

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting**  
**Agenda Item F-12**  
**February 13, 2024**  
**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 Kirk Menendez**

**City Staff**

**City Attorney, Cristina Suárez**  
**City Manager, Peter Iglesias**  
**City Clerk, Billy Urquia**  
**Assistant City Manager, Alberto Parjus**  
**Police Chief, Ed Hudak**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Jose Riera**  
**Nicolas Cabrera**  
**Tom Wells**  
**Jackson "Rip" Holmes**  
**Ed Santamaria**  
**Juan Galan, Jr.**  
**Maria Cruz**  
**Alicia Fernandez**  
**Willy Bermello**  
**Michael Mean**  
**Laureano Cancio**  
**Carl Leon Prime**  
**Letty Collar**  
**Xavier Durana**

---

City Commission Meeting  
February 13, 2024  
Agenda Item F-12 - City Manager succession plan.

**Venny Torre**  
**Dorothy Thomson**  
**Raul Mas**  
**Saralane Conde**  
**Javier Banos**  
**Jose “Pepi” Cancio**  
**Samuel Lawson**  
**Andy Murai**  
**Diana Wells**  
**Harald Neuweg**  
**Chip Withers**  
**Sheryl Gold**  
**Mayra Joli**

---

Agenda Item F-12 [10:15 a.m.]  
City Manager succession plan.  
(Sponsored by Commissioner Fernandez)

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Let's get back to our regular scheduled programming. Welcome back. So, we're going to do things a little bit differently, something that I thought of right now. Since there are so many people here and so many residents who reached out to us and who spoke to me outside, with the respect of the sponsor of the item on F-12, I'd like to have the residents speak first. I think it's an opportunity for people who need to go home, who have to go to work, who have a loved one they got to take care of. I hope that my colleagues will support me on that, and we can move forward and expeditiously have everyone speak and then we'll address the item.

Commissioner Castro: Absolutely.

Commissioner Fernandez: Mr. Mayor, I have no issue with that. I just want to make sure we set the tone. This is about somebody's job performance. I don't want to hear personal attacks towards the Manager. I don't want to hear personal attacks towards members of the Commission. We are a civilized city. We're a city that sets the bar for everybody else, and that's what I hope we do

---

City Commission Meeting  
February 13, 2024  
Agenda Item F-12 - City Manager succession plan.

today. Let's have a conversation as a municipality that's going to set Coral Gables' path for the future.

Mayor Lago: So, Mr. Clerk, with that being said, we have a civility code here. We hope that everybody adheres to it. We ask you to be kind and thoughtful as we move forward. We have a lot of people and I have probably about 20 or 25 letters that I will be submitting that I know that we all received a copy of it that I'll be submitting for the record for consideration by the Commission and obviously the record. Mr. Clerk, who is first?

City Clerk Urquia: Jose Riera.

Commissioner Menendez: Jose.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Jose.

Mayor Lago: Jose? You're up.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You're up.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Nothing like being first, right?

Jose Riera: Wish I wasn't first. This is the first for me. Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, fellow Commissioners, and the rest of the individuals in the Chamber. My name is Jose Riera. I'm a Coral Gables resident. And I want to mention two things that are of concern for me. Last month in the Gables Good Government meeting, Commissioner Menendez was asked his opinion on the issues with Mr. Iglesias. Commissioner Menendez responded, there is a toxic environment. In Commission meetings, emails, Commissioner Fernandez appears as having negative behavior, belittling, inflicting verbal abuse, targeting personally and through emails Mr. Iglesias. These behaviors and then firing the same person for their actions or different way of thinking than you believe or you think concerns me. It concerns me with liability. It appears certain Commissioners have forgotten that the Commission's meetings are televised, taped, emails are public records. Quick, irrelevant responses and forms of sidetracking do not eliminate liability. This toxic environment began since the last elections. I respectfully request you think long and hard how to stop these types of toxic and disrespectful comments, whether you agree with the person or not. There could be legal repercussions for this behavior that could cost us, the taxpayers. The second issue that I wanted to mention was, if you do come to an amicable succession with Mr. Iglesias, I respectfully request you hire a qualified individual, someone that has experience and will ensure a transition -- a smooth transition to avoid wasted time and taxpayers' money. Hiring is nothing personal, but hiring the community recreation director will not do that. I will not hire a doctor to prepare my taxes. Each Commissioner should put the interests of the City of Coral Gables before

their personal and professional interests. This does not appear to be the position of three Commissioners. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Nicolas Cabrera.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Nicolas Cabrera: Good morning, members of the Commission. My name is Nicolas Cabrera and I reside at 45 Antilla Avenue, Coral Gables, Florida. I'd like to begin today with a recent story. Just this past Friday night, I received a phone call from a business owner along Giralda Plaza. It was brought to my attention that the canopy lights and pencil lights along the plaza were off. This was at 7:49 p.m., a time when Giralda Plaza is most active on Friday nights and the businesses rely most heavily upon these lights. I immediately stopped what I was doing and took a visit. The street was pitch black and businesses had to find ways to provide lights to their patrons. So, I did what I thought best. I immediately reached out to Vice Mayor Anderson. This was at 8:08, and within less than a minute, Vice Mayor Anderson responded to me, and by 8:09, we were on the phone. By 8:10 p.m., Vice Mayor Anderson had none other than City Manager Peter Iglesias on the phone with me. I explained the situation to the City Manager, and he immediately responded. Mr. Iglesias said to me, and I quote, "Mr. Cabrera, I'm aware of the issue. I have sent an electrician to fix the lights." Not only was Mr. Iglesias a true gentleman, he was responsive and attentive to the issue at hand. He understood the challenges this blackout caused for the businesses along Giralda Plaza and the need to resolve the issue immediately. We finished our call at about 8:22 p.m., and by 9:46 p.m., the lights were back on. Members of the Commission, the reason I tell you this story today is to remind you, our Commissioners, of the professionalism and responsibility Mr. Iglesias brings to the City of Coral Gables and the position of City Manager, to remind you of the dignity with which Mr. Iglesias represents our City and cares for it each and every day. In fact, this is not the first time Mr. Iglesias was attentive to me as a resident and responded to me with honesty and respect. Not so long ago, during a wonderful experience in our community known as Moon Over the Gables, I saw Mr. Iglesias with his wife enjoying the experience, and I walked up to him. During our conversation, I had expressed my love for Ponce Circle Park and the vision I had for the space. I told him about all the incredible opportunities this park brought to the City of Coral Gables for public art and events, future experiences like the one we enjoyed that evening. Not only did he enjoy my comments, he agreed and listened intently. Shortly after the event, I emailed Mr. Iglesias, requesting the most recent plans for the renovation of the park. Not only did he respond to me within less than two hours, but he'd also directed City staff to assist me in finding the records I searched for. Should you wish to find his response, feel free to do a public records request for our email exchange on April 4th, 2023 at 4:32 p.m. This exchange is just another example of Mr. Iglesias' respect for the residents of Coral Gables. Members of the Commission, Mr. Iglesias represents our city with honor and grace, with professionalism and integrity. However, I believe a trip down memory lane is the only way to fully drive this point home. As

many of you recall, my father, Ralph Cabrera, served as a commissioner of the City of Coral Gables for 12 years, retiring in 2013. During my father's tenure, three different city managers served under his leadership. Each city manager had their strengths and each had their weaknesses. Each had their moment. Unfortunately for my father, the final city manager he served with was by no means an individual representative of the beauty of the City of Coral Gables. The city manager was a browbeater. He was secretive. He was manipulative, polarizing, and diligently worked to ensure my father received zero support in his efforts to serve the people of Coral Gables. So, as you ponder and discuss the current manager's future, please consider the following: The city manager my father ended his tenure with would not allow the cleaning staff to enter his office. Each night at the close of the day, he'd take his trash home with him. When working with consultants, he would not allow them to write him emails or call him directly on his City phone. In fact, he had a second cell phone, which no one knew about. He consistently prepared my father's colleagues to debate him on his agenda items and often prohibited City staff from responding to requests from his office. The good news is, one year after my father left office, this city manager's true colors were revealed, and he was asked to resign by the majority of the City Commission. So, members of the Commission, when you ask yourself what a bad city manager looks like, remember this era in Coral Gables government. And for those of you wondering who the city manager is, I'll tell you this, Mr. Iglesias is not Pat Salerno, nor does he even stand in Pat Salerno's shadow. Commissioner Fernandez, Commissioner Castro, you have been in office but only 10 months. This is not the first time I've challenged you to reconsider your stance on an item. You have done Mr. Iglesias a disservice today and have portrayed him in a false light simply for your own political gain. You have disrespected him on the dais, in your emails, and in your messaging. Mr. Iglesias is the opposite of what you've portrayed him. He's a gentleman, he serves with veracity, and he maintains his accountability to the people of Coral Gables and all members of this Commission. My comments are not only directed at you, but they're also directed at my fellow residents, to my neighbors, my friends, and my families. They're directed to you, Commissioner Menendez, and the entirety of the City of Coral Gables. It's easy to forget and/or obfuscate history when it's convenient for you. Terminating City Manager Peter Iglesias today will do irreparable damage to the City of Coral Gables. This is more than just a discussion item. No matter what happens today, should the Manager walk out of here still the city manager, nothing will be able to erase the stain this has left on our city. I sincerely hope you will consider my comments as well as -- as well as those of other supporters of Mr. Iglesias that are here today and remember what a bad city manager really looks like. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Tom Wells.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Wells, good morning.

Tom Wells: Good morning. I promise to take less than seven minutes.

Mayor Lago: Can I give you eight?

Mr. Wells: No. My name is Tom Wells. I live in Coral Gables. I also served as a first lieutenant in the (INAUDIBLE) Corps of the United States Army. I've been an employee or an employer for over 40 years. I know about following rules and respecting superiors. I've never seen such insubordination go unpunished as shown by Peter Iglesias at the last Commission meeting. Such insolence cannot be tolerated or condoned. I'm here to request the Commission vote to remove Mr. Iglesias as city manager pursuant to Section 11 of the City Charter. At 6:22, at the last Commission meeting, Mr. Iglesias was grossly insubordinate, verbally attacking Commissioner Fernandez by saying, "I have never worked with a more disrespectful person than yourself. You're threatening me to do things that will not work. You are the most disrespectful person I have ever met." This gross insubordination violates Sections 2-77 and 2-81 of the City Code, and Robert's Rules of Order that govern all city meetings. Comments are confined to the question under debate, which was Mr. Iglesias's unilateral decision to terminate the Fritz & Franz lease. Robert's Rule 43 prohibits disorderly words that attack a person. As of the last meeting, both Vice Mayor Anderson and Commissioner Castro tried to control the improper conduct but were interrupted. The technical term is point of order in Rule 21 of Robert's Rules. If a Commissioner calls a point of order, the meeting is stopped and the person engaging in improper conduct must leave the meeting while the improper conduct is considered. The rule applies to every person on the dais. To quote Rule 43, "It is not the man but the measure that is the subject of debate." Mr. Iglesias's lack of decorum denigrates the meeting process and the status of the City's government. In addition, Mr. Iglesias's lack of truthfulness and candor at the last meeting also violates Sections 15-5 of the City Charter and 82 of the Citizens' Bill of Rights that provides no municipal employees shall knowingly furnish false information on any public matter, nor knowingly omit significant facts when giving requested information to members of the public. For example, at 6:17 in the last meeting, Mr. Iglesias said, we lost \$187,000 to Ortanique. We lost \$240,000 on this particular lease, referring to Fritz & Franz. First, the City's failure to enforce the lease terms with Ortanique is Mr. Iglesias's failure. It has nothing to do with Fritz & Franz. Mr. Iglesias's efforts to sway public opinion by tying two different businesses together is wrong. Also, his assertion of a \$240,000 loss is wrong. The Commission addressed this issue when it unanimously approved a new 10-year lease in 2014. And there is no payment default under the current lease. A payment default only occurs when the City sends a written notice and is not cured within 10 days. The City has never sent a non-payment notice under the current lease for Fritz & Franz. By making such significant facts, Mr. Iglesias violates both the City Charter and the Citizen's Bill of Rights. This is just a recent example. There are other examples, but my time is limited. In conclusion, Mr. Iglesias is the highest ranking and highest paid City employee, making approximately \$290,000 per year, 55 percent higher than the average salary paid for other city managers in Florida. He sets the standard for decorum and honesty for all City employees. He cannot backtrack from insubordination and falsehoods committed at the last Commission meeting. Mr. Iglesias's inability to keep his subjective opinions to himself and be honest with the residents and the Commission should be a clear sign to all of you that his term must end. We deserve better,

particularly with Coral Gables being FIFA's headquarters for the 2026 World Cup. Please vote today to remove Mr. Iglesias as city manager. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson "Rip" Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Jackson "Rip" Holmes: So, I support the retention of Mr. Iglesias as city manager. I hope everyone has a week. It will only take me a week to give you all my reasons. It actually upsets me that people are trying to take down two things. They're trying to take down Mr. Iglesias, but more importantly, actually, to me, is the Mobility Hub, which adjoins my property, and which would be, if we follow through, the safest parking garage in the country, certainly in the state of Florida. I've done that much research, but Kevin Kinney tells me it'll be actually the safest parking garage in the country. That's an asset to the City of Coral Gables because women shop, and women don't like parking garages because they're unsafe. The Mobility Hub is all lit up all the time. If you see somebody getting mugged, you can call the police on 911 and say, I see a crime in progress, and we're going to take this down and destroy it and destroy the safety and the income of Miracle Mile? I -- you got another week? I got a lot of things to say.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Ed Santamaria.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ed Santamaria: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners. Ed Santamaria, 47 San Sebastian Avenue.

Mayor Lago: May I interrupt you one second, sir?

Mr. Santamaria: Sure.

Mayor Lago: You brought something to my attention. Mr. Clerk, can we make sure that everybody puts their address...

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: States their address on the record? Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mr. Santamaria: Once again, I stand at this podium as a resident and former City employee with five years' experience. Over half of that experience was as assistant city manager working directly with Peter Iglesias. In the manager-commission form of government employed in our city, the work of a manager is unimaginably demanding. The demands come at a breakneck speed from every direction. The manager is either at work or on call 24-7-365. A high-level holistic understanding is essential. Simultaneously, it requires a granular understanding of the goals of elected officials, the needs of the community, the skills and capabilities of staff, and the status of all City projects, past, present, and future. This is all in order to meet the City's approved strategic plan. There are few individuals in South Florida equipped to do this effectively. Manager Iglesias works hard at his job. He is driven by an intense desire to steward the City's resources in the best interest of the community, acting as its chief executive, working with his board of directors, the five of you. This is his only agenda. Peter can be direct and to the point. Some see this as arrogance and an unwillingness to listen. I disagree. A manager, when merited, must utter the word no. And this is a word that some people don't care to hear. Manager Iglesias is guided by a strong moral compass and a high sense of ethics. Based on my experience, he is incorruptible. I ask, what is the rationale for having this discussion? These chambers have seen this type of conversation several times before, but always with just cause. What is the just cause here? How will this body justify terminating Manager Iglesias when the effects will greatly damage the community and further strain the confidence of your constituency? I see much cause to keep our present manager. First, replacing the manager with someone experienced in the rigors of this post will be difficult. It will be a long and steep learning curve of at least a year, two maybe, depending on the individual. Also, the obvious fractures in the Commission, combined with several openings at other municipalities will make it difficult for the City to recruit the best candidates. But the word on the street, unfortunately, is that the Coral Gables at this time is a difficult workplace environment. Lastly, compounding political instability with managerial instability will further demoralize staff. The staff exodus that we have seen as of late will only accelerate. It will increasingly be difficult to recruit, hire, and retain good talent. This will have significant costs in recruitment and training of replacement staff. Additionally, with the exodus and less effective managerial guidance, City projects will slip and services will degrade. Your objectives and the community's needs will only suffer. Lastly, this managerial instability will not be welcomed by our elected officials at the state level, and we are likely to lose funding from Tallahassee. It will also be unwelcome by the bond rating agencies, and our current impeccable AAA rating will drop, yielding increased borrowing costs for years to come. Before a decision likely to cost millions of dollars is made, please ask yourselves, is there just cause? The community is looking at you to set aside grudges and personal vendettas and do what is right. You will all be held accountable if you don't. In closing, unless there is demonstrable just cause, I urge you to retain Manager Iglesias and do what is right for the City of Coral Gables. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Juan Galan, Jr.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Juan Galan, Jr.: I'm wearing the outfit that some of you know me, I usually would wear to a wake, because in my opinion, taking action on the letter that Commissioner Fernandez submitted today would be the beginning of the death of the City Beautiful and a new era called the Ugly City. As my predecessor just said, who is a civil servant, knows City well and knows the rest of the municipal environment, the somewhat confrontational environment that has evolved since the last election, the lack of collaborative work, is not the history of the City of Coral Gables. The City of Coral Gables works differently, has always worked differently. If you want to work that way, I would suggest you get elected in Miami, become their Joe Carollo, or Hialeah, and become their Steve Bovo. But that is not what we want here in the City of Coral Gables. Now, furthermore, I believe in facts. My background is computers. I know how to do data mining, okay, and I know due diligence. I did due diligence, okay. We have a few issues here, okay. We have a Commissioner trying to judge a person who manages a thousand people and property taxes over a hundred million dollars who has never managed more than 20 people. And I will please put his LinkedIn résumé. And if Commissioner Fernandez wants to show me where he has worked and managed more than 20 people, I'll learn. And if he wants to show me where he served on a board like this one, that manages the size of this organization and the dollars that are involved, I'll listen. But I believe I'm correct, okay. So, I urge you to do not act on the letter that was sent. I also would like to ask Commissioner Fernandez why the facts have changed and he has not recalled this letter. I do not believe that the facts as stated with regards to what the Assistant City Manager agreed to are correct. And I believe that when you send a letter and the facts are incorrect, your first responsibility is to recall the letter and resubmit the letter, okay. I do not believe the Assistant City Manager agreed to serve if the City Manager was terminated. So, that's what the letter said. That's wrong, okay. Now, one last item, okay. I agree, first of all, with the previous speaker about credit ratings. I don't want my property taxes going up because all of a sudden, the credit rating agencies think we're in distress as a city and don't have good governance. But I also believe that if you were to act together as the two new elected Commissioners and one Commissioner, I remind you that you went to Tallahassee together. It was public information. I understand a liaison officer did not go with you. So, therefore, it would be subject to people questioning whether some of this action was convened in violation of the Sunshine Law, which would create all kinds of problems for a lot of people, including the City, okay. And one last thing, and this is really directed at my fellow property owners and those people that are going to be working on the charter review. Again, doing due diligence, I know each and every one of you where your property records are, your folio, where you live. I couldn't find that until I did some other search, but you have -- you're the only commissioner that has asked the property records not to show your house, which I find it interesting. But also...

Commissioner Fernandez: If I may, one second. My address is protected because of my wife's role. And so, your disclosing that information is in violation of state law.

Mr. Galan, Jr.: Good.

Commissioner Fernandez: Because my wife is a protected individual because of her prior employment. So, you're disclosing that here on the record to try to show off?

Mr. Galan, Jr.: No, I'm not.

Commissioner Fernandez: Unacceptable.

Mr. Galan, Jr.: I'm not.

Commissioner Fernandez: And I will be addressing your points later because the threats you're making here are evidence of what we have been put through over the last two weeks.

Mr. Galan, Jr.: Okay, one last item is I could not find Commissioner Castro's address. I did some more digging. I understand she rents property and I understand that not everybody can own property in Coral Gables. But what I don't understand is how we, as residents and property owners that elect people, haven't asked the City to change the charter, if legally possible, to require that anybody who's going to serve as a commissioner has some skin in the game, be a property owner. Why do I say that? Because if my taxes go up because of actions taken that credit rating agencies don't like, okay, then -- and a commissioner who is renting leaves the City, we're all responsible for what is left. But the person on the left can go live wherever they want and they pay no consequence for it. So, I believe going forward, I would ask the City to ensure that, if possible, any person that puts their name up for election as a Commissioner has to be a property owner. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you for being here with us.

