

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item C
October 14, 2025
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
Michael Chenoweth
Tom Wells
Pamela Pierce
Marlin Ebbert

Agenda Item C [Start: 10:55 a.m.]

Public Comment

Mayor Lago: All right, Mr. Clerk, public comment.

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

Mrs. Cruz: Good morning. Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Watching yesterday's developments on the other side of the world, seeing people that wouldn't even speak to each other come together and agree to do what it took to end the war made me think. Our city is not a big one. Our problems are certainly not as big. And yet we continue on a path that is not good for us. Some of you may be thinking, wondering where

City Commission Meeting
October 14, 2025

I'm going with this. So maybe saying that the pot is calling the kettle black. I propose that we all should put our egos on the backburners. Stop talking about I, me, let's make it we and us. We do not have to be friends, but we have to agree to disagree. Let's mean what we say, tell the truth, stop the innuendos and the rumors, stop attacking each other, no more bullying, no more bringing back the past, put politics aside. Let's agree that we all can be better, that we all want and should wish to work together and do what is best for our city. After all, our children are watching. Let's teach them by our actions, not by our words. I really think the time is now, and I really think that we are able to do it if we wish to do it, and let's do it.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Michael Chenoweth.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir, thank you for being here with us.

Mr. Chenoweth: Mayor, Commissioners, good morning. Thank you for an opportunity to speak to you this morning. I'm here to speak on items E-3 and E-4 regarding the multifamily property that's on Anastasia Avenue by the church. My wife and I own 704 Camillo Avenue, 724 Camillo Avenue, and 701 Aledo Avenue, and those are all within just several blocks of that property. As far as the actual thing that is being requested, I don't have really a problem with it because they're sensible kinds of changes that have to be made in order to do something with the property. However, I would like the Commission, please be aware as this process proceeds and we get into the design of this area, that the neighborhood there is characterized by houses with nice yards in the front, and the whole character of the area is dependent upon having significant setbacks from the street. I've looked at the buildings that are east of Segovia on Anastasia, and they're right up to the street. And if that happens and starts moving west of Segovia, it could profoundly change the whole character of the area. You all probably know that that little area is called the Golden Triangle. It's a very, very nice area for residents, and it's because of the way that the setbacks are and the kind of green space that there is. If they move the buildings to the front of the lots, I suspect that those buildings would be much larger than the existing apartments. And so, the potential is that you lose the green space and put the access from the back, and that really changes the whole character of things. I just ask you to be aware of that as you move forward in this whole process. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir, for being with us.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Tom Wells.

Mr. Wells: I am Tom Wells, and I live at 1310 Coral Way. I have spoken to you about false promises made by Lago, Anderson and Lara, LAL, including to cut taxes in the millage rate, no. Have an independent search committee to find and negotiate the salary of the City Manager. That law is costing us about \$150,000 per year. Resourceability to the Commission, not yet. Comply

*City Commission Meeting
October 14, 2025*

with the laws in our Charter, nope. That's why LAL's PAC is actively distracting residents with past grievances and new lies. The PAC sent an email on September 25th about Mayor Largo's commitment to ethics. Another false promise. Let me explain. I believe you could put that first page up. This is section 2-307 of our city code, which provides that a political consultant needs any person or entity that receives economic consideration in exchange for political consulting services to a candidate for elected office in the city. And D, a political consultant shall be prohibited from contracting with the city for a period commencing from the swearing in of such a newly elected official and shall end 24 months thereafter. This law was sponsored by Mayor Lago in 2021 and passed unanimously with Vice Mayor Anderson's vote to set an example of ethics and transparency in government. 2021 was also the year that Commissioner Lara moved back to Coral Gables after living in Westchester for the prior 18 years. Can you put up the next page? Nope, the other page. Go forward. That one, perfect. So, here's the money that paid by Lara's campaign to Cabrera Consulting Services LLC, almost \$16,000. Cabrera Consulting, aka Nicholas Cabrera, is a political consultant that cannot have a contract with the city during the two-year period following Lara's swearing in. Next page. And here's a contract that Cabrera has with the city for the Giralda Plaza Arson Market. It's referenced as a contract three times in that document. The city promotes the market so Cabrera can make even more money from the vendors. The city discounted Cabrera's fee by \$2,500. The permit says he's going to have at least 500 people per event. However, they charge that it wouldn't exceed \$500 per event. If you take that down. What is our City Attorney doing about this, our chief ethics officer? Nothing. This is not about the market. This is about the city breaking the law on ethics and transparency to a political consultant. You should be pursuing information as to how much money Cabrera is making from these vendors. I am sure that the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust will be concerned about the illegal and unethical conduct. I'll be filing a complaint this afternoon. You can do a lot better. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Madam City Attorney, will you please clarify what this gentleman falsely represented here today?

