

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item H-1
June 2, 2026
Public Safety Building, CMR
2151 Salzedo Street, 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 Works Director, Hermes Diaz

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz

Agenda Item H-1

A Resolution of the City Commission rescinding Resolution No. 2023-360, which directed City Staff to instruct Florida Power and Light (FPL) to cease the replacement of certain silver light poles.

Mayor Lago: Okay, we'll move on now to item H-1, City Manager items.

City Attorney Suarez: H-1 is a resolution of the City Commission rescinding Resolution No. 2023-360, which directed city staff to instruct Florida Power and Light to cease the replacement of certain silver light poles.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Director, good afternoon. Yes, good afternoon, not evening yet.

Public Works Director Diaz: So, this is a follow-up to an item of presentation that was on the prior Commission meeting regarding the issue about the silver lights versus the black Washington lights. And more specifically, about 137 lights that were installed, I will say, over the last few years,

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versus the 86 on Greenway. And based on all the follow-up discussions that I had with FPL, we really only have two options, right. One option, either we proceed with the FPL program to replace the lights, or the city is going to take over the lights and be responsible, not only for the installation and lighting, but their maintenance. So just to recap from last Commission meeting presentation, to do only the 86 around Greenway, you're looking at approximately a cost of \$2 million plus electricity and maintenance, which was \$325,000 payments to FPL over the following 20 years. To do 137 lights, which included the other location of San Amaro and Harlano, you're looking at approximately \$3.2 million versus a payment of \$518,000 to FPL over the following 20 years. So our recommendation is that the Commission rescinds the resolution that was passed in number 2023-360, which directed city staff to instruct FPL to cease the replacement of certain civil light poles, and that we allow FPL to complete the installation of the replacement of the black lights that remain, which I think is like a 12 or 13.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: I believe that FPL is adamant about not changing their catalog and maintaining their catalog schedule of lights, because they have to work with so many cities that it's very hard to maintain that many different lights. And so, it would take months for them to go out, buy different lights, and instead of being stocking items as far as maintenance damage and so forth is concerned.

Mayor Lago: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Manager. Anything from the Commission?

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: I know we had said we were going to bring this back after the Mayor met with the President of FPL. Were you able to at least try? I know that they were reluctant to do it, so.

Mayor Lago: I made an effort, I tried. We've been dealing with this effort, we've been dealing with this for, if I may, I don't want to speak incorrectly. Can you give me an idea? I don't want to put you on the hot seat, Mr. Director. How many years is this now?

Public Works Director Diaz: Three years.

Mayor Lago: Three years, okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: The resolution specifically was in 2023, so maybe two and a half, three years.

Mayor Lago: Time flies.

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Public Works Director Diaz: Yes.

Mayor Lago: So, we have certain areas of the city that don't have light right now. So, I wanted silver lights. We all want silver lights. The lights are not historic. They're made of fiberglass. They're in very poor shape. I even have issues with the black lights right now in my neighborhood, as I brought it to your attention. Some of them are having issues, which is very weird, because you and I talked about this. They're integral. Yes. So, the paint is inside the concrete, and I've done a lot of work with integral paint, integral concrete, excuse me, where the blends, and I've even talked to the Manager about it, comes in all different colors, very expensive. It's weird, you never see it fade this early.

Public Works Director Diaz: We brought that up to FPL, and in fact, if you see the lights that are on Pisano itself, they've actually been there longer.

Mayor Lago: They're perfect.

Public Works Director Diaz: Our suspicion is that maybe there was a bad batch.

Mayor Lago: Okay, that happens.

Public Works Director Diaz: And so, we brought that to the attention of FPL, and our expectation is that that's going to be resolved.

Mayor Lago: And just to give you an idea to my colleagues, when you pour concrete and you blend color, what they always tell you is try to blend one mix, even if you have to pay more for it, because at the end of the day, if you go back and then you do a sidewalk, and that could be a different, it could end up, even if you use the same color, the aggregate could be different. It could be a change, and nature's not perfect, and that's the beauty of nature. So, what ends up happening is that you'll never get that exact color. So, when they pour these walls and they over-request the concrete. So, on this issue, I've seen them, I've taken pictures of them, I've sent them to the DCM and to the Manager and to you. There are some fading issues. We've given it our fair shot. I even got an email this morning from Mayor Slesnick. We've met on site. We've dealt with the issue. Right now, we just got an email from our, from, excuse me, from our director of, from Chelsea Granell, talking about the issue of the fact that it already passed the House. It's moving forward, this tax package. We've talked about how many things are encumbering us over the next few years, potentially, okay. Costs and our revenue, thank God, it went up six and change when last year was 5.5. So, it didn't go down again. It stayed kind of stable, but there are additional costs. Our Government Affairs Director, I apologize. But we're getting a play-by-play, and this is moving very quickly. This is not something that's going to take months. But if we had the revenue, I would spend the money. But my concern is not only the money. My concern is the maintenance, which is my biggest concern, which the Manager has drilled in my head, to the point that it's, I don't even want to talk to him about it anymore. But it makes sense. I mean, listen, we're trying to get rid of

liability. So, we don't even, I don't even know if we own a bucket truck. Do we own a legit bucket truck to be dealing with?