Maria Cruz: Good morning again. This must be the best show in town today. Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, same address, I am a property owner. But I take offense to asking people to be property owners to be able to do anything in this city, because you know what? To me, that's a way to say, if you're poor, you cannot participate. I'm sorry, wrong. But I'm not here to talk about that. I know -- I mean, we've already heard from somebody from the City of Miami. I don't know how that relates, but that's okay. I am here with some facts, because I took the time to look up, to read minutes, to read even my not favorite magazine, and it's very interesting how we can showcase what Mr. Peter Iglesias has not been able to do, has not done properly, and that's one of the reasons why we need somebody who can do better. And I'm amazed that he returned emails. Let me tell you, if there's one person in this whole organization that is known for not putting answers in writing, the name is Peter Iglesias. Call me, I'll talk to you, don't put it in writing. And

that is a fact. Okay, if nobody believes it, check for his emails and you will see how many times he says call me. Alright, here we go. Very interesting. I'm going to start by Burger Bob's. That's going to be my -- because the residents in this city, our City Beautiful, made it very clear from the get-go what they wanted to see happen in Burger Bob's. And I hate to say it, but from the very beginning, it was very clear that that's not what the people that were running the show at that time wanted to see happen. We wanted a -- something that was not the mom and pop, every person can come in in shorts, and anyway they wanted to, have an expensive meal with their family. People made it very clear they did not want another highfalutin restaurant, but that's not what the people that were sitting at that time here thought it was appropriate. We had to upgrade that. And we have discussed this so many times. We have heard people, we have had, I believe, Sunshine meetings, we've had community meetings. We have elected officials talk about it. And let me tell you, I could only go back, for obvious reasons, I've been busy. And I was so happy that I had the April 2022, and this was not the beginning of the issue, okay? This has been going on for years before this. But in 2022, my favorite magazine, and then I'm lying, closes, timing is everything, on page 12, April 2022, the editor-in-chief, Coral Gables Magazine, is so happy. He says, "If all goes according to plan, Burger Bob's" -- in quotes now, in parentheses -- "(and the name will remain the same) will be back in business by the end of the year." He was not talking about '24, '25, '26, '28. He was talking about 2022. And please spare me the comments about construction and the prices because I see the developers still working and making money. So, I do not know why we always have to hear about how -- if we had done this in 2022, the prices would have been lower than they are now. That's the reality. Anybody who's done anything around their homes will tell you the prices they got in 2022 and not the prices they're paying today. Okay, so -- but we knew that this was going to happen because Peter Iglesias and the Mayor did not agree with what the residents wanted at that time. I also need to remind you that the price was not that high to fix it. Actually, even the Mayor said he could do better than what was being offered. He even said he could get his people to do it for much less than we were told. Well, I hate to tell you, Mr. Mayor, but the prices come now to close to \$2 million for a small place that all we wanted was to keep it the way it was, just do what needed to be done and move on. Now we may end up with something that we will not be able to afford. Okay, Commission meeting, May 10, another discussion. Mr. Menendez spoke about getting it going, the sooner the better, May 10, 2022. Okay, Lago said, "We'll get a date from the Manager. We'll see progress soon," 2022, May. July 2023, that's a year a little more later, City Manager, waiting for final interior design. Plans are about to go into the building department. Menendez said residents have provided input. God, it seems to be moving forward. This is July 2023. But then we get to August. Good news again. Contract awarded to a construction company. City Manager looking forward to finishing the project sometime in August or September next year. December 2023, now we're not talking Burger Bob's anymore. Now it's the Granada diner. See, we're moving up. It's a better place now, okay? We're told the construction started yesterday, \$1.257 million plus the contingency fund, almost two million, okay. That's the story with Burger Bob. Then, and I'm sorry that I have to be the bearer of bad news, the 427 building, we congratulated people here for the wonderful job that was done there. Magnificent. I mean, some people even got the Key to the City for that. The windows facing City Hall, anytime there's a major storm, leak. There are walls that are already

wet, which may mean mold soon. The female bathroom, the exhaust doesn't work. I've been told that if people do not come ready -- that what is it that I learned last time? -- the Poo-Pourri, if they don't use it, the smell is unbearable. Not long ago, there was a smoke event. Somebody was cooking and something was burned, cooking in the 427 building with pots and pans that were bought by the City. There was smoke event. Guess what? The alarms did not go to the Fire Department because they're not connected. They had to call 911 to say there's smoke in the building. Okay, shall we go to the AC, air conditioning? This is a building that was spent money, that we took money, I believe, from this building to make sure that we finish that one, okay. AC is still to work well. Now, long ago, there are days that people were wearing winter coats because it was so cold, and then there were days when they needed fans. There's somebody that works there that had to have a fan on his desk because it was so hot. Today, as we speak, I was told that when you're sitting in some areas of the building, you feel that you're in an airplane because the air conditioner makes noises so loud that they cannot hear themselves talking. Okay, moving on to the Public Safety Building. I need to remind you, all this was under Mr. Iglesias's watch, okay? The people that work under him, he's still responsible. Public Safety Building. Some time ago I heard Mr. Iglesias and the Chief were looking into -- something was wrong with the roof. There were leaks. Water was coming into the new, brand-new building. This is not a building that was refurbished. This is a brand-new building that Mr. Iglesias was responsible for, okay, brand-new building. Now I've heard, now the latest leaks are sewage leaks. Sewage, okay. This is -- I know that you're going to hear that the building came under budget. Somebody needs to forget the smoke and mirrors and check the records, because that's not what we heard when it was going on. And to make it worse, they didn't account for what was going to be inside the building. When this City was told about the Public Safety Building, we were only told about the building, but there were no plans to put stuff inside the building, whatever that took. Okay, and my last example is going to be Miracle Mile. Miracle Mile, everybody's so happy in Miracle Mile. It's fantastic. That's why there are 12, 13, I've been told because I don't -- I haven't been there in a while, 13 empty storefronts. Only 13 -- 12, 13, I may be off by one or two. You know, people are so happy to go to Miracle Mile. People love those tiles. I've been looking around, talking to people that are in the business, in the construction building, and I was told if they had bought different tiles, they wouldn't have had to be fixing so many times. And last but not least, somebody suggested that I mention that -- what happened when the people in charge did not realize that there were pipes under Miracle Mile, and that created a problem. And I will be remiss if I did not mention the wonderful, beautiful decorations for Christmas. And all you have to do is read Nextdoor, go back to that time of the year, and you will hear people complaining about what has happened to our Miracle Mile. I could go on and on and on, but I think this will be enough. Everything is great. Mr. Iglesias's term of office, that appointment by the City Commission, not elected, appointed like the other city managers were. And by the way, I'm glad that Cabrera brought up Salerno because our Mayor was the one that was very, very involved, involved with getting Salerno out of here because he lied. And guess what? I could show you my book of all the lies that I've heard from Mr. Iglesias's mouth. So, you know what's good for the goose should be good for the gander. If he cannot do a good job everything he handles and I'll -- I'll keep my investigation about purchases for another time. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk, I'd like for the record just to show -- I know Mr. Wells was concerned before about time -- that was 13 minutes on the clock. Thank you very much. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Alicia Fernandez.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Alicia Fernandez: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager. My name is Alicia Fernandez. I live at 6000 Granada Boulevard. I've been a resident in the City of Coral Gables since 1962. And I am here today in support for our City Manager. I respectfully ask that you'll vote to keep our City Manager, Peter Iglesias. I received an email from Gables Insider News Alert. Commissioner Ariel Fernandez seeks removal of City Manager Peter Iglesias, proposes replacement. I said, not this again. Commissioner Fernandez, why is it that every time you have a disparity or things do not go your way, you again now try to oust the City Manager? You show no respect for your own fellow Commissioners by doing this. You have no respect for the residents of the City of Coral Gables. First item on your agenda when first elected was again to get rid of the City Manager. Now again, you try for the second time. This shows that you have a personal grudge against the City Manager from before you were even elected to be commissioner. You came into the City, requested and got the biggest pay raise ever seen in the City plus expenses that you do not even have to report. You refuse to lower our millage rate to our residents of the City. That is what I call disrespect for the residents in the City. It is only what you want to get done and not care about the residents of the City. Of course, this was done with three votes. Your vote, Commissioner Castro, Commissioner Menendez. Not to mention how much it would cost for an executive search for a new city manager who might not be as capable and as professional as our City Manager, Peter Iglesias. I ask, where is your loyalty to the residents of the City of Coral Gables, seems your only loyalty is for your own selves. Commissioner Ariel Fernandez, you must learn how to accept criticism and be corrected when you're in the wrong without these tantrums which shows a lot of your insecurities. When in reality your personal problem is with the City Manager. This discord is only between you against the City Manager, personal vendetta that should not be played out with -- by other commissioners. City Manager is a professional doing his job and has been here since before you came in. You divided this Commission like the City has never seen before. You seem to lack the professionalism the job requires, causing toxicity in the Commission created 10 months ago. City Hall has turned into a joke. Where there has always been respect for reality, there is none now. Commission can hardly accomplish anything because of the 3-2 votes. It is sad that most residents do not even know what is going on. Hopefully everyone knows before election time comes. Commissioner Ariel is the only one calling for the City Manager removal without thinking of all the damage this will be costing the City. It is my humble opinion. This should be more like instead of ousting the City Manager, Commissioner Fernandez, maybe if you can't take this maybe you should be the one to resign. And that's my humble opinion. God bless you all and goodbye.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Willy Bermello.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Willy Bermello: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, members of the Commission, City Attorney, City Manager, and City Clerk. My name is Willy Bermello, with address at 1238 Malaga Avenue. That's my residence, and my office is 4711 South Le Jeune Road. I've been a resident of Coral Gables since 1965. I have had the opportunity of working as a professional with four prior city managers, and I come here today to speak on behalf of Peter Iglesias. I support and I recommend that you not only keep him, but that you properly embrace the work that he has done unselfishly for this community for the years since he's been here. Without a doubt, I have found Mr. Iglesias to be a consummate professional. I may not always agree with his opinions, but I will tell you that even when I don't agree, I understand where his opinions are coming from and they're always on behalf of the City of Coral Gables. I consider him a consummate professional and in looking at other opportunities that you would have outside of South Florida or within South Florida, I can tell you that we're blessed to have the city manager that we have, we're blessed to have the fire chief that we have, the police chief that we have, we're blessed in this city. And one of the things that attracts people to Coral Gables is in fact, the fact that it's not just the City Beautiful, but the level of service, the quality of service and professionalism in the City of Coral Gables is a distinguishing factor from many of the municipalities that surround us. And we need to keep that in mind. Now, I realize that some of you have made up your minds before you came here today, and maybe my voice will not resonate, and I'm not here to criticize anyone. Each of you have to make your own decisions, and there's only one judge that judges us. But I do want to address those that maybe have said that they are coming here with an open mind. So, Commissioner Menendez, you know, I live by the three Os. We're always being observed, and every observation creates an opinion, and those opinions either lead into opportunity or dis-opportunity. And I would hope that you listen to the comments of people that you hopefully respect, and you respect their advice, you respect their experience, and you respect some of us when we say to you that it will be a mistake for us to remove Peter Iglesias from the position that he currently has. Just the opposite. I think he needs to be complimented. And I think somebody was talking about salaries. I would review salaries, and I would look and make sure that he is being paid for the job that he's currently being done and that we compensate him. And if he's not being paid to the top, I would pay him to the top. If I was running a company of this size, a municipality, I would want to make sure that my CEO running the business is properly compensated because I will tell you that not too far from here, there are municipalities that right now are looking to hire people like Peter Iglesias, and it will be disastrous for us to lose him. So, I encourage you, those of you who haven't made up your mind to think about those that are here today. This item, I will tell you, is galvanizing a silent majority that was asleep. They're now awake. So, please hear our voices. Thank you, and God bless you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Michael Mena.

Mayor Lago: Vice Mayor Mena, it's a pleasure to have you. Good morning.

Michael Mena: Morning. Michael Mena, 5800 Jasmine Lane. It's good to be here before you guys today. I've done my best not to be back here. I think the last day I was here was my last day in office, but I felt today's -- the importance of this item, you know, compelled me to be here today. So, as we gather here today, I stand before you not just a citizen of Coral Gables, but as someone who has witnessed firsthand the remarkable transformation our city has undergone under the stewardship of City Manager Peter Iglesias. It's with great concern that I address you in light of the recent attempts by a city commissioner to remove Mr. Iglesias from his position. Let me be unequivocally clear. Peter Iglesias embodies the essence of integrity and honesty. Throughout his tenure, he has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the betterment of our city and its residents. His dedication to transparency and accountability has set a standard of excellence that has not only been recognized locally but has garnered national acclaim. These achievements are not the result of mere chance, but rather the product of his vision, determination, and hard work. Instead of focusing so much time and energy on divisive politics, it's incumbent upon our elected officials to come together and prioritize the needs of our community. Leadership is not about tearing down those who have proven themselves, but rather about working collaboratively to build upon their success. If you're incapable of collaborating and compromising, you're incapable of leading. So, I urge our elected officials to set aside their differences and do what is right for the people of Coral Gables. Lead by example. Demonstrate that you can work together for the greater good and stand behind Peter Iglesias as he continues to lead our city to even greater heights. Mayor Lago, Vice Mayor Anderson, I know where you stand and I have no doubt you will do the right thing today. Commissioner Fernandez, you've made your position clear since day one. I don't agree, but at least you're clear. Commissioner Castro, I don't know you well, but I look forward to the moment when you demonstrate to your daughters that you're willing to take a stand on a position, even if it's in contrast to Commissioner Fernandez. Do away with that narrative. Forge your own path. Last, but perhaps most importantly today, Commissioner Menendez, I've always known you to be a good man, a man of faith. You know Peter Iglesias. You know that every word I have said about him is true. You know he's a good man. You know he's an honorable man. You know he's trustworthy. You know he's exceedingly competent. In short, you know better. I ask you to speak up. We wouldn't be here today if you would stand up and make clear where you stand. You've worked with the City Manager for several years now. You know who he is. You know what he's about. No one else should need to tell you; you've been here. He's been accused of insubordination, but no one can point to a single issue where this Commission has voted on an item and he has refused to execute the Commission's will. Not one. Instead, his mere attempt to explain that he serves at the will of the Commission, which requires three votes, not two, has been miscast as insubordination. But it sounds more like sour grapes. When there was three of you

who had the vote to increase salaries and give yourselves a car allowance, he executed. He may or may not have agreed, but he executed. I didn't hear anything about insubordination then. But you're a good man, Commissioner Menendez. You know better. Being a good man and a man of faith, it's about walking the walk every day, no matter how hard it is. Your actions today, presiding over the future of this good man, will echo loudly and forever be a part of your legacy. Do the right thing, get busy leading, and stand united in support of the City Manager, Peter Iglesias, and the incredible staff that he directs every day. This is a hard job. When things go well, commissioners pat themselves on the back and they take victory laps. When things go bad, they throw city managers under the bus. I got news for you. He's done a great job and everything that's gone well under each of your tenures is partly because of him. And everything that maybe you think didn't is partly because of you. So, let's own that, let's do the right thing. Let's work together. These people all expect more from you. Wherever they fall on this issue, we expect you guys to work together and do the right thing. Stand up and let everybody know where you stand. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Vice Mayor. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Laureano Cancio.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Laureano Cancio: Good morning, members of the Chamber. I'll be brief in what I have to say about this. First of all, let me tell you a little bit about my background. I think that might be critical. I am a 23-year resident of Coral Gables. I'm also a Peter Pan member. My understanding is Mr. Iglesias is a Peter Pan member himself. I think I came before him, though, because I came on March 16, 1961, one of the first ones to come. My background in this city goes back to 1962. Actually, back in 1961, when I came, I used to play at the Youth Center for all those years and so maybe I might have played with Mr. Menendez, so we go back that far. I don't remember that, but I mean, it could have happened. I've been an attorney for 40 years. I'm licensed in three states, currently licensed in New York, New Jersey, and Florida. I have previous experience. I also have a master's degree in management from a very good school. So, my experience is extensive in nonprofit. I worked at Columbia University as assistant director for labor relations. I worked at the New York Botanical Garden as the director of human resources. I also worked at Ramapo State College. I didn't work there. I was a member of their board of trustees. And we took up issues regarding performance, performance of managers. And I think this is what it's become. I think somebody mentioned at the very beginning that this was an analysis of Mr. Iglesias's performance. Obviously, I have some experience dealing with Mr. Iglesias, and that's why I'm here, to address my experience when I had to deal with Mr. Iglesias. Before I get there, I'd like to say that the City of Coral Gables has a serious problem. I don't know if you're all aware of it, but it does have a serious problem. We have a lot of people who were upper middle class who came and bought their homes here in Coral Gables, and then all of a sudden, they got to be 65 and they retired. And all of a sudden, they have difficulties making their payments on their

houses or making adjustments, you know, changes to their houses, improvements to their houses. And so -- and many of them have a trust on their estates and their homes and they can't sell their homes, they can't leave because the family figures, hey, I want to make sure daddy doesn't sell the home and I get my piece. So, I think the Administration overall in Coral Gables is the fact that they think that everyone in Coral Gables is rich. They look around, they say, the average home here in Coral Gables is worth \$1.5 million. They have the money to pay, and so we make them pay. You talk to the police department, many of them make over \$100,000, and they think, hey, I've got to have more. The fire department, the maintenance people who, even the guy who picks up my garbage tells me, go talk to the City Manager and make sure he gives me a raise. The people who pick up my garbage work seven days a week, every day of the year, and you figure, oh, that's wonderful. No, it isn't wonderful. It just reflects that the contracts with the unions in Coral Gables have been incorrectly negotiated. They were incorrectly negotiated because all those people working on holidays make double time in addition to their regular pay. So, you've got somebody, of course, he wants to work on a holiday. He's not doing it for the good of the city. And then I also found out that people who ask for funds, one day the firemen were asking for funds on Bird Road. And then I find out they were earning overtime. Their regular salary, they were collecting money for some cause that they figured was significant and they were getting paid overtime. So, this is some examples that they don't really take into account the fact that the citizens of the city just don't have the funding that they think they have. They have restraints, family restraints. They want to leave their home to their kids, you know. We -- I think Mr. Menendez knows quite well why that movie that you show at the City of Coral Gables Theater, so many of the older people go there, because they have financial problems. Why do they go to the exercise over here by the palace? Because it's free. And I know lots of them who do that. And they might sympathize with that. So, the bottom line in that particular long story is the fact that I did have a case similar to that with Mr. Iglesias. Not too long ago, I had to cut the, you know, the trees in my yard. There were too many of them, and I had to cut them. You know, I just had to do it. And the gardeners have gotten used to charging people a lot of money to do things around Coral Gables. They figure the going rate is so much, that's how much you're going to have to pay. Well, and then on top of that, they don't want to do what you want to do. So, I had brought in my own gardener and I told him exactly what I wanted him to do. So, after we got done with that, we put the trees, whatever we cut, the branches and forth, right on the side of the road, and maintenance came and picked it up and took it away. So, the next week I did the same thing. I cut some more trees and I put it there. Well, you know, like a month later I get a bill. It says you owe \$500. I said, what do you mean you owe \$500? It's supposed to be free. So, then of course, I call the City and say this is insane. I pay \$800 a year to pick up my shrubs, and here I have to pay \$500. So, that's the way it is. The idea is you're rich, you have lots of money, no problem, no problem. Unfortunately, I called Mr. Iglesias. I didn't call him, I wrote him -- well, let's put it in sequence. I spoke to the person in charge. I followed chain of command. I called the person in charge, and the person in charge said, good luck, go fly a kite. So, then I wrote a letter to Mr. Iglesias and the ombudsman of the City. Then well, the Manager called me back and said, look, we have an offer for you. You notice it's an offer. They're doing me a favor here. It said we're only going to have you pay for one pickup rather than two pickups, just so you pay \$250. I said, well, I shouldn't pay anything. I shouldn't

pay anything. Because of two reasons. The City never notified me that they had this policy. I've been here for 22 years and no one ever came to see me about this. I'd thrown it in the garbage and it never happened. Well, that's the way it is. So, then they said -- I figure, well, you know, you're not going to go anywhere. Just take the offer. I never got a call from Mr. Iglesias. I never got a call from the ombudsman regarding this particular issue. No calls, just an offer, take it or leave it. If you don't like it, you know -- the implication is, if you don't take the offer, you're going to pay \$500. Well, it seems like a minor thing, but it isn't, because it reflects on his managerial techniques. And you know, there's a very old story about a famous admiral who was out in the Pacific and he had this crew sitting next to him, and they sit there and they have something to eat. And after they have their breakfast, he calls his HR person back and he says, I want to make sure you write in that person's -- in that officer's, you know, file that he had his eggs and he put salt on them without first finding out whether the eggs had salt. He has no managerial ability. A person who goes out and makes a decision without even trying to find out what the deal is is not -- cannot be promoted within the U.S. Navy. I always remember that because this comes right to the case of Mr. Iglesias. I never got a call from Mr. Iglesias, even though I wrote him an extensive letter, it was like four pages long, outlining specifically what was the problem. I never got the ombudsman. Well, what does he do? Does he ever call anybody back? It took me hours to type this letter. He sends me the person back, this is the offer. Okay, the fact is that what we have here, it was -- I was complaining about something that was not ethical. I was complaining about something that the citizens of the City should not be submitted to. And that is, we pay \$800, \$900 to have our garbage picked up. And they have tried to take that right away. And they were unsuccessful doing that, thanks to the Commissioners, the ones that everybody criticized, Ariel Fernandez and Ms. Castro and Mr. Menendez. Thanks to them, they didn't take it away. Thank you. Thank you for your help. But anyway, the bottom line was that they didn't -- he should have called and asked, hey, what is the problem? The problem is basically, what I wanted to address to him, what I addressed in the memo was, you should change the procedure. Not try to bargain with me and give me a deal. I'm not looking for a deal. This is incorrectly administered. You're doing it wrong. If it's wrong, it's wrong. Don't just -- because the garbage guy who called me up or the guy in the maintenance said, oh, everybody in the City complains when this happens. When you first find out, you got to pay extra money for them to pick it up. Just what is this? And they pay it up and they get used to it. They get used to it. That's the refrain. Well, you have money. You all have lots of money. Pay it. It doesn't really matter. It's not going to hurt you. You've got lots of money. Unfortunately, lots of us are not real estate developers. We're not, you know, representing people in buying properties, and we get commissions for that, which are substantial, 6 percent of the commission. Sometimes it could be a million dollars, sometimes it could be \$500,000. Unfortunately, a lot of people -- a lot of us don't do that. So, we don't have that source of side income coming in. You understand that. Mr. Lago, you understand. You're in real estate, you know how that works, right?