City Attorney Suarez: So, Mayor, I'm not familiar with those particular documents, but generally that prohibition applies to doing business with the city. And I believe what he showed was a special events permit application. So, the prohibition was not intended to apply to prohibit a campaign consultant from applying for a permit with the city, such as a special event permit. So that's my general understanding of what he was discussing.

Mayor Lago: So, what you've seen once again is an effort. Again, this will be on a blog tomorrow or some effort like that to conflate the issue. I guess Mr. Wells will be launching his campaign for Mayor or for Commissioner pretty soon, but at the end of the day, our City Attorney has been very clear that this is completely allowed. I wrote this legislation. I know very fondly what is allowed and what's not allowed. No one has broken the law. But if I may, I just want to answer. Mr. Wells, who's a lawyer with his wife, represented a contractor that has a direct contract here with the city

*City Commission Meeting
October 14, 2025*

and openly lobbied me and then Peter Iglesias, who is the Manager, in an office, in Mr. Peter Iglesias' office for his client. I don't know if he registered as a lobbyist or not. But at the end of the day, he was being paid as a lawyer, or it was his wife being paid as a lawyer. But one form or another, I was in that meeting discussing that vendor, which has a contract with the city, which was given a, if I'm correct, Mr. Manager, a no-bid contract. Is there a no-bid contract that was given?

City Manager Iglesias: It was a, there was no TI payment. It was \$1.3 million in TI that wasn't paid. It was \$35...

Mayor Lago: Yeah, so at the end of the day, we have to be very careful of things that we say here. You're talking about an individual who's not here. You're trying to tarnish his reputation. And at the end of the day, as the City Attorney has just said very clearly, the law hasn't been broken. I wrote that legislation. So, Commissioner Lara, would you like to say a few words?

Commissioner Lara: Yes. I just want to say that several times, Mr. Wells and others like Political Cortadito and whatnot, they keep getting the acronym wrong. If they're going to refer, LAL just isn't catchy, right? I think it was A-L-L. I've heard it for a long time. So, it's all like, you know, all for one, that kind of thing. That's all I had to say about what he had to say.

Mayor Lago: Moving on, Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Pamela Pierce.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Pierce: Good morning. It's still morning. This is a very exciting day. And my family has been here since the 40s at 724 Camillo Avenue. And I'm the spouse of Michael Chenoweth, who you just met earlier. I want to congratulate the Commission on several new green space issues that have come up. One being the pocket park. Okay, very important. Snap up those empty lots. It turns out that I was brought home, let's say mucho años adad, many years ago, to 724 Camillo Avenue and the family, we're the family of Pierce Park, okay? Which is the ultimate green space to be preserved for all these years over time. And so, the nearby pocket park to the Anastasia properties are Catalonia and Anderson. Okay, I want to emphasize the importance of green space. And we're concerned about the design. Yes, that's not what you're voting for. And my husband explained it. What you're voting for today is reasonable. But the design of that looming same density, but not the same ambiance or anything is just a few feet really from the sidewalk and to the west, single family homes, kitty-corner, single-family homes. Even the pastor's house is a single-family home, which is part of the church block. They have the whole block there. Segovia, Riviera, Cardina, and then Anastasia. So, I'd like to bring that to the attention of the board. The other thing is even the change to very beautiful townhomes and the difference of the availability of student housing. We have the University of Miami nearby. They're always looking for something reasonable. And in

*City Commission Meeting
October 14, 2025*

any of the additional City of Miami, West Miami, that would be lost. What's there is undoubtedly reasonable. Yes, it has little air conditioners stuck in the wall, whatever. But we're going to something completely different. And that's also the entrance, one of the major entrances to the gateway to our historic Biltmore Hotel, okay. There are other streets that lead there. But that's the official one off Lejeune Road. There's a Carl Gable sign there with an arrow, Biltmore Hotel. And then over time-

Mayor Lago: If you don't mind, we were running out of time.

Ms. Pierce: Okay. I like the duplex buffer along Segovia. And now we're going to a completely different.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Ms. Pierce: Okay. Thank you so much.

Mayor Lago: Before we move on to the next, I'd like to compliment this nice lady who just came up. I didn't catch her name. What was her name? Mr. Clerk, her name?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Pamela Pierce.

