear to me, and I've gotten a lot of phone calls about it, that the people that would be most affected, the people that would not be bringing the dogs in a car because several of the people that spoke that day, they were, I remember one specifically, he was going to get his big dog in the car so he can take him to the dog park. Well, the dog park is supposed to be for people that will not need parking because parking supposedly will be an issue. So, you know, you can't have it both ways. If you have as many dog parks as we already have, I mean, there's one coming under the Underline and et cetera, et cetera, this park should be the concern of the people that are around there that will not be affected by people coming from other places to park like we did with sidewalks and such because it's becoming that our dog parks are not just for Coral Gables residents. Anybody who can get a dog in a car will be coming from any other place because they don't have access to a dog park, so they'll come here. So, we'll end up being the dog park of the county and not Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

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

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect. I'm sorry.

City Clerk Urquia: I apologize. Lynn Guarch-Pardo.

Ms. Pardo: Good afternoon. My name is Lynn Guarch-Pardo. I live at 421 Cadima Avenue. I'm here representing myself and my fellow neighbors in the University Green Neighbors Association that live near 520 University Drive. As you recall, 100 immediate neighbors signed a petition opposing the proposed dog park. Since then, the number of petition signers have only grown in numbers. To be clear, we continue to object to the development of any dog park on 520 University Drive, and while the association and its members are not waiving any of our objections related to notifications, process, land use, or possible design plans for the proposed off-leash dog park, we are in favor of item F-7, directing staff to conduct a community meeting to obtain public input regarding the proposed dog park at 520 University Drive and provide a report back to the City Commission. We thank Mayor Lago for placing the item on the agenda for Commission consideration. Should the item pass, it is our hope that the meeting take place at the Coral Gables Youth Center and be convened in the early evening, that a meeting notice be posted in a timely manner at the proposed dog park location, that property owners within 1,500 feet of 520 University Drive receive notification, inviting them to the community meeting, and that the findings be summarized and presented to the City Commission at a scheduled City Commission meeting. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important item.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Excuse me. Mr. Director, may I ask you a quick question? Through the Manager. There were some requests that were made. I want to make sure that those requests not only are met, but I also want you to put on the record that's the standard protocol.

Community Recreation Director: Yes, we will. We are planning to have it at the Youth Center, having to plan it in the evening. We usually do our community input meetings in the evenings, and then we will do, as we do with all of our park input processes, meetings, we do door hangers, and we get it out to the community. As I told the neighbors, you'll see my staff, they'll be the ones that will be making sure that you get notified.

Mayor Lago: I'd also like to make sure that we put an email out to the community, to the city, to ensure that everyone is aware. Some people may not get a door hanger. An email is just another opportunity to get even more input. Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, we will also notice within 1,500 feet all around the park, and our Parks Director is very, very good at handling these meetings. He's handled quite a number of them, and he's been very effective.

Mayor Lago: By the way, I just want to put on the record, and Madam ACM can come up and talk if she deems it appropriate, this is a standard protocol. They're not asking for anything that we don't do for anybody else. We've done this for everyone. I just don't want there to be this kind of ambiguity that we're being extra transparent. No, this is what we offer everybody. We offer this to everybody. So, again, we can't force you to come. We can't pay you to come to a meeting. So, the intent is to garner support, and what do I mean by support, not in favor or against the dog park, in support of what those individuals who come to the meeting want to see on that piece of property. What is the intent? So, God willing, we have a community meeting that is in the same vein as always. The Coral Gables meetings are this in a community. We're not here to fight and argue. We're here to find the best opportunity for that piece of property, which has been vacant for a long time. So, at the end of the day, I look forward to that meeting. We're going to Sunshine that meeting, right?

City Manager Iglesias: Well, Mayor, do we need to Sunshine the meeting?

Mayor Lago: No, I don't think we need to.

City Manager Iglesias: Because I think that those meetings are normally done through the Parks Department. As I mentioned, we notice within 1,500 feet. That's our standard procedure.

Mayor Lago: And I'm going to tell you why. I'm going to tell you why. I don't want to politicize the meeting. I want it to be about staff. And then give a report back to the Commission through the Manager's office, okay?

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City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor. And that's what we normally do, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: We're doing the standard that we always do, okay? Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Director. Okay. So, public comment is closed. We have a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir, we do.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Yeah. I just want to say that I'm glad that we're doing exactly what we said we were going to do. Mayor, you made it a point at the last meeting that you're looking for consensus. You're not looking to divide or pit resident against resident. And I added to that saying that don't underestimate the power of the residents to influence ultimately what it looks like. You may be surprised with what you're able to accomplish. And we've seen that happen here with other projects as well. So, with that being said, in the spirit and in the hope of positivity continuing through this entire process, my vote is yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. Thank you to staff.