Mayor Lago: I know how that works. Thank you.

Mr. Cancio: Yeah, I know you do. Well, in any case -- in any case, so we're talking about -- we're talking about a job that Mr. Iglesias has that pays him almost \$300,000 a year. We ought to pay him more money. There was a guy who came up here and said, give him more, your money, not his money. He didn't say, yeah, I'm going to write a check for you to pay salary. No, no, we should pay more money. Now, all I know, I checked it out, the governor of the state of Florida makes \$134,000 a year, but we pay him \$300,000, more than twice as much as the governor. And a U.S. senator makes \$174,000. My god, he almost makes as much as the president of the United States. Well, I understand, Mr. Iglesias. You're really good. You're a really good guy, so maybe we should pay you more. Maybe we should pay you more than the president. Let's give him a raise. So, I want to conclude, because I'm going to keep you here all day, because I can talk a lot, and I don't want to do that. I don't want to do that. I don't want to do that. You know, I had a medical problem once, and I went to a local doctor here, a very good medical doctor, very good medical doctor, and he gave me some medicine, and the medicine wasn't any good. I said, doctor, you know, this isn't working, and you're the best guy in town. What do I do? He says, oh, keep taking it. It's better to take this medicine than not to take anything at all. So, I did that for a while. I said, I just got to be crazy. This doesn't make any sense. So, you know what I did? I got -- I told the doctor, look, change the medicine. Because if you're married to somebody you don't like, and you find out you don't like them, you have a choice. Either take the medicine for the rest of your life or move on and get a different wife. Some people keep on taking the same wife, you know? I happen to be lucky. I've been married for 49 years. I didn't have to -- I didn't have that dilemma, but some people do. But in any case, the doctor said, just take -- keep taking this medicine. And I said, this doesn't make any sense. I got on a plane; you know where I went? To the Mayo Clinic, the best hospital in the world for the last 10 years, in Minnesota. I flew up there, cost me \$5,000 to go up there. But you know what? The doctor here was giving me the wrong medicine, the wrong medicine. And it's a good thing I went there because they cured me. The bottom line, how does this apply to Mr. Iglesias? Well, you know, everybody says he's such a great man. No one could be better than him. This is not -- nonsense. There are lots and lots of people. I worked in HR for many years. I know about recruiting. You can find a lot of better people for \$300,000. Let me tell you, if you put an ad in the paper, the line would be going out from here to Kingdom Come, to downtown Miami. There are lots and lots of people. You can't just be saying, oh, he's the best, just because you're used to it, just because he has lots of friends, just because he helped you at some point fix your own problems. No, I would say that's what the Commission has to do. I mean, Mr. Iglesias might be doing a great job, but you know, what we have is we have greater expectations. The more money you make, the higher the expectation. If Mr. Iglesias was making \$100,000, we would say, okay, we're getting what we pay for. If we're paying \$300,000, it doesn't work that way.

Mayor Lago: May I interject? I apologize.

Mr. Cancio: Sure.

Mayor Lago: You've been speaking for 13 minutes.

Mr. Cancio: You've had plenty of people supporting your position, okay, who spoke for longer than that, but I don't have anything else to say because I think everybody gets the drift of what I'm trying to say, including you.

Mayor Lago: As always, you're a gentleman. Thank you so much. I appreciate you.

Mr. Cancio: Okay, thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Carl Leon Prime.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Prime, great to see you again.

Carl Leon Prime: Alright, good morning, again, Mr. Mayor, Madam Vice Mayor, members of the Commission, Mr. City Manager, Madam City Attorney, and Mr. City Clerk. I and many members of my community are distressed by the turn from civility that once was a hallmark of this esteemed body. Some members have forgotten to place principles before personalities in service to this city. The current move to replace a distinguished public servant who has brought stability and clear direction to the operation of this municipality is in direct opposition to the adage, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. A spirit of cooperation for the greater good must be reestablished, consistently employed, returning the City Beautiful to a place of eminence within the state. The removal of the City Manager would plunge the City in a state of catastrophic chaos similar to what existed prior to his appointment. The ship may not be on calm seas. However, there is a firm and confident hand at the helm as we head to the port of world-class city greatness. The Manager has been responsive to needs of this community with an eye towards fiscal responsibility and common sense direction towards accomplishing projects. Making the sausage is not beautiful. The result is the goal. At this time, failure to retain the City Manager would not be in the best interest of this city. Work together for the common good. And remember, you are but trusted servants. Results, not personalities, is what counts. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Mr. Prime.

City Clerk Urquia: Letty Collar?

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you for being here.

Letty Collar: Letty Collar and I reside at 440 Sevilla Avenue. I moved here from Colorado in 2015, and I remember when Mr. Iglesias was appointed in 2018. And in those short three years, I saw the changes that he brought to the city, the progression in a positive way. And I'm not here with a lot of big words or a lot of history or personal interaction with Mr. Iglesias. I'm just a resident of Coral Gables that appreciates when somebody does their job, they do it well, and they do it in the best interest of the community, not for their own gratification financially or otherwise.

I understand that not everybody is in agreement with people that are in leadership positions. Sometimes we don't agree, but we have to respect some of the changes that take place. It's part of, you know, what happens. But I understand that Mr. Iglesias has overseen municipal government of more than 51,000 residents and 1,100 employees in the last 10 years. And he has an operating budget of \$195 million and has been a top administrator reporting to the Mayor and the four City Commissioners. I also understand that you have an incredible experience managing people professionally in both the -- experience in both private and public sectors and that is something that shows in how you conduct business on a day-to-day basis. In my humble opinion, I would like for you to stay in your position to continue to help Coral Gables grow in the right direction. We're not always going to agree with you a hundred percent, but I speak for a lot of residents who are not here today because not everybody has the opportunity to come and be able to voice themselves, but I talked to a lot of folks around the city and I have never heard anybody say anything really negative about you in the time that I've been here, and it's, you know, almost 10 years now. So, I don't really understand the sense of urgency to get this position replaced in the manner that has happened in the last 10 months. If there was something really wrong with what you have done as a manager, I think over time it would have accumulated, but it seems like all of a sudden in the last 10 months, there's been a drive to move you out of your position, and I would like to understand the reasons why, because they're not clear to the residents, and that is important to us, because we are in a position to vote for the next round of Commissioners and we would like to understand what's right and what's wrong. So, I thank you for your time and I hope that the right decision is made today.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. We appreciate you coming.

City Clerk Urquia: Xavier Durana.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Xavier Durana: Good morning, Xavier Durana, resident at 1111 Aduana and business owner at 333 Palermo. Just real quick, you know, I've been a lifelong resident of Coral Gables since I was six years old. Coral Gables High graduate, Gables business owner. We -- our company has our offices here. We do most of our work in Coral Gables. I sit on the Historic Preservation Board. You know, I kind of just want to be quick because I know some people here have taken a while, and respect for everybody else. You know, I think recently we've noticed a lot of toxic environment here on this board. I'd like to see that, you know, change. I don't want this to become, you know, City of Miami politics. I'd like us, you know, to be able to work together. With regards to Peter Iglesias, I have worked personally with Peter Iglesias and I've always found him to be extremely professional and an individual with a high integrity and standards for business. He doesn't bend the rules for anyone and I admire him for the courage to do that and all my interactions with him have been, you know, straightforward and he's always been a great guy. So, I hope you reconsider and keep Mr. Iglesias working for the City. It's a privilege to have him. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Venny Torre.

Mayor Lago: Good morning. Thank you for being here.

Venny Torre: Mr. Mayor, Commissioners, Venny Torre, residing at 450 Valencia, offices at 208 Andalusia. I'm here to state my unwavering support for City Manager, Peter Iglesias, who I've known for probably 25 years. I've known Peter since he was a structural engineer and I've known him to be a man of integrity. It's been a long time, Peter. You're a good man and I definitely support you. I also support staff and this is an issue because I believe that the morale of the City is in a real bad place. I really, really do. I've been here for a long time. I've seen many, many things happen. I've seen many commissioners. I've seen five to six city managers. For those who say this is easy to replace, I beg to differ. This is a very tough job and if you guys embark on finding a new city manager, good luck. This is something that I would not suggest you do. Back to the issue of morality, the City staff is a great group of people. I've had the privilege to work with almost all directors, every staff member from the top to bottom, and I tell you that they're professional, they're ethical, they're by the book, and they treat everybody with courtesy, and I've seen that through the years. And people that say otherwise, it's not true. It's not true. So, I was reading the paper yesterday, two comments came back. Commissioner Castro, Commissioner Menendez, you said you were open-minded and you had not made up your mind. That's what I read. I would hope that is true. I hope you're asking that that is true. There's a lot of people here speaking, but what Mr. Bermello said is true. You're galvanizing the people who have been quiet, have been sidelined. I'm here speaking out loud because times are changing and I don't like what's going on in the City. What's going on in this Commission is taking my city in the wrong direction and I'm very upset about it. That's why I'm here. This is not something that should be happening. This is very serious and I hope you take it as such. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir, for being here.

City Clerk Urquia: Doris Thomson.

Mayor Lago: Mayor, good morning. Thank you for joining us today.

Dorothy Thomson: I thank you. Sitting too long and I'm not sure that I would make it from there to here.

Commissioner Menendez: I know the feeling.

Ms. Thomson: My name is Dorothy Thomson and I reside at 2600 Cardena Street for over 30 years. And you might call me -- if this were a trial here today, you might term me as a reluctant witness, because I wasn't planning to come. I'd rather be sitting at home and watching the

proceedings on my television, because the position I'm in is that I like all of you. And I think all of you, all of you, every single one of you is doing the job that you're supposed to be doing and doing it with great accomplishment. So, I'm not taking any stand here, or any side, if you wish. I do not wish to do that. I am here only because of Peter Iglesias. Peter Iglesias is an icon, I would think, in his own right here in the City for so many years. It has been 23 years this spring since I left the Commission, having served over 16 years on the Commission. And so, I'm not privy to what's going on, you know, in the, as far as the Commission actions are concerned, I stay apprised of everything and I stay involved, as you well know. However, I do have to say that based on my experience with my interaction with the City Manager Peter Iglesias, then as an employee of the City, as a chief engineer here in the City, he is remarkable. It is not even the adjective that I should use. You know, I said he's an icon himself because he's an engineer by profession, so he really knows the nuts and bolts of the City. And I say that with true meaning. He does know his nuts and bolts of all the various buildings that are put up in the City of Coral Gables. And I personally know that he was always the individual -- in the City position that he was in, he was the go-to individual on anything having to do with the building. And you've heard Willy Bermello, an acclaimed architect in the city, come up here and say the same things. He's very well respected. He's always been well respected. I still respect him in that capacity and I respect him as a city manager, even though he never was the city manager while I was serving in office. Peter Iglesias is a fine gentleman, and I know we do not want to besmirch his reputation in any regard whatsoever. However, we're sitting here today in a different situation, a different scenario altogether. So, I left my home, and I came here today, and I started to think, why is this happening? And Commissioner Fernandez has every right to bring this up today. He's a commissioner. He has every right. I did not fault you one bit. When I was on the Commission, I had different problems at times with my city manager. I never brought it forward the way you are. That's a different way you want to do it. But it's not always easy, and we don't know it. It's a different world altogether, government, and everything is up front for the community and for the public, but there's so many things happening in the background that none of us understands unless you're actually there and with it. Something was said about Commissioner Castro, you know, not being in much experience or whatever. Yes, I didn't have any experience either when I first came on the Commission in 1979, but I did my -- I learned my lessons along the way and she is doing the same thing. Every one of you is unique. You are unique. I admire Vice Mayor Anderson with the way she dissects her items that she brings before the Commission like a real lawyer, which she is. She's a wonderful attorney and I can tell, even listening to her, she dissects it and gets to her position. And you all should have a very congenial and very happy, good atmosphere and to get things done. That's why we have such a wonderful reputation in the City. You know, if I may, I'm being -- aligning with something that happened. Did you all watch the Super Bowl the other night? Yeah. That was something else again, wasn't it? Well, why do I say that? It's because, in a way, I can bring -- I can align something in my thinking. Remember when their favorite -- one of the favorite players, Kelce, came up and he bumped his coach. Now, I don't know, did you bump the commissioner here or something along the way? But you know, the coach did not flinch. He just shrugged it off, if you will, and I'm sure he had much to say afterwards to that player in his private domain, but not in public. We're in public today. And I don't know, again, I don't know really

the reason why we have this on the agenda, nor should I, because this is between, this is in your commission rumination and so forth. However, if it is that, I would suggest that we go back and try to get this old salt behind us in your offices, which is proper, you and he. And I know Kirk is there, always there, to fall back on him, to come up with some solution, of course. But if it's to the point of Peter Iglesias, you know, failing in his job, I have never seen it. I don't believe it. I think it is a momentary thing that should be taken care of before it goes any further. What is today? Today is Tuesday the 13th. Let's not make it Friday the 13th, Mr. Iglesias, today. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Mayor Lago: Madam Mayor, thank you for your guidance.

City Clerk Urquia: Raul Mas.

Mayor Lago: And always being present when you're needed. Thank you so much. It's an honor to have you here today. Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Raul Mas.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, Mr. Mas. How are you, sir?

Raul Mas: Good morning, Vince. How are you, sir? Raul Mas. I've been a long-time resident of Coral Gables. I live now at 610 Vilabella Avenue in Coral Gables. My first residence in Coral Gables was at 3111 Coconut Grove Drive, which is now the parking lot for Coral Gables Hospital, and I've been here on and off ever since. Following Dorothy Thomson is a very difficult thing to do. A woman of extraordinary grace and intellect and clear thinking, reminding all of us, I think, of the importance of civility, of the importance of sometimes you've got to take a hit, and you know, roll with the punches type of stuff. And you know, and I think about that and I look at everybody on this dais up here, and you know, I consider everybody up here, you know, not just friends but neighbors. You are in fact our elected leaders. Ariel, I've known you for a long time. I consider you a friend. Kirk, you know, you -- our family goes back a long time. Vince, Rhonda, I mean, Peter, I don't know you that well, but I mean, the few interactions I've had with you over the years have been fairly pleasant. And I've never had an issue that has required your direct attention. Usually the City of Coral Gables and the staff of the City of Coral Gables is able to take care of those issues. And I am no stranger to the City as a rabble-rouser, as somebody who is willing to challenge the City, who is willing to, you know, take out the proverbial sword and do battle. But you know, I'm really taken by the comments of Mr. Bermello and Dorothy Thomson, and you know, not everything is worth fighting over, quite frankly. And you know, we've got a terrific community here. And if I was in your position, I would want to have a city manager that challenges me on occasion, that, you know, holds us accountable, and probably going to butt heads every once in a while. But I guess I'm here to say that, you know, the last time that we replaced a city manager, I think it was for a very good reason. You know, we had a city manager that had taken on our esteemed police chief, Ed Hudak, and that was a battle worth fighting. I don't know

if this is one that requires, you know, the removal of the city manager. And so therefore, I sort of want to echo the comments of Mayor Thomson and just sort of say, figure out a way to fix this, man. I mean, you know, there's some issues here. There's some arguments. Maybe a censure is warranted. I don't know. I mean, I don't know what the rules call for here. But, you know, I just don't see it. I mean, you know, why -- you know, when I first heard that Peter Iglesias was going to be the city manager, I didn't even know who the guy was. You know, he's worked for the City for a long period of time. He's an engineer. I said, well, that's good. This is a guy who fixes potholes, is going to take care of business, is going to just, you know, follow whatever the Commission tells him to do. And I think that's basically the way I sort of view him, someone who's done his job. But again, you know, Ariel has the right to sort of bring this issue up. And I just call for some civility and some figuring out a way how to get past this difficult patch that we're in, because I think we're all blessed to live in this community. We're all friends. We're neighbors. And let's figure out a way to make this work. That's it. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Saralane Conde.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Conde, good morning.

Saralane Conde: Good morning. I'm Saralane Conde. I'm from 228 Alesio Avenue. I just wanted to say that I noticed that there were a lot of people in support of the City Manager, but I did notice that they were all related to the development industry, either directly or indirectly. I think we need a city manager who's -- and he is responsive to them, I believe that he is, I believe that he answers their calls. But I think we need a city manager that's responsible to all of the residents, not just those who are connected. And like I said, a lot of the people who spoke were connected, and I'm sure that they get great response, but that's not all of us. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Javier Banos.

Javier Banos: Thank you. Good morning, everyone. Javier Banos, 1253 Anastasia Avenue. One of the things that I want to remind the Commission, well, specifically the Mayor, back when he first ran for Commission, I was one of the people that walked the City for him and made sure, along with many other -- there was a large contingency -- had him elected to be commissioner. And he confided with me afterwards about his opinion about City Manager once he was an elected official. And he told me about the positive of what he believed Mr. Salerno had done, then he told me about the negatives of what he believed Mr. Salerno had done. And he ultimately led the effort to terminate Mr. Salerno. He didn't believe he was guiding the city in the right way. And I think Mr. Nicolas Cabrera has illustrated one of the many reasons for which Mr. Salerno perhaps was not the best person to lead our city. Subsequent to that, we had Ms. Cathy, hard time saying her last name.