Mayor Lago: Pamela Pierce. Pamela, Ms. Pierce. Your comments in regard to the green space, I think we should echo those sentiments over and over again. We've expanded our parks portfolio over the last 12 years immensely, as you can see. And we're going to be bringing a few special acquisitions in the next month that I think are going to be very surprising to the community. And I know that people don't want me to use the word I, but I've been working on this for over 10 years. And it's something that it's going to be the largest park to the city's history in the last probably 50 years that we've been able to acquire and we're in the process of finalizing that now. We've been working on it for a long, long, long time, and there's other opportunities. But the reason why I bring that up and I'm speaking about it is because I want to use this moment here. Hopefully people are listening to welcome people like yourself who have real estate in the community. If you ever decide to sell any of your property, I'm not saying it's these properties in the future, and they're in a location that makes sense for the city because we're missing a park, we want to have a park within five to 10 minutes walking distances of the neighborhood, please consider calling the city and saying, I'm not talking about you, I'm just saying anybody, anybody you know, because we're looking and it's very tough in the city and I'll tell you why. Because when individuals sell their properties, people come in and snap them up really quickly. And the city gets themselves into like a bidding war. And we want to try to find these areas as our Director of Parks will show you on where we're missing certain green spaces and we want to continue to acquire that. In your neighborhood, we already have a park, but in other areas, we don't. So, it's just putting out the message out there that if you know that you're missing a park in your neighborhood and you're

selling a property, you have excess property you want to sell, consider offering it to the city first. We'll make you a fair and reasonable offer.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yeah. That's it. Maybe we can put it on the e-news. You know, maybe that can be something that we can add. If you're interested in selling your property, the city is always considering spaces for new green space.

Mayor Lago: Not saying we're buying, because we may have a park in that area already. But for example, if you own a park next to a park, you own a property next to a park, maybe we can expand the park. That's just two quick points. So, thank you for that.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, real quick. And just to add, there is an item on the agenda today regarding environmental TDRs to preserve existing tree canopied areas that exist in our city. I'm so sad when I see something where we failed to get it in time to save it. And this is an effort to try to save some gems in our city before it gets to that stage.

Mayor Lago: And one of these gems is in my neighborhood. And we've been trying to get this property for a few years. It's a little over an acre, and it has pine rockland and I'm very happy that the Vice Mayor has proffered this legislation. It's a great idea. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Marlin Ebbert.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, Ms. Ebbert.

Ms. Ebbert: Good morning, everyone. My name is Marlin Ebbert. I live at 6510 San Vicente Street. I've been a resident of Coral Gables, I figured out this morning, sitting there for just about half my life. I'm surprised. As you can see, I'm dressed all in white today for a purpose. I find that as our days are getting shorter, and daylight savings time is due to come to an end, I would like to start a campaign, Wear White at Night. I am out often in the evenings. You know that I'm very active in downtown Coral Gables and at the Cinema. And honestly, I think that everybody just has decided to wear black hoodies and black pants at night. And they're very, very hard to see, especially along North and South Greenway and I'm going slowly. But when I'm going down LeJeune to go home, and I'm driving 30, 35 miles an hour, and somebody's on a bike with no lights, in black, you know, it puts the fear of God into me. So, I've talked to the Chief of Police, just briefly, about maybe we can somehow, in the E-News or something, just start a campaign, just to remind people to wear white at night. And I would hope that when we have the Farmer's Market this winter, we can actively hand out reflectors, because we're, something bad is, some bad things have happened already, but something terrible's going to happen, so.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor?

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

*City Commission Meeting
October 14, 2025*

Commissioner Lara: So, Marlin, I think that's a wonderful idea. It's a campaign that's worth backing. I know that during the Farmer's Market period, Coral Gables Crime Watch does give out very helpful reflectors for, you know, bikes. I'd like to see maybe some reflective tape also be given out, because people might prefer to put that on their walking shoes at night. Because, you know, anything to enhance the visibility at night is certainly warranted. And certainly, the worst option is just to wear black. It's the same as just putting on an invisibility suit, you know, at night.

Ms. Ebbert: And in the morning, too. You know, I walked with a group for years in the morning, and we had lights that we would, you know, hanging on our clothes. So, anyway, I just think it's a good idea. You know, at the Farmer's Market, you have to go up to Crime Watch, and up to that table. I'd like to see people handing things out in the market. So, okay, thank you very much for having me.

Mayor Lago: I love it. Thank you for that idea. Mr. Clerk?

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

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, one last comment on that.

Mayor Lago: Is it good?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Not only at night, but during the day, being used truly bikes during the day, I've noticed that you're much more visible during the day to cars, if you at least have a white shirt on. I have flashing lights in addition, too, but. An effort to come back not injured.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll bring up the suggestions at the next Crime Watch meeting.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right. FDOT also has a program where they're handing them out, so we could have another source.

Commissioner Fernandez: And a lot of the content that we give away from Crime Watch comes from either the county or FDOT, so we can start looking into that.