Public Works Director Diaz: A bucket truck, no.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Public Works Director Diaz: We have a boom.

Mayor Lago: I know, but--

Public Works Director Diaz: And then we have a contractor who we can use.

Mayor Lago: I get it, but at the end of the day, if we take responsibility for it, it's added costs. It's got to buy the equipment. Gotta hire, we got to hire a private contractor. You know, we're going to have to do a lot of work ourselves. When the light bulb goes out, you're not going to call somebody to come and do it. The cost will be exorbitant. Probably have our team do it. We do a lot of stuff in house. So, it's not only the cost. It's the maintenance and it's the management. And it's more stress on staff, which already have an immense amount of stress already to deal with the level of quality that we require here in the city. So, I'm asking my colleagues, it's time to move on. Okay. I want to make the residents as happy as possible. I want to make Mayor Slesnick as happy as possible. And I responded to his email today when he asked me if a meeting had occurred. We weren't able to get the meeting. We got to finally move forward on this issue. Anybody have any further guidance, any further help on this? Can we figure this out? Because this is like the Underline. Our back is against the wall, and we got to make a decision here.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: I agree with you that right now is not the moment to invest this amount of money into lighting. But I also want to put on the record part of Mayor Slesnick's email. And point number two that he was bringing up was, while these lights are not as historic as the 1920 installations, they do qualify as historic for being over 50 years old. And he is really; he's not talking about all the ones around the Granada Golf Course. He is talking about the ones on Riviera Drive and Segovia Street. So, I don't know if maybe we can exclude that.

Public Works Director Diaz: So those are different lights altogether. So, the fiberglass lights are basically a replica done with fiberglass. The ones on Segovia specifically, those are city maintained. And those are, they're not necessarily historical either. You can actually have those available. But those are maintained by us and that's not part of this patch. The only things that we're changing, those are FPL maintained lights that are being transferred from the silver into the black Washington. The ones on Segovia, those are not under, those are city lights, and there's no current plan to replace those.

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Mayor Lago: By the way, Hermes, this is, I don't know how, it's not an issue that we've even brought up or even discussed. I don't want to get anybody confused about that. We're not replacing the ones in Segovia. The next thing now we're going to get is start getting phone calls that we're getting replaced from Segovia. That has never, never even been in consideration. And I've been dealing with this FPL issue and this lighting issue for three years. Now, we should replace those lights in Segovia because they look terrible. And I've sent many photos to the DCM, how at a minimum, can we at least clean them?

Public Works Director Diaz: We've done some of them.

Mayor Lago: I know, I know. But I want to make sure we have them on rotation maybe once a year, every six months, kind of like what we do with the Whiteway lights. And by the way, and talking about the Whiteway lights, there's a Whiteway light across from the library that is very close to a tree limb. So maybe we can have Deena go out there and take a look at that, because I would hate for that. And it's a massive, massive branch. I mean, I'm talking about, it's this close to it. I know it's ridiculous, but it's within a foot of a Whiteway light. Now remember, we spend millions of dollars on these Whiteway lights. And we have, I want to make sure the base, we went through with the Manager that the base has the white rock and that we're maintaining them, keeping them away from sprinklers and getting the report. So, the last thing I want to see is five years from now that we have to spend more money after this massive investment. So, let's be clear. I don't want to-- I love receiving emails, but I don't want people to be confused. The ones in Segovia have nothing to do and they're not being replaced. Those are city lights.

Public Works Director Diaz: They're metal.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Public Works Director Diaz: Those are not fiberglass.

Mayor Lago: Those are not fiberglass. And number one, those are not historic. And let's also be clear, we don't have our Historic Preservation Officer here. Just because things are 50 years old does not mean they're historic. That's not the way it works. We have to be very, very careful when we say things like that without due respect. So, the fiberglass lights, if you've seen them, they're all full of pitting. They're cracking. They're from the 1980s. They're almost 50 years old, but even if they were 50 years old, they would not be historic. Okay. So, does anybody else have anything to add for the record? Yes, Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I mean, I understand what fiberglass is made of because boats are made out of it, cars are made out of it. It doesn't last forever. Okay, so it's going to require maintenance, and we'll have to do what we need to do it. Clearly now is not the time to be spending money, additional monies, on these light poles. Perhaps when, after the pension's paid up and we have additional funds, we can revisit this topic. But in the meantime, we need to consider public safety. And lighting is important for public safety. It absolutely is. I mean, the House and the Senate have

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voted moving forward, and we know it's going to be on the ballot about the property tax relief. And we do need property tax relief. We need to see what the voters are going to do on that and wait for the pension to be fully paid before embarking on large expenditures going forward. I use the same analysis on the Youth Center matter. We need to see what happens in November.