Unidentified Speaker: Swanson.

Mr. Banos: Swanson, there we are. And Ms. Swanson also wasn't to his satisfaction, the proper manager for the City of Coral Gables. There were defects, there were issues with the chief, which we all supported at the time and all the items that (INAUDIBLE). So, the point that I am trying to make is managers come and go, okay. There's always -- there is -- there's always a change for one reason or another. We've heard a parade of horribles about if Mr. Iglesias were to depart, how, you know, how the wheels are going to come apart and the City will go to shambles. And my experience has been not only in this city, but in other municipalities, that that doesn't really ring true, okay. Leadership does matter. Leadership does have a change in the effects, but at the time, I think Mr. Salerno was called by the then City -- the City Mayor that he was irreplaceable, indispensable, something along those lines. Okay, he was -- they were effusive in his -- in their accolades as to Mr. Salerno. And Mr. Lago was one of the people that led the charge eventually for cause to eliminate Mr. Salerno. I'm sure Mr. Fernandez and Commissioner Castro and the other members of the Commission who may vote one way or another today have their reasons for which they believe that Mr. Iglesias is not in the best position to lead our City as -- in his position as manager. And I'm not here to disparage him. I think I try to make a point to say that he's a capable person and he has done what he believes is in the best interest of the City. I think the complaint has been by many residents that I've heard is that his mode of thinking, his approach to problems, okay, is not, in their perspective, in the best interest of what can -- of what they think the City should go. So, there is a cadre of people who maybe were asleep and were awakened back in April, since we're talking about people being awakened, that responded to that and changed membership of this Commission. And as I've heard the matter said before, elections do have consequences. So, it is the most natural thing that happens in many municipalities that upon there being a change in leadership in the Commission, there is a change in the management. There's nothing overly dramatic that is going on here today. So, with that, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and I wish you luck.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Daniel Ravicher. Jose "Pepi" Cancio.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Jose "Pepi" Cancio: Good morning. Thank you for the education from everyone before me. I appreciate learning more about what is going on. My experience with Peter Iglesias is none, but I'm in the construction industry, the pumping rental, and I only heard negative things about Mr. Iglesias only because he was tough, he was safe, and it was hard to deal with him because safety was his priority and the people that put cranes up had to deal with him and he was the most strict of everybody. I'd say my name is Jose "Pepi" Cancio. I live at 198 Caoba Court in Coral Gables. I own three other properties in Cocoplum. I love this country. I love Coral Gables. I hope that my kids one day can achieve the success to live in Coral Gables, the City Beautiful. I dislike a

few things that I've heard. Number one, I don't know much of you guys, but Mr. Fernandez, when you first got elected, one of your priorities was to raise your salary. I think that's disrespectful. As a business owner, I think that you should prove yourself first and not bring chaos to the city. That's my opinion. So, I suggest that we take a step back and be cordial to one another and let Mr. Iglesias continue to do his job. And Mr. Menendez, it seems like on the salary thing, I think you guys deserve a proper salary. I don't want to work for free. I don't think you should work for free. I think you should get paid well. I think we live in a great community that has money. I think people that cut too much of their trees, they should, you know, do the right thing and wait one week and the next week. But really, your landscaper is supposed to take things like that. So, I hear all these things, but it's hard to please everybody. People come here to complain more than anything, and that bothers me. People are not, you know, helpful. They just take forever. So, I think maybe you should raise the time a little bit, and people should be more respectful about the time for everybody else that comes here. So, Mr. Menendez, I think you might be the middle vote there, and if you don't have your mind made up, I think maybe you should make a motion and save everybody's time. So, anyway, thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Samuel Lawson.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Samuel Lawson: I'm here humbly. I've been here before and spoken. Sometimes I want to be careful that I'm not here to just hear myself speak, that in fact I'm here for a good reason. So, the thing that I'm here for today is I'm triggered by what I think is a lie, what I think is deception, and what I think is unfair, and I think I owe it to my community to stand here and say some things that are quite actually uncomfortable to say. So, let me start with good morning, City Manager. I'd like to start by apologizing to you for what we, the citizens of Coral Gables, are either directly or indirectly putting you through today. I've reviewed various online articles and comments and read emails between yourself and Commissioner Fernandez, and I've seen nothing at all that remotely resonates with insubordination. Second, I inquired about your credentials and found that you are both a structural engineer and a building official, a very rare combination and highly difficult credentials and experience to achieve. And I've seen your salary online, and it's basically in ballpark with a mid-level vice president in a South Florida corporation, which seems to be the minimum job level you would likely have in the corporate world, given your educational background, your years of work experience, and the fact that you have a large team of directors and managers reporting directly to you. I don't see that salary even remotely out of line. I've also met with you personally on City issues, and you were very responsive to me, professional, and had an honest and a humble personality. I'm sorry. Next, good morning, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners. I'd like to start by asking the question, who's really on the hot seat today? Who's really on trial? Is it the City Manager who has a great résumé and can easily go out and get another extremely high-paying job? Or is it the members of the Commission who have unethically

fabricated this issue and in a disgraceful attempt at publicly humiliating the City Manager, actually not humiliated him but humiliated themselves by not only making slanderous lies, but also by the unprofessional, tactless, below-bar, open delivery of these things. The educated, or let's say the majority, I would think, of the educated professional citizenry of Coral Gables, I'm sure are quite offended. This would never be the process in a corporate environment, in a legal environment, or any professional environment, and only demonstrates the lack of education, experience, manners, and especially lack of decency that we are witnessing today. I'd like to start with a few observations before making a couple final comments. In 2023, a Commissioner meeting agenda item was brought forth to move the election date for the City Commission from April to November to coincide with the general election cycle. The idea was that considerably more citizens would vote in November and that the vote, therefore, for commissioner would be more reflective of the Coral Gable citizenry. There was a considerable public participation and comments at that meeting which I attended and spoke at as well. I would estimate that approximately 80 percent of the people physically present and online were for moving the election dates to December. Eighty percent. Yet Commissioner Ariel Fernandez, Commissioner Menendez, and Commissioner Castro voted against it, contrary to the majority public demand that day. Why? I would assume it was for a self-serving interest. And here's why. The same three commissioners, as was stated by several other speakers here today, not long after that, subsequently voted to give themselves a raise. I am not sure how this is even allowed legally in our city. This is the most obvious example of a conflict of interest imaginable. Can you imagine if you or I could just give your own self a raise when you like? Not your boss, you give yourself your own raise. It is so obviously unethical to do so, so in fact embarrassing to do. Where's the shame? I noticed immediately thereafter one of the commissioners upgraded to a Mercedes. Is that not a conflict? In fact, this embarrassing conflict reached its way all the way to Tallahassee, where I have heard that certain Florida legislators refused to even meet with these three commissioners on their trip to Tallahassee. I heard stated that they will not even provide funding to the City of Coral Gables until those salary increases were reversed. I'm not sure if that's true, but that's what I've heard. Now after this, despite the incredible disgust so many of us as citizens witnessed and felt watching this, the City Manager, Peter Iglesias, against his own sentiments, did in fact subordinate himself to the Commission and instituted the raises. Next, I'd like to bring up a couple of email strings between Commissioner Ariel Fernandez, City employees, Commissioner Manager -- City Manager Peter Iglesias, and the other Commissioners that shed light on what's going on behind the scenes in Coral Gables, particularly, Mr. Fernandez's unprofessional, aggressive, out-of-order approach bullying the City Manager, Peter Iglesias. There's an email string on January the 29th -- and you can find -- I encourage everybody who's online watching and everybody here today that's interested, go to [aesopsgables.substack.com](https://aesopsgables.substack.com). Don't go to [aesopsgables.com](https://aesopsgables.com), that's a kitchen designer in New Mexico. Go to [aesopsgables.substack.com](https://aesopsgables.substack.com), and there's several copies of emails here that demonstrate character. So, on January 29th, there was a City employee who wrote to the Commission on the Fritz & Franz providing an update. Commissioner Ariel Fernandez was outraged. These are some of his words. "Where's the Manager?" With everybody online in the email. "Where's the Manager? Nowhere in this email is he mentioned. Why? If there were concerns, why did the Manager not address these prior to offering an opportunity to renew on

August the 3rd? Is this directive being taken seriously?" The Commissioner -- or the City Manager responded back tactfully with some facts. They were long. I'm not going to go through that right now. It was very, very vanilla, but very factual. Commissioner Ariel Fernandez retorts back, "How often do we check the DBPR for issues with our tenants? Please provide me with all DBPR violations, status reports for all our current tenants." So, the City Manager responds back. This one I will read two small paragraphs. As I mentioned before, we are currently negotiating the lease extension. This is the City Manager's tone and professionalism. As I mentioned before, we are currently negotiating the lease extension with Fritz & Franz properly and rationally, as directed by the City Commission. We are acting appropriately as fiduciaries for the City, as I believe this is the intent of the Commission. He goes on with a lot of details, and then he closes with, "Unfortunately, your continued demands on our incredible staff significantly affect our morale. Please work with me to make our great city even better." You can clearly see a conflict or a contrast in professionalism, demeanor, experience. Now, despite this harassment -- well I said that, extremely professional tone. So, another email string on February the 1st, an email from the City -- from Commissioner Fernandez, again bypassing the chain of command, directly to the City employee, Addys Kuryla, copied to Mr. Iglesias, quote, again, listen to the tone, "Please call me ASAP. FPL is damaging our trees. All work must stop. Mr. Manager, this needs immediate attention." Addys replies back, "I called you," as in called Mr. Fernandez, "but there was no answer. I'm gathering information." There was an email back then from Mr. Fernandez to that employee, Addys, with a copy to the City Manager. "Just informed" -- this is from Ariel -- I'm sorry, Commissioner Fernandez. "Just informed tree cut by our staff in violation of what our Commission requested. I will address this with the City Manager." So, this goes on, and you can see that Mr. Fernandez is bypassing, not only speaking directly to the City Manager, but going directly to his staff. But as we subsequently find out, that tree that was cut was not cut under the circumstances that Ariel was so alarmed about, Mr. --Commissioner Fernandez was so alarmed about. It turns out that it was a monkey pod tree in terminal decay being suffocated by a strangler tree, and the response by the professionals there was best practice, cut the bad limb, cut more as time goes on until the tree dies. There was a photo attached, it was a clean cut, and it had nothing to do with FP&L, but this is the kind of thing going on behind the scenes. So, last, let's move on directly to the issue of insubordination. But before I do that, I'd like to point out that the role of the city manager, from what I understand, does not directly report to any of the commissioners individually, not even the Mayor. The Mayor can, of course, call the City Manager, as can any of the City Commissioners, but the city manager position is a self-determined role from what I understand. It simply carries out the will of the majority of the Commission and their majority votes. So, Commissioner Ariel Fernandez or the Mayor or any of the Commissioners do not have the right to directly demand work from the City Manager any more so than do I or any of you. So, with that in mind, I'd like to read the direct comment by Commissioner Fernandez during the January 23rd meeting in regard to issue F-5. And I quote -- this is from Commissioner Ariel Fernandez -- "The Manager said to me during my last agenda review with him, he only answers to three members of this Commission. In other words, he does not answer to Commissioner Castro or myself. Mr. Manager, there was an election in April and we were elected, and yes, we are your bosses." Again, the tone. And incorrect, right? Clearly, Mr. Iglesias was referring to the collective

majority decision by the Commission and not an individual jab at Commissioner Ariel Fernandez. And again, individually, Commissioner Ariel Fernandez and Commissioner Castro are not the City Manager's boss. Now, on to the now notorious email that went out to Coral Gable citizens from Commissioner Ariel Fernandez on February 5th. With a memo attached, which was somehow shared with the Coral Gables Insider and Cortadito before even getting to the citizens, showing a nefarious machination to spin an untrue, harmful, slanderous narrative on all fronts, declaring that the City Manager was publicly insubordinate and refusing to do with the will of the Commission when he decided not to accept the lease renewal demands as they would have cost the City, as per the City Manager, Mr. Iglesias, \$250,000. So, basically, if you go back and listen to the words of the City Manager, what he says is he says, "I will not do that. But if the Commission wants it, so be it." In other words, he doesn't want to sign a trumped up lease agreement that would cost us \$250,000. But if the City wants it, he'll do it. Where in any of that, where in any of that do you hear insubordination? What I hear instead is good fiduciary management.

Mayor Lago: If I may, Mr. Lawson, will you bring it in for a landing?

Mr. Lawson: I will land it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lawson: So, final thing to say, I think we, as citizens, should strongly consider recalling Commissioner Fernandez for even bringing this series of lies and defamatory remarks to the Commission agenda. But at the minimum, we should immediately work on the recall of any commissioner that votes -- that does not vote no against terminating the City Manager. So, in other words, I'm steering away from these soft landings where we've seen sometimes by Commissioner Menendez a kind of a negotiated extension, which is kind of like wiggling your way out of it. So, we should either see a no or a yes. And if you vote -- if you don't vote no, we need to strongly consider why are we even tolerating this and what is the process for recall. And I know that there are people out there talking about it and looking at it, so let's get on it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Andy Murai.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Murai, good morning. Thank you for being here, sir.

Andy Murai: My name is Andy Murai. I currently serve as chair of the Code Enforcement Board. I have served this city for the last 40 years continuously as a board member, coming to the City Hall month after month because I care for the City. And today I'm here sad to see this happen because it's not what the agenda says about the succession of the City Manager. It's the lynching of the City Manager without cause. Just yesterday, I think some of you, or all of you, attended the opening of Fire Station Number 4 under his guidance. With some state money, the City Manager

was able to seek or process or whatever. And that's a reality. Fire Station Number 4 is a reality. Luckily, we stopped -- and I was involved in stopping the previous location, which was a residential home in an awful location, which would have been a major mistake. I was a member of the Blue Ribbon Commission, where we stopped and we have \$4.5 million buried in that courtyard where that (INAUDIBLE) was going to be built in a lot that did not fit and building that was truly not proper for services to be rendered. During the last few years, as you well know, and you more than anything else, Ms. Castro, the Building Department has gone through transformation from paper to electronic, a mammoth job. And the Building Department continued to work and plans continued to be processed and work continued to be done. Some of you might not recall that we built the Public Safety Building. This gentleman here took it upon himself to review the structural plans to make sure that that building was built correctly. This gentleman here went to Tampa to look at the manufacturer of the windows to make sure that those were special windows and make sure that were right. He never told anybody, never told me. I happened to ask, where's Mr. Iglesias? He said, he's doing this and doing that. And today we have the Public Safety Building. I was here, and an hour ago, Mr. Mean was here. We owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Mena. He was the one who finished the Swanson-Fernandez era, where they tried to fire this best police chief that we've ever had in our history. Where he reinstated the zones where there were police cars all over the place. And Mr. Menendez, early on, you might not remember me, we spoke. I did not know you. I was asked to support you. I checked on your background of your youth fair activities and said, this is a good man. I, as you well know, contributed to your campaign. I seek -- more important, I had my friends vote for you. I had my family vote for you because we believe in you and we believe in your rationale in making the right decisions for us. I'm aware of the infighting that's going on between you, Mr. Fernandez, and the Mayor, and Ms. Castro. You know, I'm very pleased to have seen Ms. Castro support the Manager on the second go-around after it was defeated that you wanted to get rid of him the first time around. Mr. Iglesias has performed his duties well with respect to all, Mr. Iglesias has an assistant, Mr. Tony Silió, a fine man to help residents. There's not a day to go by that I don't send somebody to see Mr. Silió and things get done. So, the City is working well. The morale is working well. We have an excellent police chief. Day in and day out. Only the man with his rectitude and fortitude could stand what he had to stand during the Swanson-Fernandez era, where they installed a police chief on top of him. Insane, absolutely insane. What are we doing here today? This man has done the transformation of the Building Department to electronic. This man has got the Fire Station Number 4 open. This man has made sure that the budget is on time, or you know, within the budget. This man has contributed more to the pension fund than is required from 4.5 or whatever. I don't keep track of that. I'm not here every day. This is the first time I've been here in years. I'll be here tomorrow morning again to chair the Code Enforcement to make sure that things get done with respect to all the residents, and at the same time, preserve the Code. I have served to preserve the Gables and preserving the Gables through Code Enforcement. This man has served to preserve the Gables, to install morale, to install good people, you know, under him. We have a true professional, a respectful professional, you know, a true good human being. Why the change? What has he done? What has been so terribly wrong that requires his firing? It's not a succession. We have spent now what, three hours for this? Four hours? You've seen, take notice of what

Willy Bermello said. Take notice of what my mayor said. By all of this going on, you have awakened the silent majority. Coral Gables is not North Gables and the streets abutting Southwest 8th Street. Coral Gables is not the Gables Insider. Coral Gables is a lot of people that perhaps don't get involved, but now after seeing all of this, I receive calls. I said, what is going on? I ask you to put aside your personal feelings, put aside your infighting for the benefit of all of us. Mr. Menendez, we trust you. Thank you, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. I appreciate your service to the City.

City Clerk Urquia: Diane Wells.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Wells, good morning. Thank you for being here.

Diane Wells: Diane Wells. I live at 1310 Coral Way. I'll be brief. I wasn't going to speak, but the reason I'm standing up is I listened to everyone this morning. I do support the measure. I emailed Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson, sorry, Ms. Castro, and also Mr. Menendez. It's about the future for me. And what concerns me about what was said today is that everybody's telling you that the City is going to be in a catastrophe if we don't have Mr. Iglesias in office tomorrow. If he's done the great job that everyone says he has done, we will not have a catastrophe tomorrow. So, this is really about the future. It's about what is our succession plan? Where are we headed? Our future is some of you, but not all of you, because we're all getting older. But we appreciate you being here today, and that each of you is respected today by your children for being here and making decisions. And yes, be open-minded, but show the leadership for our future. And so, what we need is a succession plan. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Harald Neuweg.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir. Thank you for being here. We have your item coming up soon.

Harald Neuweg: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, City Manager, City Attorney. My name is Harald Neuweg, Fritz & Franz Bierhaus. I didn't want to really speak today. I thought it was not my point to come up here and speak. But the name Fritz & Franz Bierhaus came up numerous times in this meeting today. And I would like to tell you thank you for your last decision at the City Commission meeting to give me the three weeks to negotiate with the City. And I'm happy to report, thanks to Alberto Parjus, that we are in basic agreement with the terms of the square footage. It's going to be an amendment to the lease, and we're going to work it out in the next couple of weeks, and I think there's an agenda on here as well. So, thank you very much, and thank you, Ariel Fernandez, for putting this on the agenda three weeks ago. That's why we are at this point with Fritz & Franz Bierhaus here today. Why I'm speaking right now is I wanted to tell you while I believe, and I really don't know, but what I heard today is that

the City Manager is a fantastic person dealing with big development and big business, but maybe he forgot the small business. And the reason I'm saying this, because the issue surrounding Fritz & Franz Bierhaus could have been avoided by him just saying, let's find out the market estimate for Fritz & Franz Bierhaus, and let's sit down with Harald and figure out if he wants it and if he wants to negotiate. And we would not have had this problem with Fritz & Franz Bierhaus over the last five months. And that's why I think, and I'm not here to tell you today what to do, this is not my decision. I know Peter Iglesias when he was assistant city manager, and I never really had a problem with that, but it felt to me, and I mentioned this at the last meeting, he was eminent to get Fritz & Franz Bierhaus out of this place and he didn't really succeed. And I wanted to tell you, it's your decision today what you're going to do regarding the future of Peter Iglesias, but whatever it is, we need to look in the future, not just the big business, the big development, but we also need to look at the family operations, the long-term business development in the City, and hopefully whatever happens today will be a better future for the City of Coral Gables, which I love very much. And I thank you again for letting me speak today. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Chip Withers.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Withers, thank you for being here with us today. Thank you, sir. It's great to have you.

Chip Withers: Chip Withers, 1104 Hardee Road. I want to thank you all. I used to think that weddings and funerals was the only time you saw old friends, but I guess replacement of city managers ranks right up there with it. So, I saw a lot of people here today. I saw a lot of folks that really have worked hard in the 35 years I've been involved with this City and making this a city the way it is. So, I implore you, when the vast majority of them support Peter and his work, it shouldn't fall on deaf ears. But I want to tell you, I did a little personal survey. I don't know actually the number of living mayors and commissioners today. I can tell you that I reached out to seven of them. And the issue of decorum will be discussed another day, but the issue on hand today, I can tell you unequivocally, that every one of them felt that retaining of the City Manager is the right decision. Without hesitation, without thought, and the fraternity that you will be joining as a past commissioner, you know a lot of the things that I know went on that were behind the curtain. A lot of things, a lot of decisions, a lot of discussions, and I'm not talking about breaking rules or violating the Sunshine, but a lot of the issues that you deal with on a daily basis are yours kept in confidence. And there's a lot that goes on that a lot of folks don't know. I don't know all that's going on with this happening right now. I can tell you that personally it's disappointing to me. We've had issues in the past, huge issues in the past, that we have been able to resolve quietly and systematically, but to bring in, I guess, some of the political ramifications that I'm seeing involved in this, it is very discouraging to me. Each one of you obviously have the right to make your decision. If I were to handicap this, I know that it's going to rest on Kirk. And I'm not disparaging Commissioner Fernandez or Commissioner Castro. All of you who have been publicly and have told me one way or the other how you feel. Kirk, it's a big decision. And I hope that you have thought, I know you've prayed about it, and I encourage you to put any of the

political you know what aside and make the decision that is best for the City of Coral Gables. Thank you very much, y'all, and look forward to the deliberations.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, I'm going to go to Zoom next. First speaker is Enrique Bernal.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Bernal, good afternoon.

City Clerk Urquia: He is not unmuting, so I'm going to go to the second speaker, it's Sheryl Gold.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Gold, good afternoon.

Sheryl Gold: Okay. Good afternoon, Mayor and Commissioners. Sheryl Gold, residing at 721 Biltmore Way. Thank you, Commissioner Fernandez, for placing this item on the agenda. I know that this is not a result of any personal relationship you may or may not have with the City Manager. Coral Gables is a tale of two cities: The one presented by this Administration and its proponents today, and the real one that exists behind the smoke and mirrors. I could speak for hours about my personal experiences as an engaged resident during the past eight years on multiple issues, including, but not limited to, the wrongful upzoning of my neighborhood, the ongoing loss of resident on-street parking, the City's failure to address flooding, mitigate urban heat islands, plant trees, public safety issues, traffic calming, historic preservation, and widespread demolitions and overdevelopment. Instead, I'm going to make this very short today. Residents have been ignored, dismissed, disrespected, obstructed, insulted, and even lied to. I've been considered a nuisance and an adversary when I've come to the City with solutions, not just problems. My experience isn't unique among residents, although I may be one of the few that speak up today. The bottom line is the City is dysfunctional and Peter Iglesias's mismanagement and disrespect for elected officials and residents alike is unacceptable. A change of leadership is long overdue so the City can move forward with residents' safety, quality of life, and sustainability as the top priorities and not those of the special interests who have circled the wagons today to perpetuate their own special treatment. Thank you very much.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Ms. Gold.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor, is Mayra Joli.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Joli, good afternoon.

Mayra Joli: Good afternoon. Let me get my -- my video. Yeah, can you hear me okay?

Mayor Lago: Yes, ma'am. Yes, the floor is yours.

Ms. Joli: Okay, alright. I agree with the resident that just spoke now, because right now what we seeing is a parade. It looks a little like an episode of the Real House Husbands of Miami in which they're all just supporting somebody who's an employee, nobody is indispensable. The ones that are indispensable here are the residents. And if Peter Iglesias is not there for the good of the residents, if he is not willing to follow the directions of the commissioners, if he says that he's not going to work with one commissioner, then Peter Iglesias is not doing his job. If I have an employee in my office who said he's not going to do what I -- what -- my orders, you know I tell them, you want to work for me? You think the City of Coral Gables is going to fall over their belly if Peter Iglesias is not there? Or who's the one who's going to suffer? It's not the residents, but for real, who's going to suffer are the developers. I remember vividly, I don't have any beef with Iglesias. I don't know how he got there, who was he before that and whatever. But I do remember one time that we were fighting for this Wawa project not to be in a school zone with an entrance by the school but in US 1, that Peter Iglesias and whoever was the attorney at the time, and even the Clerk of the City of Coral Gables, they were all there in the police department building. They were rooting for the interests of Wawa, not of the residents. Wawa didn't have one single representative there, but there was Peter Iglesias fighting me for whatever I was saying, because that would represent more money that the developers and the owners of Wawa have to spend. And I truly remember how any of you, every of you, Mayor Lago, Anderson, Iglesias, they all say that this was said and done, and were telling that there's nothing to do, that their hands are tied, because that contract was done a long time ago, so the Wawa people had to have their gas station right there in the middle of the school for those children to be -- to use it at their leisure. So, nobody's going to tell me now that Peter Iglesias, all the people that are there saying that Peter Iglesias is the best of the best, well, you take him home, you employ them, or you pay his salary. How many residents have been at the microphone? Because we all have things to do. But how many of the residents have been at the microphone saying, yes, I want Peter Iglesias there? We don't care who's there. We care who's somebody who's doing the job, who's doing our, representing our interest. So, if Peter Iglesias have to go, believe me, believe me, tomorrow the City of Coral Gables is going to continue going. We have presidents elected every four years. America doesn't go down to shiz (phonetic) because of that. I say shiz because of that. So, if today they say, Peter Iglesias is gone, is gone. And I don't have papers to be bringing and accolades to be telling everybody how good they are. You have to be good at your job. And don't tell me what you did for the City of Coral Gables two weeks ago, 10 years ago. Tell me what you're doing for the City of Coral Gables today and what you're going to be doing for the City of Coral Gables in the future for us, the residents, not the developers, they don't live here. And I'm glad that Fritz & Franz is going to stay, yes. Have a great afternoon, everybody.

Mayor Lago: Thank you for joining us.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we're going to try one more time with Enrique Bernal.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Bernal, good afternoon.

City Clerk Urquia: Okay, he's not unmuting, sir. So, Mr. Mayor, we had a speaker --

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Why don't we try again? I think we're back to Ms. Joli.

City Clerk Urquia: Alright. So, we had a speaker who came in and had to leave, but he did leave me a letter. His name was Daniel Ravicher. He had prepared a written statement and it says, "My name is Daniel Ravicher and I have lived in Coral Gables for over a decade with my wife and son. One of the things we love most about our city is the proud history of professional leadership provided by the Mayors, Vice Mayor, Commissioners, and Managers. The city is safe, clean, and growing at a reasonable pace. Disputes arise, of course, but they have in the past been handled with professionalism and respect so that productive relationships can be maintained despite differences. Recently, however, I have been dismayed at a dramatic and unexpected rise in animosity and, shall I say, pointless drama, among the leadership of the city that is causing us a grave concern. Our nation is built on the governing principle of checks and balances. No one person shall be capable, or permitted to, enforce their will on others. I never would have thought that the City Beautiful would turn into a tabloid town. It's unsettling and the citizens of the city deserve better. The most recent unnecessary distraction to remove the Manager, who serves the City quite well for quite some time, seems rushed and personal. The propaganda materials distributed in advance of today's hearing to support the motion allege insubordination but did not explain what underlying dispute involved. The City Manager is an educated, experienced person with expertise that should be welcomed on issues affecting the city, not ignored and told to just follow orders. I am concerned that the Commission has taken a wrong turn recently leading it to erode the trust that it has built over decades of faithful service to the residents. The City Manager should not be removed absent unanimous agreement by the Commission. To do otherwise serves to only further fracture those who have given their time and lives to serve rather than bringing everyone together for the good of the city. I hate to consider the alternative, but one must always be prepared for the worst while hoping for the best. Thus, the petition I have been told will be started to remove all of the current Commission if the City Manager is removed is one that I will unfortunately have to support. Thank you, Daniel Ravicher."

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Mr. Clerk, do we have anybody else?

City Clerk Urquia: No, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Alright, we're going to take a 15-minute break so we can use the bathroom, and then we'll come back to this item. Madam City Attorney, anything we need to address before we take a break? Thank you.

[Later...]

Mayor Lago: It is 12:45. I'd like to see if we can get started. I know we have a long agenda today. So, I ask that my colleagues who are still pending to join us to please join us here in Commission. Mr. Clerk, I think we're ready to get started.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Before we get started, I'd like to put on the record, I have over a dozen emails that I think some of my -- most of my colleagues should have been copied on them, I don't know if they were. All of them are in favor of having the Manager remain. I'd like to put it in the record. It's from residents who were not able to make it today or some were, but at the end of the day, I have it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And Mayor, if you received the last couple that just recently came in, one from Thomas Snook and another one from Vicky Rua, who couldn't make it due to a variety of personal reasons, and I'd ask that those be put in the record, and all those also were in favor of retaining our current city manager.

Mayor Lago: And I also received one from Enrique Bernal who was trying to get on. That email is included, which is also in favor of retaining the Manager. Commissioner Fernandez, your item.

Commissioner Fernandez: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I want to start by thanking everybody who has come out today, either in person, via Zoom, who has contacted us by phone, text, email over the last eight days. Thank you for your participation and for your input. The five of us have been entrusted by the residents of our great city with the responsibility of leading their government and ensuring the proper operation of the same. Coral Gables was created August 29, 1925, as a commission-manager form of government. I wanted to talk to residents about how a commission-manager form of government works. I received calls from residents who were being told this Commission is an advisory board. It is not. In a commission-manager form of government, the Commission is the City's governing body. We select a city manager to enact the legislation and priorities set forth by the mayor, vice mayor, and commissioners. Each of us up here has an equal role in this government. None of us can individually decide what happens. Decisions are made by the majority of this five-member Commission. The Manager answers to the Commission and we all answer to the residents. On April 11th, I was elected to this City Commission by a 58 percent vote of the residents. I took my oath of office to uphold the Charter 18 days later. In those 18 days, the Manager never reached out or took the opportunity to meet with me. The City Clerk and City Attorney were the two first congratulatory calls on election night and both met with me prior to my swearing in. In respect, not of me as a person, but of the office I was about to enter. I brought up resident concerns with the Manager's leadership my first City Commission meeting, as has been talked about at length here today. From the Mobility Hub residents opposed to the promotion of MX3 zoning to the parking lot next to Caffe Abbracci, to a three-year delay of renovations at Burger Bob's, residents wanted a change. The Commission vote was a split 3-2 vote in favor of keeping the Manager. The Manager and I were the first to return to this dais after

a break following that vote. I extended my hand and said, it's time for us to work together, and we shook hands. For some time, there was progress. In December, residents began expressing concerns about FPL's replacement of the silver light poles in the North Gables. The Manager made it clear during more than one meeting that he disagreed with residents. He stated that if the Commission wishes to spend \$2.5 million on light poles, they can go ahead and do it. The last time the Manager yelled that to me, I asked him to leave the meeting because I did not need his animosity. The Manager said I was not his boss and that he only answers to three members of the Commission. The message was clear. He only answers to those who voted to keep him in office. Through all that, I kept my head down and continued to work through another Commission meeting without bringing this to public light. During this time, the Manager did not answer my phone calls and delegated all communications with me to the Assistant City Manager. The Manager then did not show up to my next two agenda review meetings. I did not make any of this public until the Manager decided to publicly attack me on the last Commission meeting and stated he would not get a deal done with Fritz & Franz and that the Commission could do it if they wanted to. Residents contacted me wondering why the Commission had not taken action to remove the Manager immediately. After a couple of weeks and re-watching the meeting, seeing the Manager's behavior, last week I realized we could not continue to allow for this toxicity to pollute our City Hall. The Manager must set the tone for the rest of City staff. If the Manager states as he did he will not work with a member of the Commission as he said about me and that he will not follow the directives of the Commission, he is sending a message to staff that this is acceptable. Well, it is not. I sent the memo eight days prior to this meeting in order to allow for my colleagues to have time to re-watch the meeting and for residents to provide their input. Sadly, the last eight days have shown the worst in those seeking to keep the Manager in office. Calls and text messages from members of the establishment have been spreading false information and using scare tactics on members of this community in order to come out and support the Manager. The same political attacks that were used during the last election by the establishment to dissuade residents from voting for Commissioner Castro and myself have been employed now. The establishment will stop at nothing to hold on to power, while attempting to run a shadow government circumventing the directives of this Commission and the interests of its residents. Threats have been made against Commissioner Castro, Menendez, and myself. And most disturbing, and residents need to know this, threats have been made against our families. To those mounting those threats, let me be clear, I will not be intimidated, and our families are completely off limits. My fellow residents, I know we are better than this. We can disagree on issues, but making things personal and launching threats is way beneath us. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, we must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. I am deeply disappointed in the behavior by people who I have looked up to in the past and who I helped lead our city. I am disappointed that their desire to hold on to false power clouds their judgment to distinguish between right and wrong. But I do not lose my infinite hope in a better Coral Gables, a Coral Gables where we can differ in our opinions, but be able to share a laugh and be respectful of each other, where we can have an open-minded conversation without fear of retaliation and baseless attacks. We're a small community, and the failures of one are inevitably the result of the failures of another. Today, we are faced with a decision. What direction do we want to set forth for our city? This is not about the past. This is

not about the Manager's experience and his work in the past. In fact, this has nothing to do with the individual himself. This has everything to do, as was mentioned before, about our future. Setting the course for the next 99 years of Coral Gables. The fearmongers will tell you that City Hall will cease to exist if the Manager is removed. It will not. In fact, it has not. This City has survived many peaks and valleys in its 99 years. From major hurricanes, to the Great Depression, to replacements of city managers, to the removal of its founder from the City Commission, and it will survive many more. But setting the course for the future must start today, with a move towards a resident-centered manager who will make residents and only residents their priority. I know some have expressed their concerns over the City's stability. This is not the first time the City has been in this position. In the last 10 years, the City has had four city managers, each one of them with varying strengths and weaknesses. Mr. Mayor, you led the efforts to remove two and to ensure the third did not get the permanent position. This community trusted your reasons as did your colleagues at the time. Those managers all placed the City first and departed rather than the City being in the position it is in today. This manager has been given numerous opportunities to retire on his terms. His response was to place the item on the agenda and have the Commission vote to remove him. My memo last week put forward the name of our assistant city manager as a potential successor to our current manager. Mr. ACM, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your service to our City over the last two years. You have always treated me with respect and been expedient on addressing resident concerns. I know putting your name forward has led to some unintended, difficult days for you, but I stand by my statement that you would be able to lead this city in the right direction if you're interested. My intention was to show this Commission and our residents that we have an in-house candidate who could take the baton on day one without skipping a beat. With that, I will make a motion to remove Peter Iglesias as city manager immediately.

Mayor Lago: Before we move into motion. Mr. Hudak, please come forward.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: This is not -- this is not a moment -- this is not a moment to joke around, okay. I have Commissioner Fernandez to my left that says that he has been threatened, that his family has been threatened. I've heard rumors that tires have been slashed, that windows have been broken. Through the Manager, and I hope that my colleagues on the Commission -- I want immediate action. I don't want action tomorrow. I want action now. Recess, 15 minutes. Through the Manager, I want forces on the ground to address the issue. I want to find out who did it. I want to find out who's threatening people in this community. I want to find out who is behind it. I want to understand -- every resource that we have, I want to throw at it. If somebody has a camera in front of their home like I do, I want access to that camera. If somebody is willing to make a statement in regards to an issue, I want to be very, very clear that this would not be tolerated in our city. And the reason also why I'm doing that is because there have also been insinuations by the members to my left and to my right that I'm responsible for this, and that Commissioner Anderson -- Vice Mayor Anderson is responsible for that. So, I want you to expeditiously, through the

Manager, move forward and address these issues because as we've seen before, the constant threats, the constant innuendos, the constant remarks that are made by people, these rumors, the ball rolls and before these conversations and whispers, they become truths and people actually come up to me and make statements. So, I ask you to please address the issue immediately, sooner rather than later, and overturn every stone possible in this community until we get to the bottom of it.

Police Chief Hudak: To your point, Mayor, if I may, everybody on the Commission, and not to violate the Sunshine, all of you, have contacted me one-on-one throughout your tenures as officers. The Manager has been apprised as my boss to look into every one of those situations. Every Commissioner, and again, this is not something to tell you all what somebody else is saying in the police department, we are in the middle. So, every person sitting on the dais has relayed to me their concerns and they have been investigated to the point where we have taken measures over the last 72 hours to make sure that there were no -- any ancillary issues to become -- to be fraught any of you or your family members. We have taken extraordinary measures to make sure that your safety here, to and from your residence, has been looked after.

Mayor Lago: Let's be clear on that. Hold on one second. You asked me if I wanted a detail?

Police Chief Hudak: No, no, I asked everybody. Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: I was adamantly clear. I said I don't need a detail.

Police Chief Hudak: Right.

Mayor Lago: I don't need a detail. We're not the City of Miami.

Police Chief Hudak: No, we're not doing a Sergeant of Arms.

Mayor Lago: I don't need a detail. I don't need a Sergeant of Arms. While my other colleagues are more than welcome to have a detail, that's not my thing.

Police Chief Hudak: So, to your point, Mayor, directly, as far as we looked at everything, every Commissioner and yourself, and when you've talked to me, we've talked about the issues that were presented, whether to you all directly or to your family members. Reports are talked about, they're written, they're documented, they're investigated. At one point, just on video cameras alone, we were able to arrest several people and made no connection at that point to your jobs here. Whether they were flying drones or damage to tires, you know, stuff, broken windows, the police department has looked at everything under my tenure and we will continue.

Mayor Lago: And if I may -- and if I may, Chief.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Which our City Attorney can corroborate. I've had many anonymous letters sent to me.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Threats to my family, to me, intimidation tactics, comments that have been made. People have showed up to my doorstep. I've had people break into my car. And again, this is nothing new. There's not anything that is happening to my left and to my right. It happens here in the city and it's been happening for decades, and it's been happening in an effort to intimidate people prior to significant votes. But at the end of the day, I want you to work through the Manager and ensure the safety of the Commission, just like we ensure the safety of the employees and we ensure the safety of the residents here, because what we're seeing now is the -- just kind of the leading into the conversation that some of the Commission is responsible for this. And I will not stand for that under any circumstance.

Police Chief Hudak: Mayor, if I may take a point of personal privilege. Society has become so visceral on its own, and not because of you all, but because of the politics, period. The fact that I had to surround one of our residents' houses for seven days because he went to one of my officers' family's houses has motivated me and the legislator to increase our stalking laws to protect you all. Now, why that's happening, I don't know, but it's at a federal level, the judges in our city, the requests that you don't know that the police department gets to protect is residents and because of what they do is something that is widespread across this country. So, I don't take these issues lightly and until I can prove who is responsible for it -- but to your point, we have had no major connections, criminally, in an investigation, that any of you are behind anything that has happened, and whether it's a coincidence or not. Cops don't believe in coincidences, but we are working as a police department to protect everybody, including what we have. I've got 13 federal judges that live in here. So, we're all responsible. The one person that knows everything that I'm doing is my boss, and I have to keep that through him. And when you talk to me individually, because he allows me to talk to you about your personal safety and your family's personal safety. So, to your point, Mayor, the police department has taken these threats seriously from beginning to end because we know what can happen. We know the fear that it is. Whether it starts in this room or not, we understand, but our job is to make sure you're safe too from why you're here and your families as well. We will continue to do that. And the men and women that I lead are committed to that. That's why we have the best police department in Miami-Dade County.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Chief.