Public Works Director Diaz: And FPL will not maintain metal lights. They've made that very clear.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, no, I know it's abundant and clear. We've kind of beaten that dead horse a few times. So, in the interest of moving this meeting forward, I'm going to need a motion on this.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll make a motion. Accept the resolution.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Manager.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor. FPL a number of years ago had some very favorable tariffs as far as lighting is concerned. By using those tariffs is substantially less than if we were to do this kind of investment. And in addition to taking care of the maintenance, as you mentioned, the car hits them, they replace the light. If a hurricane comes in and destroys the lighting, they replace the lights. So, it's a very favorable tariff and it really gets us out of the light business because it's very expensive for us to be in the light business and it's not very efficient for us. That's not what we do best.

Mayor Lago: We have a motion and a second.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. I have a member of the public requesting to speak on the item, Maria Cruz.

Maria Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, 305-323-2154. I know the timing is not good to spend money, but we have money for other things. Let me tell you, I cannot believe that this city who, I mean, we think is very important and we know that it's very important and the world knows that we're very important. We cannot force a president of FP&L to meet with our mayor. That doesn't make any sense. Okay, I'm sorry. You know what? We use our power when we want to. We go to court when we want to. This is important to a lot of people. Not to me because I've already had to agree that except the fact that the San Amaro lights are horrific, too high up and incredibly ugly, but I think Don Slesnick has made it a point and he's right. You know, we only fight the battles that we want to fight and forget the ones that we don't want to fight and at this point, we have money for other things, but we don't have money for that and the fact that we do not want to be in the light business, we didn't want to be in the landscaping business either. Go look around and see how well the private sector is handling our grass, our circles are horrific, but we're out of the business. When we were in the business, we did better than now.

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

Mayor Lago: All right, Mr. Clerk, just a few points of clarification. I want to thank the Manager for his comments before in regard to not wanting to be in the business of handling the power poles. Just for the record, nothing has changed from today than three years ago. It's been the same consistent statement that we should not do this, that FPL is not willing to bend, that we are selecting the most spectacular, high-end lighting fixtures available in the catalog. We are receiving favorable tariff, correct me if I'm wrong.

City Manager Iglesias: Correct, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: And we should not be in the business of maintenance. This is the same thing. We could have had these lights on three years ago. We wasted three years. Neighborhoods have not had lights for three years, okay. Well, that's number one. Number two, the comments that were made before, again, are factually incorrect across the board. I'm not even going to waste time, whether we're in the business or we're not in the business. I live on San Amaro. I like the lights. I like the lights. I'm a resident, okay. I'm a property owner. I own my home. So, at the end of the day, many people in the community have asked, my neighbors asked, what do you think about the lights? They say they're spectacular. Nobody has complained in my neighborhood about the lights. If anybody feels that they're not happy with the lights, please feel free to give me a call. What they're happy about their refresh. They look great. They work properly. They turn on and off. They're not on all day. And it's, again, much better than we've had before. Is it what we want exactly, 110%? It'll never be 110%. But like I said, three years ago, let's move forward. It didn't move forward. We've been caught in this back and forth. And guess what? We're in the same position as we were three years ago. Now we give the green light to FPL to move forward. And hopefully we can get this taken care of going into hurricane season. It is not only about the money. It is about the maintenance of these poles. And if something were to happen in regard to a hurricane, we could be years, years with these poles down.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir.

City Manager Iglesias: FPL is a utility. It's not a private sector. It's a utility. Accepted through the state and part of the Public Service Commission. So, we are dealing with a company that's a utility, that that's what they do. And that's the business that they're in.

Mayor Lago: It was a different time in the City of Coral Gables under Amos Rojas. And at the end of the day, now we have more sensible leadership here, which obviously knows what they're doing. We move forward and we're still in the same position in regard to FPL's position. It has not changed whatsoever. So, we have a motion and a second, Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

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Mayor Lago: I just feel horrible about the amount of time that we wasted here.

Commissioner Fernandez? Yes.

Commissioner Lara? Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson? Yes.

Commissioner Castro? Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes. We could have done this three years ago.