Commissioner Fernandez: And to your point, Mr. Mayor, I have to thank you, Chief. Every single time that there's been an incident, your team has been quick to respond, has addressed it quickly,

and you've always made it clear that a threat against one of us, you're going to make sure that we're all taken care of, and I appreciate that. I think that's important.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Madam Vice Mayor, would you like to have any comments in regards to the item that we're discussing?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes, I do.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Chief.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Before you step down, I again thank the Chief. No, this is a thank you. There was one time you guys were outside of my house and I wondered why. Because you were copied on an email in which I was specifically copied with a threat.

Police Chief Hudak: Correct.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay, it was not necessarily directed at me, but I, you know, and I didn't feel particularly scared, but you were vigilant in protecting all of us. So, you can have a moment to get off your feet right now.

Police Chief Hudak: Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And I'll start with my comments.

Police Chief Hudak: I can't -- you want me --? Okay.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, you can.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Chief.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, that's okay. Sorry, it was just a thank you. I know it's a little tense here today, but. So, I'm going to talk to you a moment about the agenda item, the way you phrased it. City Manager Succession Plan. It's no secret in our city that our City Manager is a man of great esteem. But like all of us, we get older at time. And I've had this discussion with him about a succession plan and search committees have been contacted in order to bring in a younger ACM that can work under his wings and cause a smooth transition. And the search team, and I know you obviously didn't have this conversation with the City Manager, otherwise you may have phrased your agenda item differently. City Manager advised us from the prior search team that they just weren't getting any hits. And if you look at the salary range for a top rated not only city manager, but a building director, I agree with him the comments that were made that perhaps he's underpaid because he wears so many hats. We normally have two assistant city managers. He works night and day tirelessly, including managing projects. Projects that were, you know,

delegated over to Parks and Recreation that he had to bring back for himself to take home and work on overnight, like Burger Bob's, to make sure it got done because it just wasn't happening without his direction, without his experience being touched upon it. So, he's more than a city manager here. He's serving as a building director, a project manager, and I know some people expect him to be on the job 24-7 and be in every place and every project to see every malfeasance that happens on every project out there, whether it's a leaky roof or a leaky pipe. It's impossible for one human being to be everywhere. You need to delegate. You hire contractors. Each and every one of us have probably had some work done in our home in which we had to call back the contractor because something wasn't done wrong. Landscapers, same thing. Got the same problem. They don't follow directions necessarily. But yet, the one who takes the blame and the only one that's taking the blame is the City Manager here today. So, let's go back to your agenda item. This is not a succession plan. A succession plan would be having an intelligent discussion here about how we plan for the future. This is not where you say off with his head like an Alice in Wonderland movie. This is where you plan for your best and your brightest. Impart upon those who work under them how to carry the torch forward, not take and douse the torch out so they have to relearn on their own, without the benefit of an experienced city manager how the City runs and how to best manage things going forward. The term succession plan refers to a business strategy companies use to pass leadership roles down to another employee or group of employees. Succession planning ensures that a business continues to run smoothly and without interruption after important people move on to new opportunities, retire, or pass away. You get that definition if you look it up on Investopedia. They talk about succession plans. That's a logical way to do it. You do a hiring team, now would be a good possible time to do it, although we have a lot of competition out there because the City of Doral, I think the City of Homestead, the City of Miami Beach, the City of Miami are all jockeying around on city manager issues, and that's just in South Florida. We need to do a nationwide search. We need to look for the best and the brightest, and we need to bring them in with an opportunity to gain from this experience, just like the chief of police does with his team. He brings in experienced people sometimes to impart upon the rank and file that he hopes to be the future leaders in this police department, the wealth of knowledge that they have from years and years and years of experience that you're not going to be able to get overnight. That's why lawyers who have lots and lots of years of experience get paid a lot more per hour than those who haven't been in the courtroom, know what it is like to be in the heat of the battle, know what it's like to be down in the trenches and dealing with difficult cases in public, on media, or elsewhere. I noticed you did have an opportunity to speak to the media. I know it's something that is important to you, it's not so important to me. Because what I like to focus on is bringing this city forward and representing its residents in the future. It's not about a soundbite, it's not about causing a shake-up in the city, not about causing chaos in the city. Your agenda title lacks the transparency that you've used on prior items. Pay raises buried in a financial budget of over 400 pages in length, which I heard, because the grapevine does talk, was represented at the last Gables Good Government as being something that you three were going to bring up, but you didn't put it on the agenda. You three were going to bring up but myself and the Mayor jumped the gun on it. But you'll bury it in a 400-page budget where the residents can't see it. You don't put it on for discussion. What is the right amount that we should get paid, okay, for the number of

hours or the dedication we put in the job? I can tell you one thing, Commissioner. Based upon the number of times that you've brought items that have not been well planned like this, the number of hours, not just of this Commission, but of the residents that have had to be invested to avoid a catastrophe that could have happened is exhausting. You owe it to the residents. If you were in a court of law and you brought a frivolous motion, you would be met by the other side, most likely, with a motion for sanctions for legal fees and for the waste of time and/or the ultimate sanction, the dismissal of your case. And that's what's warranted here. This is frivolous. This is wanton. This is just looking to engender yourself in the limelight of the television. For the interview, the breakup in the City of Coral Gables has happened here because that's what the residents want. Yet you've ignored every speaker, the majority of which, 80 some odd percent here, has spoken in favor of the City Manager today. And no, they're not all developers. They're ordinary residents in here too. They know that the City Manager is experienced, they know he's more than qualified to continue to do the job. Our task now is to address the next chapter. How do we get there? No one lives forever. I'm not going to live forever. You're not going to live forever. I always look for somebody to groom to be the next person that sits in my seat because it doesn't come overnight. You've been here a little over six months. I know you took exception with the fact that the Manager didn't meet with you or call you after you were elected. I didn't meet with the Manager after I was elected either until after I was sworn in. We had multiple meetings, which we did a little differently here trying to consolidate it for you because it was breakneck pace where he's just introducing me to this department and that department and this person and that person and to get a complete understanding of what each department does, each department director does, and how things get done in this city. That takes time, not only for elected to learn, but a future city manager. You just don't come and dump them in the pool and expect them to wade through it without having an interruption in the flow and smoothness of how things are done. You don't expect that to be done without our city being tarnished for the future. People want to move here with this kind of chaos constantly going on? This chaos didn't start until after you were elected. It didn't. I know you're smirking. But the facts don't lie. I was going to read an excerpt from Ed Santamaria's letter to us, based upon his firsthand experience. I'm just going to highlight a few points that are evident to me now that I've been in service here for over two years. Okay. The demands of a city manager come at a breakneck speed from every direction. A manager is either at work or on call 24-7, 365 days a day. A holistic perspective is essential, and the position requires visualizing the administration of at least at a 30,000 foot level. Simultaneously, it requires the granular understanding of the goals of the elected officials and the needs of the community, the skills and capabilities of staff members and the status of all City projects and initiatives, past, present and the future to meet the objectives established by the City's approved strategic plan. There are few, few individuals in South Florida equipped to do this effectively. I digress. Let's examine your stated reasons for an immediate removal of the City Manager. In your memo, you claim, quote, dot, dot, dot, as far as I'm concerned, it's not going to happen.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

City Clerk Urquia: Sorry.

---

City Commission Meeting  
February 13, 2024  
Agenda Item F-12 - City Manager succession plan.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll wait for a moment. You ready? You claim the City Manager said, as far as I'm concerned, it's not going to happen. If the Commission wishes for that to happen, the Commission can go ahead and do it. You assert in your memo, this was a direct and public insubordination of this body which has raised much concern for the residents and the Manager's willingness to address their needs and concerns. You misquoted the Manager. You absolutely misquoted the Manager by omitting his full statement and distorted it. You did it for the same purpose you do a lot of things, to incense and inflame not only the residents, but your two fellow commissioners here that appear to be willing to vote for his removal. If you look at things out of context, you can distort the person's perspective of a very qualified and exceptional city manager that we have. And I'm not going to say that I agree with him on everything. We've agreed to disagree and I have moved him in a position on items that he didn't realize existed before. But it doesn't take -- it doesn't happen without sitting down at a table. It doesn't happen when you point someone out of the room and direct them to leave like you did in the prior Commission meeting. When you do that type of behavior, it's not quite you reap what you sow, but you've caused the problem. Insubordination, as defined by the Indiana State University Human Resources Department, is an overused and misused word the work -- in the work environment and has a very narrow definition with serious consequences to the work and to the employees. Insubordination is a deliberate and inexcusable refusal to obey a reasonable order which relates to an employee's job function. The refusal may be openly stated or may be silently withholding of services. Merely protesting an assignment is not insubordination. So, our City Manager is sitting there telling us that he wouldn't do something if it was his choice. But if we want to do it, it's okay. He'll follow our directions. It's not insubordination. That is merely protesting to make sure we understand the gravitas of what it is that we are going to do to our city. Whether it's a COLA increase that's going to lay a \$26.7 million of additional debt on our residents, which will ultimately increase either the length of the debt and expense that we have to pay. And yes, Commissioner Castro, I'm referring to a decision you made. The advice of our staff in the Finance Department is critical, and you need to absorb it and incorporate it and think about these residents that you're representing when you do it. Do they want this additional debt put on them? Because there is a middle ground that can be reached that accomplishes the purpose. So, to make sure that there is no accusation that I'm drawing things out of context, I've asked the City Clerk to play a 17-second excerpt of that critical piece from the last Commission meeting, Item F-5, at 6 hours and 17 minutes and 30 seconds to 6 hours 17 minutes and 47 seconds. So, when you're ready, Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Gables TV should have the clip ready to play.

At this time, an audiovisual presentation was made.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think it -- I think it repeated, but perhaps it was worth repeating so that you could hear it clearly and not distorted. The Manager expressed his opinion. He clearly stated if this Commission wanted to take a different course, we could do so. That's the same thing he said about the White Way Lights. May not be what you wanted to hear, but it's something that

we, not only as a Commission, needed to hear, but it's something the residents need to hear. You want us spending additional millions of dollars to change the colors of the poles and the style of the poles. This has been referred over to two of our boards to address in a Sunshine meeting and they'll get back to us. But understand the cost. We need to understand the cost because it comes on our tax bills, okay. And this is how you want to spend your money? That's fine, what the City Manager said. If this is the way we want to approve something for Fritz & Franz, that's fine. We can do that. We were looking for a market value rate out of Fritz & Franz. We hadn't received it. We had not received it before the last Commission meeting. I had invited the owner to send in proposals. I suggested that he forward it to the City Manager's Office while I was even out of town so that we, as a body, after getting a market rate analysis and having the information we need to make an intelligent decision could make that decision. As you can see, the City Manager has dealt with that issue. He resolved the issue. And we do have a deal based upon market rates so the residents get the right dollar value for the City properties that we own. And we're not going to be eating \$240,000 on a deal. We're not going to be eating any money on a deal, and we're going to have lease terms that have enough teeth in them that we can get back into the properties, unlike we were able to do easily in the past, whether it be Ortaniques or the Country Club, the leases that are done today are not the leases that were done yesterday. Sometimes we're stuck with the language that we have in these leases. It pays to read them because otherwise you make assertions that are not accurate and you hurt people with those -- with those accusations. We have to be careful with our words when we do that. One of the things that I try to do is not just criticize, contend, and complain or demoralize anyone. I first ask so I gain more information. Whether it be about a tree being trimmed on a golf course or elsewhere, I ask. I don't assume I know everything. I know a lot about trees, but I don't know everything. And I know I don't know everything, and that's one quality we have to do. City Clerk, I'm going to ask you to bring up some of the emails now. So, although they were summarized by one of our prior speakers, I'd like you to bring them up so the entire Commission can see the actual language that was used. Let's see. It's coming up on this thing. I'm the guinea pig on this new one. Can you enlarge that? Okay. From Commissioner Ariel Fernandez. Again, another example of how the Commission is left in the dark, Mr. Manager. You had a duty to inform us. This is another example. This is a little bit off screen now. Another black eye -- at least I think what it says -- in the City Commission. This is in reference to the Fritz & Franz lease. You claimed there was another black eye because this city manager failed to inform you of something that happened. So, rather than ask, you accuse, you criticize, you condemn and complain. If you had asked, you would have realized that you overlooked an email back in September and a letter from our City Attorney. I'm going to ask you to bring up this Item C. Next.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, are you going to be jumping off Fritz & Franz?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Hmm?

Mayor Lago: Are you jumping off Fritz & Franz?

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm just bringing up the emails.

Mayor Lago: Okay, because I'd like to add something to Fritz & Franz if I may. I just want to add something if I may. Just to be clear so everybody understands, when the discussion was with Fritz & Franz, like the Vice Mayor said, it was a market rate discussion. I have a lot of respect for Harald and the business. We all have a respect for Harald and the business, but it was not market rate. Today, we will be considering a market rate at \$51 a square foot. The lease that Harald wanted to sign with an extension was in the low 30s, okay. We are fiduciaries on behalf of the City. I don't have any friends when it comes to doing business with the City. So, understand that. We will consider your deal today, but you will be paying market rate. He wanted the same deal, the same deal that we gave Sra. Martinez, which is correct, it's \$34 a square foot. But Sra. Martinez is putting \$3.8 million in TI, over \$800 a square foot into that property, which we own, and that will increase the value of the City-owned property. Mr. Harald's new lease does not include any TI, zero. The building will remain the same. He will just be paying market rate at \$51 versus the \$34. This is just a little background information so you understand what the Manager was doing to get the best value, the best bang for your buck. I can go through all of them. I just don't want to disrespect the Vice Mayor and her comments. I just thought it was important with all the people that are watching today so that they understand the importance of getting the best deal for the City, not the best deal for your friends.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. So, I brought up the September 28th email from our esteemed City Attorney Cristina Suárez where she informed the entire Commission of what was going on with Fritz & Franz. This was before you sent the accusatory and derogatory email to the City Manager saying that this was another black eye on the City because you failed to inform this Commission. Attached to this email is a letter, the letter that was sent to Fritz & Franz. It's a notice of non-renewal. And as I explained to the owner, Mr. Neuberg [sic], your lawyer, once you walk through those doors and learn the law, you will never look at the world or the language in leases or anything else the same again. Our city manager had an obligation as his fiduciary duty to our residents and this city to place them on notice timely that the existing terms on the lease were unacceptable. We have a little problem with -- there we go. That's his duty. If he had failed to do it, then it would have been another black eye to our city, but he didn't fail. He did his job and he did it effectively. Throughout your tenure here, there's been demands for firing of employees. That's the Manager's decision. Employees that don't follow your directions. There's been meetings that have been held in which there were not nice things said about all of our employees, and Chief, you were present during one of those, I understand. Are you still in the room? There you are. You're hiding around the corner. Come on up.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes, ma'am.

Vice Mayor Anderson: You were present at a meeting that was -- Commissioner Fernandez requested. And there were some words that were exchanged, derogatory words towards our

employees, that if they didn't understand that there was a new sheriff in town, they can take their opportunity and leave. Do you recall that meeting?

Police Chief Hudak: No, I recall the meeting, I recall the email. The email to myself, the Manager, and the HR Director was as a result of a previous conversation that we had in the Manager's office to talk about some of the issues that were brought up by the executive board or the members of the FOP. And we had a discussion about negotiations, things along those lines. Subsequent to that, there was an email I believe all of you got from President Challenger about two individuals that had left the -- two officers who left the police department. And I was going to allow them to burn some of their sick leave, and I was obviously not allowed to do that and the subsequent conversation which is where your email comes into play was the Commissioner sent that to us, I believe it was like on a Thursday or a Friday. Subsequently, we talked and met at the Bike 305, you know, and I explained my point to him that day that that was not necessarily the case, that there was no insubordinate acts, I would say. I mean, I remember now, I remember the title of the email, and I said, listen, those issues when we made those decisions were before we met with him. So, it was just putting it in context. But it wasn't directed at employees other than the three of us. I think that was the conversation in that email that you're now referring to was that the Manager, myself, and the HR Director basically blindsided him or didn't give him all the information because of a response that he had received from the FOP who copied you all on some personnel issue memos.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. And Clerk, I'm going to ask you to put up the email that's labeled G. We can look at G -- E, F, and G. And I believe that's that email that talks about insubordination. And you have to go to the prior one.

Police Chief Hudak: That's the Manager's response.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, let's look at E. Let's take a look at E. You're getting there.

Police Chief Hudak: You have to scroll down.

Vice Mayor Anderson: That's page -- I don't know what page you're on there, what you got, but I'm talking about the one June 30th, 2023.

Police Chief Hudak: That's it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: At 10:02.

Police Chief Hudak: That's it now.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Okay. Talk to insubordination folks. I made a request in meeting three of you, which is completely disregarded, not disregarded, but the total opposite. This

insubordination will not be tolerated. Was the City Manager rude to Commissioner Fernandez during that meeting?

Police Chief Hudak: During our meeting? No. I think we all had conversations about what was going on. I mean, you know, Commissioner, it's not -- at one point or another, I will be honest with you, okay, as probably the elder statesman of the employees, and my job is to sometimes tell you all no. And I don't -- I am a person who is married to government, and I will tell you wholeheartedly, and some of you have heard me say this, residents for this police department are always first, but they're not always right. They're always first. So, I think we have had conversations in this dais about things that you wanted me to do, and I was like, listen, there's issues. So, those kinds of conversations I have with each one of you individually. I didn't see this as being something where the Manager was screaming or Raquel was yelling. You know, the issue that upset Commissioner Fernandez was he believed that we did not -- were not forthright with him on something that the union brought forward. And I explained this to him. It wasn't a question of whether -- you know, I saw the email when everybody else got it, and I believe I rode my bike down with you that day to Bike 305 day. We had a conversation. The Commissioner was still, you know, upset about it, but I think all of you have been upset with me at one time or another, including my boss. And, you know, it's sometimes we have to say no. That's part of being in these positions. So, that response, he allowed us to talk about it, but yes, that was directed at the three of us.

Mayor Lago: Yeah, Chief, I'm sorry to interrupt you. I can't remember the last time I was upset at you, but I have disagreed with the Manager, both in the private sector when he was in the City of Miami and both here when he was in the City. But there's a difference though. I've never used that tone in 11 years of being in public office with an employee in the City where I've said someone is being insubordinate when they're not being insubordinate. They're telling you the truth, but you just don't like the truth. And they're telling you the facts and you are unhappy with it. I think that's a difference and you have to be honest with us on that front. So, you know, someone -- you've sat there and you've told me no. And I've said, okay, not a problem. Let me give you an example. City Attorney told me no last week, correct? We had a discussion and you told me no, flat out no over a matter, over the powers that the mayor has. And I accepted the City Attorney's comments, continued to work together, value her as a professional, but I'm not going to demean the City Attorney and disrespect the City Attorney in writing in any form or in person, because at the end of the day, it has a ripple effect throughout all 1,000 employees here in the City. And we end up in situations like this. I just see a lot of emails like this that, to me, set the wrong culture here in this community. You can have a disagreement. I welcome disagreements. I've had disagreements on policy with all members of this Commission. But at the end of the day, there's not emails that leave a level of stain like this.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to follow through on you. We've had disagreements before, too.

Police Chief Hudak: Yes, we have. This is why I call you all individually. But again, when I get the okay to do that, I mean, this Manager allows the chief to talk to you. And if I could, the one thing I've learned in this job as your chief for the last nine years was something that then Mayor Manny Diaz said at John Timoney's memorial. You know, a commissioner and a manager are made and broken by their police chief in one day. And I've taken that challenge very seriously to make sure I don't do anything that would embarrass you all to other cities, which is why I talk to you all one-on-one, very frankly, whether you like it or not. I'm going to say what I think to all of you. I mean, to the Mayor's point, we have had some heated discussions. I think we all have. Vice Mayor, to you as well, I mean, and the idea is my job is to say no within the police confines, the same way the City Attorney is, the City Clerk, the Manager. I think what we're getting down to, Mayor, to your point is the definition of insubordination within the police department is a terminable offense. And my bar for insubordination has got to be a documented -- and I have moved to fire people and have fired people Within the police department for insubordination because we're a paramilitary structure, you know. And so, I look at it a little bit differently. I don't know what Commissioner Fernandez's level of insubordination is. Mine's a lot higher, so I guess I didn't get as upset about it, but that's just my training or my upbringing, I guess.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, thank you.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I appreciate you doing that. So, you can --

Police Chief Hudak: I can go back?

Vice Mayor Anderson: You can relax.

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yeah, yeah, yeah. We all love you, Ed. We all love you. I may agree to disagree with you and I may vehemently express my opinions at times, but it's in no way would I ever call you insubordinate. So, I touched upon the demands for firing of employees. I mean, we're a deliberative body. We have to make decisions together. Okay, we don't make -- you know, lead by one. We lead by five and the majority, obviously, rules. That is something that this city manager has recognized time and time again, even if it's a bitter pill for him to swallow, even if he doesn't support it, he will follow our directions. It may not be the direction that the residents want, it may not be the direction that he wants, okay, but he has no choice but to follow it and he has dutifully done so. So, I've noticed the level of email activity demanding records on the staff, inquiring about bars of soaps, receipts, which I am the worst at keeping receipts., okay. By the way, in case you want, I purchased this. I purchased these cups. So, we don't need to get down to this granular level as to where \$117 worth of paper receipts went because you have to recognize something. Employees are human and so are all of us human. We're not perfect. Even machines

are not perfect. Contractors are not perfect. And we're all capable of mistakes. The quality, though, of leadership is when you recognize your mistakes, when a human being recognizes their mistakes and learns from them. And it also takes a quality that requires you to look in the mirror at yourself and say, is this the right thing for leading this ship forward or is there a better way to do it? There's nothing wrong with a succession plan. Like I told you, I've already had those conversations with the Manager. I've already told him if we're having trouble attracting folks -- and this was before your election and after your election -- with the salary offerings that we have, that we may need to raise that salary because this is an unrelenting job that the City Manager does. Not many people would want to take it on, especially with the level of demand this Commission places on them. There's no secret about it. We are a very demanding Commission. We have a lot of projects going forward. There's a lot more we would like to go forward with. We just wish we could have a money tree, we'd be able to get them done more, to have more contractors able to lay out more sidewalks. But there's a limit on supply and demand to be able to get those things done. The consumption of time, though, for staff on these demoralizing things is overwhelming. They'd like to get their job done. I would like to get my job done, which is moving the important projects of this city forward for the residents. People have questions people don't know the answers to. Why weren't the lines painted on the asphalt yet? Well, because it has to cure first, okay. Why is Granada Boulevard all torn up and it's not been repaved yet, okay? Well, because we're putting in a water force main. We're going to wait until it's finished with all the digging, and then you repave it. But that's just a sewer force main. We still got to dig it up again when we go do the septic to sewer stuff. So, do we want to put a, you know -- this is not a decision for us to make today -- a finished finish coat on it, or do we want to do our best job at smoothing it out in order to conserve taxpayer dollars? Talk to the County many times about coordinating our efforts for that reason. But if you consume staff's time with needless witch hunts for \$117, we're going to spend thousands and thousands of dollars to do an audit over a missing receipt or two.

Mayor Lago: I'm looking forward to the audit, by the way.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Rather than trying to put our residents through unforgivable stress and distress in the upheaval of our city, many people have approached me and said, yes, and I voted for him, but you know, I thought he was going to bring some good ideas, but I'm disappointed. I'm sorry I voted for Commissioner Fernandez. So, rather than gaslighting the residents with false representations of what this Manager said and pointing them out of the door during meetings and putting him out of the door during this Commission meeting, how embarrassing that was. I've never seen that throughout the course of this Commission's history. Looked more like a Miami Commission -- City Commission meeting than it did Coral Gables. That was a sad day in this city. And unfortunately, you're continuing it forward. Leadership is -- a supreme quality of leadership is unquestionable integrity. That is something countless people here have said about our city manager. Yet you want him out of here immediately. Leadership cannot just go along to get along. Leadership must meet the moral challenge of the day, Reverend Jesse Jackson. These are leaders that met the challenge of the day and led peacefully without disruption, led through the most difficult times that we've had in our country with honor. I would hope that this entire body

could lead forward in that same fashion. Put aside your petty grievances, your allegiances, your political aims, and what is important to you in your view, in your personal view, based upon the information that you have. And I, if you really poll the residents now, I think their view of this Commission is pretty low because of what type of leadership you've been bringing.

Commissioner Fernandez: I disagree.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll agree to disagree with you. You know what? They don't talk to you. They talk to others because they don't talk to you. Let's bring unity together. We can talk about a succession plan. Let's put it together. I would move that we have a succession plan, hire an appropriate organization -- City Manager, you've done this before -- to do a nationwide search for a qualified city manager, okay. I know that there was a suggestion of bringing somebody up in the ranks that had applied for an ACM position before, assistant city manager position before. That person did not succeed at that because they weren't quite ready. The person's not quite ready yet today either. They need to take the necessary training and experience. And I'm not referring to the City Manager -- Assistant City Manager Parjus. If you're trying to land on the shoulder of a single man, the job of this city manager who's serving as building director and has done an excellent job as city manager throughout the history of our city that he's been here, what a stark difference this is than where we were prior to that. It'll take you a little time to get used to working together with people. I implore you to learn those skills so that we can work together as a collegial body rather than animosity and worrying about the next election and the next election. I'm done.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I yield the floor.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Castro?

Commissioner Castro: Okay. To begin with, I would like to put on the record that I was followed by an undercover detective because I was concerned for my safety, and thank you very much, Chief Hudak, for that. I also told my daughter not to go to school today. I've had a drone flying outside of my condo on the 17th floor. And sending your attorney to file ethics complaints against me is pretty desperate. This is the toxic environment that we are living in in this Commission room. But let me just make something very, very clear. I will not be intimidated and you're not going to scare me to change my vote. I vote how I believe I should vote and that's the -- and that's the end of it. If you know me, you would know that there is no bargaining. Once I've made up my mind, I've made up my mind.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Castro: I'm not done but thank you. Okay, before I begin, I want to express my sincere gratitude to Peter Iglesias for his dedicated service to our city. Under his leadership we

have seen positive developments and accomplishments. His efforts have not gone unnoticed. However, as public officials it is our duty to critically evaluate the performance of our city manager and to ensure that he is effectively serving the needs of our residents and employees. It is with this responsibility in mind that I must address some concerns that have been weighing heavily on my mind. I believe that we're currently facing a morale and employee retention crisis within our city. While it is important to focus on the numbers and the financial well-being of Coral Gables, we cannot overlook the well-being of our employees. We need a city manager who is not only acquainted with department directors, but who also genuinely cares for every single employee and their hardships. We need a leader whose vision is built on the principle of merit rather than favoritism, and who prioritizes the wants and desires of our residents over those of developers. Moreover, it is imperative that our city manager remains neutral with all elected officials and shows respect to each and every one of my colleagues. I cannot help but feel concerned when I sense a bias towards certain individuals or agendas. Trust is a cornerstone of effective governance. And regrettably, I find myself unable to fully trust our city manager. We cannot turn a blind eye on the concerns raised by our residents or employees, nor can we ignore the mounting evidence of mismanagement or misconduct. As stewards of this community, we have a duty to act in the best interest of Coral Gables. Therefore, it is with a heavy heart and commitment to the greater good of our city that I must advocate for a changing leadership. When the fundamental principles of transparency, integrity, and public service are compromised, we owe it to our community to take decisive action. With that being said, Commissioner Fernandez, I second your motion.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Menendez?

Commissioner Menendez: Yes. First off, I want to say to Chief Hudak and the entire Police Department, thank you for not only protecting our residents, protecting staff, but protecting the elected officials, protecting everyone in the City of Coral Gables. I'm truly grateful for the work that you all do. Secondly, I'd like to say that my statement is not directed towards any one individual, none of my colleagues, it's just a factual count. It's a factual statement of things that I've witnessed, things that I've experienced, and things I want to share publicly. I want to thank everyone who reached out to me to have a thoughtful discussion and a respectful exchange of ideas concerning this matter. It is greatly appreciated. To those individuals who have chosen a darker path, here is my response. I don't respond to threats, nor do I bow down to anyone who makes them. Not now, not ever. Threats were made concerning the election issue. Threats were made concerning the annexation issue. And threats have been made concerning the City Manager issue. Threats, intimidation, and mafia-like thuggery have no place in Coral Gables, no place in society, and no place in the heart of mankind. There are some who think they can plot and lash out and harm others while hiding in the shadows, but I'm letting you know now that a light is coming, a light that bright -- that shines brighter than the sun. And those who remain in the shadows, purposely causing harm to others, will be revealed. Now to the key issues and concerns shared with me by Coral Gables residents and business owners these past few days. One, the City has a great many capital improvement projects currently underway and in the pipeline. We can't allow those projects to fall by the wayside. Two, the City has made improved strides in the working

relationship with the County. We can't afford to turn the clock back now to a time when the City and the County were at odds. Three, the City has a significant budget and a great workforce, which requires a veteran administrator with leadership skills at the helm. Four, stability has always been synonymous with Coral Gables. Stability at the top and throughout our local government is what draws and retains businesses and investments to our downtown, the economic engine of our city. It is true that our great city has a long history of seasoned city managers with a wealth of experience in management, construction, and finance. It is true that our great city has a long history of city managers who can motivate and lead staff to higher heights of public service. It is true that our great city has a long history of city managers who have helped bring our community together as one. Therefore, in response to the issues and concerns previously referenced and in keeping with our history of outstanding city managers moving forward, I believe the city manager for the Coral Gables should be Ralph Cutié, the Director and CEO of the Miami-Dade Aviation Department who, among his many responsibilities, has overseen a \$6 billion capital improvement project at the Miami International Airport. Mr. Cutié, a 32-year veteran of Miami-Dade County government, has 35 years of experience in the fields of project control, critical path method scheduling, project management, construction contracting, and construction claims administration. Mr. Cutié has worked extensively in various capacities on numerous Miami-Dade Transit projects of significance, including the \$248 million Metromover Extension Project, the \$88 million Metrorail extension to the Palmetto Expressway, and the \$106 million busway extension to Florida City. Mr. Cutié is held in very high esteem throughout South Florida, both professionally and personally. He would address and resolve the key issues and concerns of our community, as well as be a great addition to our City's long history of excellent city managers for many years to come. I have spoken to Mr. Cutié and I'm very excited to report that he is ready, willing and able to start the conversation with the City concerning the city manager position, and I am thrilled for our residents and our business owners and the city at large for this amazing and unique opportunity. Therefore, I ask Commissioner Fernandez to amend his resolution to direct the City to commence discussions with Mr. Ralph Cutié to become the city manager for the City of Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: You done, sir?

Commissioner Menendez: Yeah, I am.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. So, today, we have before us a matter of great importance. I'm hoping that this governing body makes the right decision and represents the voice of our community, which is to keep moving our city forward under transformative leadership and profound dedication of our City Manager, Peter Iglesias. Over the past five years, his strategic foresight, impeccable diligence, and unwavering commitment have elevated Coral Gables to new heights, enhancing the quality of life for each member of our community. Under Mr. Iglesias's stewardship, Coral Gables has flourished, witnessing remarkable achievements that have fundamentally contributed to the City's growth and prosperity. His role in spearheading strategic development and innovation has been instrumental, marked by significant accomplishments in infrastructure, community engagement, public safety, and financial stewardship. Our City has seen the planning, design

funding, and implementation of key facilities, including a state-of-the-art Public Safety Building, Station 2, and the trolley maintenance facility, enhancing our emergency response capabilities and public transportation system, the development of the Fink Studio, and the 427 Biltmore Way Development Services Center, alongside the renovation of Coral Gables Golf and Country Club, and the oversight of the Minorca Garage and Firehouse 4, have significantly bolstered our city's quality of life. Coral Gables is proud of its 64 neighborhood parks and open spaces, offering a blend of passive and active recreation activities. These spaces, linked by sidewalks, pathways, bike lanes, serve as vital gathering places, underscoring our commitment to community engagement. Our efforts have been recognized through a community recreation department that is nationally accredited, a testament to our excellence in providing recreational services. Our citywide community engagement survey revealed a 94 percent excellence and good quality of life rating, reflecting the positive impact of Mr. Iglesias's leadership in our community living standards. The launch of a City website and the introduction of a citizen's request system and mobile app further demonstrate our commitment to transparency and accessibility in governance. Look at the numbers today. Over 80 percent of the individuals that came to the City Hall today spoke in favor, even though this email was circulated trying to get people to get here. I did not get one email opposing Mr. Iglesias. Public safety, a paramount concern, has been significantly bolstered during Mr. Iglesias's tenure. Coral Gables remains one of the safest cities in South Florida, thanks to increased police and fire personnel. Innovative programs such as manned drone programs and telehealth capabilities in our rescue vehicles, ensuring our response times remain among the lowest in the region. During the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Iglesias provided critical leadership, issuing guidelines and administrative orders to support businesses and ensure public health, demonstrating his ability to navigate through crisis with grace and effectiveness. Moreover, under his guidance, Coral Gables has emerged as an international city in smart city solutions, recognized globally for our achievements, strategic leadership in the implementation of new financial and operational systems has streamlined city operations, enhancing efficiency and servicing -- service delivery. Mr. Iglesias's commitment to talent recruitment and legislative success has strengthened our City's administration and operational capabilities, securing record amounts of state and federal grant funding for various projects. His financial stewardship has ensured Coral Gables maintains a AAA bond rating with significant reduction in the pension's unfunded liabilities and a healthy general fund balance reserve showcasing our fiscal responsibility. Yet amidst these accomplishments, there have been discussions, misunderstandings, and criticisms that fail to acknowledge the depth of Mr. Iglesias's contribution. The exchange between him and Commissioner Fernandez often reflects his professionalism and integrity. Mr. Iglesias's words, "I work for this Commission and if you tell me to do something, I will do it," underscores his dedication to serve our community and its leaders with respect and commitment. As we stand at the crossroads, let us not be swayed by cynical agendas or personal vendettas. The proposal to discuss the termination of such a dedicated public servant without cause is not only unjust but irresponsible. We must ask ourselves, why is this happening? Why would we consider dismissing a leader who has brought about such significant advancements and whose integrity remains unblemished? Let us instead focus on the positive, on the achievements, and on the future. Let us continue to build on the foundation that Mr. Iglesias

has helped establish for the betterment of Coral Gables and for all residents. We owe it to ourselves and to our community to make decisions based on reason, on evidence, and on the truth for our people. As we face a proposal to discuss termination, as we have been going through over the last few hours of Mr. Iglesias's tenure without cause, we must question the rationale behind such an action. It is imperative that we consider the substantial positive impact of his leadership, the unnecessary cost and fiscal irresponsibility of pursuing an unwarranted executive search, and the voice of our residents, which have overwhelmingly, overwhelmingly been in support. We talk about residents first, correct? There was a call for residents to come out from the CGNA, emails were sent, and we stand here today with an overwhelming support for Mr. Iglesias and the voice of our residents who have vouched for his professionalism. In conclusion, I urge you to reflect on Mr. Iglesias's achievements, dedication, and his integrity. Let us not be swayed by political agendas, but instead focus on the facts, the accomplishments, and the true will of our community. Our decisions and our discussions must be based on reason, evidence, and a genuine commitment to the betterment of our city. Together, let us stand in support of Peter Iglesias, a leader whose vision, integrity, and dedication have not only shaped the present, but will continue to inspire the future of Coral Gables. As I mentioned before, I've had many, many interactions both in the private and the public sector with Peter. When he was in the City of Miami, I had the opportunity to engage with him while I visited him in reference to a litany of different structural issues that I was facing for clients. Every single time he was firm, but he was just. When I dealt with him on multiple occasions, the answer was no, to the tune of over \$500,000 in one case that was added to the project cost, because he found an issue with an original design that had to be addressed. Even when there was conflicting views amongst architects, engineers, and clients in an effort to try to not spend that amount of money, he stood firm in his belief. He was unwavering. No matter how many lobbyists, no matter how many, you know, architects, engineers, people showed up, he was firm that this was the right thing to do. As a result of his firmness, of his unwavering ability to do the right thing, that city -- that building stands today in the City of Miami because we found out later that that designer of that building in the 1970s and '60s had flawed designs and there was potential issues. He caught that in the City of Miami. He caught that in a project that I was in. We've had many discussions here in the City where the answer has been no. Where he's told me, Vince, I cannot support you on this issue. You know, I think we need to do it this way. After having conversations, level-headed discussions, we've always built consensus. I think it's a shame, it's a shame to let this man go. He's worked hard, he's a resident of the City, and after a 40-year career as a professional, this is not the way that you deserve to leave. So, I wholeheartedly support you. I'm thankful and grateful for your service. And this community has been honored to have you as their city manager. And I ask my colleagues on the Commission to please let this man stay to do his job on behalf of this community that he has always put first, nobody else.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, if I may, I just want to bring to light a couple of things with Commissioner Menendez's proposal. And that is, you know, we do have an issue at the Miami International Airport, the SkyTrain, been down since September 27th of last year because of concrete damage, which means -- and I'm just assuming -- lack of inspections, lack of follow-through. In any process where you bring in and hire or have a succession plan for someone, you

do a thorough background check, you do a nationwide vetting process. And again, I'll repeat my motion that we need a succession plan. We can decide, you know, who gets assigned to do the nationwide search, what company does it, how often they report back to us. All these things are open for discussion. Is it every 30 days we should ask for a report back? We need to look at the CVs and résumés. We have to meet and have an opportunity to interview that person, to ascertain if this is a person that we can work with going forward and have the opportunity for that person to be able to learn the ropes here in a proper manner rather than being thrown into the pool, so to speak, and expected to swim with the water flow continuing at the same pace that it is right now. So, yeah, you call it chaos, disruption, lack of proper transition, but that is why businesses and municipalities have succession plans. We want to bring up people in the ranks. We want them to train under the tutelage of the individual that is departing. They may do it differently. The new manager may do things differently. But you can't hold them accountable for failures when you handicap them going forward. They don't have the opportunity to work with such a qualified city manager. I am certain that he does want to retire in the future, and he deserves to retire in the future. Quite frankly, he'll earn more in the private sector than he does here. He does this for the love of our City because he's a resident of our city. So, Cutié may be ultimately the best one that we can bring in to work under the wings of the City Manager until the time comes to pass the baton. That's the proper way to do things. You don't propose a name because you had a conversation with somebody that is the director of the Miami International Airport and because they're willing to take the helm despite the choppy waters and despite the transition period. That's not necessarily in the best interest of the residents or the City. So, I would expect us to do a professional job, have a professional company, do a nationwide search, that we all have opportunities to review and interview a potential city manager succession, working under our current city manager. You know, I even had the opportunity to interview assistants coming in here previously. I asked staff to first vet out the unqualified folks and I could talk to the, you know, the ones that are the best qualified, so I don't have to waste my time doing that. We need to do this in a thoughtful process and just not pick a name out of the hat. So, that's my comments on Menendez...

Mayor Lago: Commissioner Fernandez.

Commissioner Fernandez: I was shocked when you brought the name up because I've worked with him in the past. When I worked in Congress, he was my point of contact for many years at the airport, addressed many of my concerns, and I've honestly never heard anything bad about this person. And in fact, everything that I've heard from his employees that I've been reading over the last few minutes has been positive about the way he operates, the way he works, the professional that he is. I think if we're talking about succession, we're talking about assistant city manager searches that have yielded no results. If we have somebody here in Miami-Dade County who would elevate the position of city manager, which I think this would, I think this does sound like a path forward for Coral Gables. There were comments made about nobody being interested in this job. I was in Tallahassee last week and I had four people approach me interested in the city manager position or an assistant city manager position in Coral Gables. This is the most desirable

city to come to. This is a city that people want to work at. We just need to fix things. So, Commissioner, I guess your amendment was to --?

Commissioner Menendez: To direct the City to -- I apologize, direct the City to commence discussions with Mr. Ralph Cutié to become the city manager for the City of Coral Gables, to commence discussions, City and Mr. Cutié.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may, excuse me, before you move forward. Has everybody here read the Herald over the last six months? Has everybody? What have they been saying about the airport?

(COMMENTS MADE OFF THE RECORD)

Mayor Lago: Okay, who is the head of the airport? Who was the head? What was his position before? He was Facilities Director. Do we really want to go down this route and do this this way? My advice to you is very simple. Let the Manager stay. If you want to go down this route, let this gentleman apply for a position. You don't just name somebody on the Commission -- on the Commission floor who's not even here, who can't even speak, and we take your word on the fact that we're going to replace him as a city manager. That's not the appropriate way to do things. The appropriate way to do things is to go through the process unless the person has been the ACM or the person who works as a staff member here and you want to bring that person up and we've had an experience to work with that individual. I don't think this is the right way of doing things and I'd highly recommend that the Manager stays and we don't move in this direction. This is not the way that things are done in the private sector. You don't bring somebody in without having vetted that person and name them the city manager of the city without having had a conversation, vet their interests, understand what their capabilities are. Do they want the job? Are they interested in the job? Are they willing to accept the package? You know, again, I know things are very, very difficult in the airport, but the gentleman currently has a job. And you know, I'd like to, at a minimum, speak with the Miami-Dade County Mayor. It's a courtesy that you provide somebody before you go after their employee. So, you know, that's the way things work in the private sector.

Commissioner Fernandez: But...

Mayor Lago: And I think that this right now what we're doing here is not the appropriate way to bring somebody forward who could be considered.

Commissioner Fernandez: The discuss -- the motion or the amendment suggested by Commissioner Menendez was to have -- begin the discussion. It wasn't...

Mayor Lago: Again, it's not an issue about a discussion, it's about there has to be a process. And I want to -- if I'm going to vet people for a position, if I'm going to be forced to vet for people for a position, I want to have a full conversation with as many people who I think are qualified for that position. But I still stand with my motion that Peter should be the person who is leading us

forward. He's done nothing wrong. He's more than qualified at the end of the day to be here. If you want to make a motion to get rid of the Manager, like you've already done, it's a second, you want to take a vote on it, then you're more than welcome.

City Attorney Suárez: So, there was a motion and a second.

Mayor Lago: Yes, I know.

City Attorney Suárez: And then there was, you know, the request by Commissioner Menendez so.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I will accept your amendment and I would add to name the Assistant City Manager acting city manager until such time as the new city manager is in place.

City Attorney Suárez: So...

Mayor Lago: Have you spoken with the ACM to see if he's willing to accept the job?

Commissioner Fernandez: That's...

City Attorney Suárez: So, just to be -- so, I understand what the motion is, it's a motion to remove the Manager, Peter Iglesias, and then appoint the Assistant City Manager acting city manager, and to begin discussions with Mr. Cutié.

Commissioner Fernandez: Correct.

Mayor Lago: Mr. ACM, are you willing --? Will you please come forward?

Commissioner Castro: Do you really need to do this? Can we do this in private?

Mayor Lago: I'd like to ask...

Commissioner Castro: This is an employee that has rights to his privacy. You don't have to put him...

Mayor Lago: I'd like to...

Commissioner Castro: I'm talking, okay? You don't have to put him here. You could speak with him in private.

Mayor Lago: I would like to have a conversation with the ACM.

Vice Mayor Anderson: There -- there's a motion on the floor that affects his future. There is nothing private here.

Mayor Lago: You don't need to scream at me. There's nothing private here. You're getting rid of a manager in front of everybody.

Commissioner Castro: You don't have to put...

Mayor Lago: And you're naming -- and you're naming...

Commissioner Castro: You don't have to put an employee...

Mayor Lago: Mr. ACM, will you please join us?

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, no. No one put the employee here. The motion put the employee here. Commissioner Fernandez put the employee here. So, before we vote, we need to be able to hear from this individual.

Mayor Lago: Mr. ACM, are you willing to stay during the course as needed to address the city manager objectives?

Assistant City Manager Parjus: If I may, may I have five minutes with the City Manager?

Commissioner Castro: That's fair.

Commissioner Fernandez: That's fair.

Mayor Lago: That is fair. Let's take a five-minute break. Thank you.

[Later...]

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, you ready?

City Clerk Urquia: Give me one second. We're ready, Mr. Clerk?

Mayor Lago: Ready, Mr. Clerk?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, sir.

Mayor Lago: Okay, perfect. Madam City Attorney, Mr. ACM, will you please join us?

City Attorney Suárez: So, Mr. Mayor, I met with both the City Manager and the Assistant City Manager, and I'll use the words that they both used and agreed, which is that for the sake of the organization and for our wonderful employees, the ACM would accept an interim appointment as, you know, as interim city manager until a city manager is appointed but no longer than three months. If this motion is adopted or passes, my office would prepare a resolution detailing with the details of that interim appointment that we would bring back later in the meeting as a standalone for his appointment.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may ask my colleagues just as a level of respect to our ACM, I ask you to please, if you're going to have one motion, please break that motion down in regards to one being the termination, and number two, the second one being the appointment as the interim city manager of Alberto Parjus.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay, so your request is that we do two separate motions, am I correct, Madam City Attorney?

Mayor Lago: And I have another request besides that and that would be...

City Attorney Suárez: That's the request.

Mayor Lago: If we're going to move in that direction.

Commissioner Fernandez: That's his -- that's -- okay. So, I guess I will amend my motion to immediately terminate the City Manager. That's the first -- I guess that's the first motion.

Mayor Lago: Do you have a second?

Commissioner Castro: I second that.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Vice Mayor Anderson?

Vice Mayor Anderson: For the reasons...

Commissioner Menendez: I have a question. I had requested an amendment regarding the gentleman that I had mentioned before. Where is that?

Commissioner Fernandez: We'll do that in the second one.

City Attorney Suárez: So, it's up to you all. It's how you want to do that. If you want to include it in this motion, that's up to...

Mayor Lago: But I was going to ask was, after you're done with what you need to do and the ACM is appointed as interim city manager, that we, like the Vice Mayor had mentioned, that we go through a thorough review, nationwide search for a competent individual to step in and we include any individual -- because I had a conversation, I just had a conversation right now with Miami-Dade County Mayor, and she was very disheartened with the process. She says that this is not the most respectful thing to do, and it taints the process, and that she wished that it would have gone a different way. So, my recommendation is if three-fifths of this body is going to terminate the Manager, then I think what we should do on behalf of all the residents in this community, especially all that came out here today, why don't we look for the most capable person? I've never had the opportunity to sit down with the gentleman that you proposed. I think that this should be an individual who is going to move us forward, should be a person that represents the entire Commission, the entire city. Let's have a conversation with this gentleman and anyone else who would like to throw their hat into the ring to be city manager.

Commissioner Castro: I think the amendment was to open discussions. It wasn't to hire him. It was to discuss the possibility of hire.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I heard that.

Mayor Lago: Again, but I understand that, but there shouldn't be a discussion. It should be let's go and search for the best. Let's not put ourselves in a position with just one person that I've never even -- never even had really a formal discussion with. I think that's the competent thing to do, the reasonable thing to do. That's what we do in both the private and the public sector. And that person has not worked here in the City of Golden Gables. So, I'd like to at least, if we're going to go down this route, let's at least do what we can to have a robust, a real large grouping of people who are competent, who are capable, who have an interest in the job, not just have a discussion with one person. I don't think it's in the best interest of the City.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, just to bring this in full light, I heard that, you know, Mr. -- was it Cutié? -- just quit Miami International Airport. The other thing, you know, when we have discussions with somebody and that's usually because we've already, you know, agreed to have a -- that this is the bid winner on an RFP process but we have to have discussions to iron out the language. So, the choice has already been made. So, the meaning of having discussions would mean that we obviate a normal succession plan where you have a nationwide search, a local search, or an application. The past search that was done was shortly after COVID and right before you all went into office. My understanding, City Manager, was they were not getting any responses at that time. So, we hit pause and now would be a good time to restart that again. I mean you, the City Manager, initiated that search, and you know, with a professional headhunter in an effort to cause a smooth transition in the city in succession so you could retire and go into private business or go on to another city if you chose to do so, so that we'd have a smooth and orderly business. So, having discussions with someone means you've basically already chosen them. Having

discussion with him would mean that each and every one of us has had an opportunity to sit down with this individual. And I'm not going to say that I haven't spoken to Mr. Cutié before because I have. But I haven't had the level of discussion with him that I would have normally if I'm going to choose the next CEO, basically, of our city leading us forward, evaluating the experience and capabilities of that person and matching them up against other individuals. So, having a discussion means you've made a choice. We need to have discussions with more than one person in order to do comparison and evaluate what's best for us, our city going forward.

Commissioner Castro: Commissioner Menendez, do you want to clarify your amendment? Does it exactly mean that we are hiring the person that you recommended?

Commissioner Menendez: Not at all.

Commissioner Castro: Or does it mean that we're going to give them the opportunity after we meet with them to consider him being hired?

Commissioner Menendez: That's exactly the point. Since it's been said over and over and over again, not only during this Commission meeting, but for days and it seems weeks now from pretty much everyone I've discussed with that it's impossible to find somebody qualified, that it's impossible, that there's nobody who wants the job, nobody qualifies for the job. On and on, I think searches have been done and the fact that someone so qualified, so capable at least is -- would entertain a conversation, I think that's something we definitely should pursue considering that the mantra has been nobody wants this and nobody ever -- you know, would ever come to Coral Gables. I think it's an opportunity to sit down and have a conversation. That's what it's about.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I would invite a conversation with that person, with each and every one of us, and that it be also opened up to others who are interested. Again, the last search was done sometime after COVID for a period of time, and the headhunter said, listen, I can't find anybody. It's time to start that again. I don't fault you for putting on the agenda a succession plan. What I fault you for, Commissioner Fernandez, is the abrupt removal of somebody without cause, without any cause whatsoever, other than your perceived personality conflict, okay. Your memo provides no cause. You use the word insubordination, when in fact, that was a misstatement of fact. When you misstate facts that are the basis for your motion, normally in the court of law, it fails. Okay, so there was no insubordination here, not based upon what was written in your memo. I think that's been proven. So, I would like to have an orderly succession plan. Like I told you before, I've had that discussion before with the City Manager. I said we need to evaluate what the pay ranges need to be in order to attract the best and the brightest to our city because we require the best and brightest services to our residents in this city.

Commissioner Castro: I have a question. By putting that amendment, are we closing out the possibilities of looking for another candidate?

Mayor Lago: No, but what you're doing is you're sending a message that is the preferred candidate, and there isn't a process where that person can potentially apply if they are interested in the job. I just don't know why we would pigeonhole ourselves and only choose one person. If we're trying to get the best, let's cast a wide net and see who lands. Maybe it is Mr. Cutié who is interested in the job. But I think that if you want to work with the Commission and with staff, and you want to work with everybody, then open it up. We shouldn't be afraid to have other people join the contest. It shouldn't just be about one person that we're having a conversation with.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'll repeat the motion I made earlier because apparently it was missed. And that is that we open it up for having a search for an assistant city manager in order to be able to carry our city forward in a logical and smooth fashion so that we have the best results for our city going forward.

Commissioner Castro: Commissioner Fernan -- sorry.

Commissioner Fernandez: There's already a motion that's been motioned and seconded, so we can't have two competing motions. What I'll ask, Commissioner Menendez...

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, it can be -- you can consider...

Commissioner Fernandez: The question that I have for you is do you want that to amend the termination and then have a separate item on the interim city manager?

Commissioner Menendez: My initial request was to have the amendment that I proposed with your legislative item and then obviously now that the ACM has agreed to stay on board for three more months and acting city manager in capacity, I guess that would be the second.

Commissioner Fernandez: Okay, so I -- there's been many conversations about the process and what's happened in the past. We went to a national search. We hired somebody and we had to remove them within 24 hours. The national search was then followed up by a local search, which yielded just one candidate.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner...

Commissioner Fernandez: There are different ways to do this.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, but let me just correct you, just...

Commissioner Fernandez: I understand, Mr. ...

Mayor Lago: But you can't just say that.

Commissioner Fernandez: You cannot interrupt me, though. I have the floor right now.

Mayor Lago: Listen, I'm not interrupting you.

Commissioner Fernandez: You are interrupting me.

Mayor Lago: You have to give a little bit more background. You just said we searched. Let me just explain to you. I'm not...

Commissioner Fernandez: And you -- you can talk after I finish. Let me complete my comments. There have been several processes. I asked the City Clerk to send me the different processes that have been followed in the past and every Commission has opted to go in a different direction. When we appointed City Manager Iglesias, we promoted him from within. Cathy Swanson-Rivenbark was a single candidate that came up. Pat Salerno was a national search. James Beard was a national search. Carmen Olazabal was an in-house candidate that was promoted for nine months. There are different ways to do this. I believe we have a candidate on the floor who would be a step forward for our city. We have an ACM who's willing to take a position for three months. We can't go to a national search that's going to take two and a half, three months, and then where are we? I think this is a path forward. This individual, according to Commissioner Menendez, has said he's interested in the position. So, I will accept that amendment to...

Commissioner Menendez: I want to clarify, he's ready, willing, and able to have that conversation with the City.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, I would, I will accept your friendly amendment and I will ask that you lead the efforts to communicate with him and work on that discussion.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may. If I may.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, that is my amendment.

Mayor Lago: Just for the record, to be clear, we did do multiple national searches. Mr. Beard, I do not want to disparage his name, was a person that was chosen. Within 24 hours, he was let go because the background check had failed. There were certain things that came back that we did not think were appropriate. We were reimbursed the \$50,000 for the national search that was done by a local firm. So, again, you want to move in this direction, you have all the ability, you have the votes, move forward. I'm just asking you to please split it so that I can vote in favor of having our ACM stay as the interim.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes, so I am splitting it. This is the termination of the City Manager and Commissioner Menendez's amendment. That's the item that's on the floor now so.

Commissioner Castro: Do I second it again?

Commissioner Fernandez: Right. So, are you okay with the amendment?

Commissioner Castro: Yes, I am okay with it.

Vice Mayor Anderson. For the reasons I extensively addressed during my comments, no.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Mayor Lago: No.

(Vote: 3-2)

Mayor Lago: So, before we move forward, I would like to have our Manager for the moment provide us some parting words, please.

City Manager Iglesias: I just have a brief comment. Mayor, I want to thank those who expressed accolades for me today. I appreciate each and every one of you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mayor and Vice Mayor, and all those past members of Commissions that we've worked together for the past five and a half years. It was an absolute privilege working with all of you. And to my team, I hope you're as proud as I am about all that we've accomplished. I leave behind an unbelievable team, probably the best in Dade County. God bless you all and God bless Coral Gables.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Manager, one second please. The Clerk would like to say a few things.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before the Manager leaves, I wanted to say a few words, not just on my behalf, but on behalf of your team as well. You know, through my tenure here in the City of Coral Gables, I've had the privilege of working with different managers, and none of them ever come back to the City. And I honestly thought that would be different for Peter because of his history and because I know the kind of man that he is. I desire for Peter to get the farewell that other City officials get because he deserved as much. As I acknowledge that this may be Peter's final time here in City Hall, and I would be remiss of me not to express my gratitude towards him. Peter, I extend my thanks to you for your leadership, your integrity, and your guidance. And although you never appreciated my impeccable taste in socks, and I've never lived up to your high standards for pencil sharpening, your dedication, hard work, and calm demeanor have always been invaluable. I'll miss you, my friend. And as you exit this chamber today, do so with pride and with your head held high, knowing the impact you've made in each and every one of us. Take comfort in knowing that your legacy will live on through the countless projects and the countless peoples you've influenced. I will truly miss you.

City Manager Iglesias: Thank you very much.

Applause.

Mayor Lago: Before we move on to the naming of the interim city manager, I'd like to say a few words. As someone who has grown up amidst the vibrant streets and the lush greenery that define our city, Coral Gables, the City Beautiful, has been my home, my sanctuary, and it has been an immense privilege to serve you, the heart and soul of this community as an elected official. However, it is with a heavy heart that I address you today. Under circumstances that I am deeply disappointed in, for years we have prided ourselves on being a city that acts with the best interests of its residents at heart, a place where decisions are made through careful deliberations and a keen sense of responsibility. Yet it seems we have come to a day where the very principles that should guide us are overshadowed by personal vendettas and irrational, impulsive decision-making. I must express my profound concern over the recent actions taken against our city manager. This decision, made in haste and without due regard for the professionalism that has always characterized our City's administration, paints Coral Gables in an unflattering light. It signals a departure from reasoned governance, casting us as unprofessional in the eyes of those who look to us for leadership. Make no mistake, the manner in which the City Manager has been removed not only undermines our credibility, but also sets a dangerous precedent for the future. It sends a message to our City employees and to all that the personal grievances can triumph over the collective good, a notion that stands in stark contrast to the values we hold dear. To govern is a privilege, a sacred trust bestowed upon us by you, the residents of Coral Gables. It is our duty to uphold this trust with the utmost integrity and to ensure that our actions always reflect the best interests of those we serve. Today, however, we have witnessed an abuse of power, an act that betrays the very essence of our responsibilities. The City Manager, whom we have been fortunate to have at the helm of our administration, is among the most professional individuals I have ever had the pleasure of working with. His dedication to Coral Gables has been unwavering. His commitment to excellence unmatched. We are indeed blessed to have him serve our community. In closing, let us remember that the strength of our city lies not in the decisions of a few, but in the collective will of its people. It is together that we must navigate these challenging times, always striving to act with dignity, respect, and a deep-seated commitment to the common good. So, moving forward, I'd like to please call our ACM up. We have another vote to take, correct, Madam City Attorney?

City Attorney Suárez: Correct. So, you all can appoint him as, you know, as he, under the, I guess, with the parameters indicated. But...

Mayor Lago: Wait one second.

City Attorney Suárez: But once -- if there's a successful motion on that, then I would ask that, you know, my office can prepare a separate resolution with the details of that appointment that we would bring back for a second vote -- another vote...

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Attorney Suárez: Later in this meeting.

Mayor Lago: I'd like to make a motion to make Albert the interim city manager. And I hope that there's a process that does not name just one person city manager here in this community. I hope that we have an opportunity to have everyone embark on that process, even if it is you or if it's not you. I've known you for a long time. You're a great individual. You're a great steward. You're an honest man. And I hope -- I hope that there is an opportunity for real transparency in this community. There's a motion on the floor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second it.

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes.

Commissioner Menendez: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

(Vote: 5-0)

Commissioner Fernandez: And if I may, Mr. Mayor, I know this has not been an easy decision for you, and I know this has not been an easy process for you but I thank you for putting the City first and for serving our City with dignity.

City Attorney Suárez: Mr. Mayor, I just want to point a clarification. So, the direction was to begin discussions with Mr. Cutié. So, if for whatever reason those discussions are not successful and there's no -- you know, there's -- we don't reach an agreement with him to become city manager --? Or was that -- is that a conversation that will happen at that point? Because right now, staff doesn't have any other direction. I just want to make that clear.

Commissioner Menendez: We'll bring it back. I'll bring it back.

City Attorney Suárez: Okay.

Commissioner Menendez: With an update.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And this is why I suggested that we don't just look at a solitary candidate. It's just like when you're purchasing anything or you're interviewing people, you need to compare your candidates and choose the best for our city. Remember, Mr. Cutié was essentially forced out. He's resigned. We need to look carefully. I've learned in my law practice when clients move lawyers a lot, the problem is usually with the client, not the lawyers.

Mayor Lago: So, Mr. Interim City Manager, please join us. What I'm requesting from my colleagues on the Commission is that we have a lunch for the next 30 minutes. And when we come back, I would like to address all the items on the Commission, except if the Commission is willing, I'd like to move any City Commission items, I'd like to move all those items to the next Commission meeting as we've already had a pretty long day. So, please consider that during your lunch and we'll be back in 30 minutes at 3:45.