

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-11
April 16, 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 Manager, Amos Rojas, Jr.
City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Clerk, Billy Urquia
Police Chief, Ed Hudak
Police Sergeant, Beth Mager
Human Resources Director, Raquel Elejabarrieta

Public Speaker(s)

Christopher Challenger
Jackson “Rip” Holmes
Ignacio Alvarez
Jaime Salamanca

Agenda Item F-11 [5:33 p.m.]
Update on vacancies in the Police Department.
(Sponsored by Commissioner Castro)

Mayor Lago: Moving on, F-11. Commissioner Castro.

City Commission Meeting
April 16, 2024
Agenda Item F-11 - Update on vacancies in the Police Department.

Commissioner Castro: F-11 is in regard to the vacancies, the police department vacancies. This is very important to me and is very close to my heart. First and foremost, I would like to tell all the police officers that you are truly valued, and you do an exceptional job. I want to thank Ignacio Alvarez. He's running for sheriff and he's a resident and he has a business here in Coral Gables. Thank you. I know that you wanted to speak on this item and also Chris Challenger who's the president of the police union. Chief Hudak? Yeah. Okay. I know and please correct me if I'm wrong. I know because we went -- you told me -- you corrected me when we spoke about vacancies earlier. You told me that there were 23 vacancies, right?

Police Chief Hudak: There's what?

Commissioner Castro: 23?

Police Chief Hudak: Physical? No, there's 37, I believe what the number is. If you want, Commissioner, I mean, you can have the people speak and then I'll respond to any of the other issues that come up. I think it would be easier through the Chair just to defer if they have issues because I have my staff here. If something comes up in comments instead of trying to prolong this too long. So I'll yield if it's okay with the...

Mayor Lago: Anything else?

Commissioner Castro: Well, can I just ask you a couple quick questions?

Police Chief Hudak: Sure.

Commissioner Castro: And just correct me if I'm wrong.

Police Chief Hudak: I'll have Sergeant Schultz come up. I'm sorry, Sergeant Mager come up.

Commissioner Castro: There's 23 vacancies, 10 on-field extra positions from year 22nd and 23. We're supposed to have added five more positions on October 1st so I'm not even going to include those. And there's four more vacancies that are going to retire on April 30th. I think it's Bob, Kelly, Melissa, and Joe. And that's approximately 38 vacancies without even including the five that we're going to add on October. Is that accurate?

Police Sergeant Mager: I believe so, yes.

Commissioner Castro: Yes? Okay. Are there any applications in the department?

Police Chief Hudak: Yes, ma'am.

Commissioner Castro: Do you know how many?

Police Sergeant Mager: Did you want to talk about applications? Applications received or ...

Commissioner Castro: Applications received.

Police Sergeant Mager: Applicants that are currently in process?

Commissioner Castro: Well, you could tell me both, I guess.

Police Sergeant Mager: Well, currently I am the background sergeant.

Commissioner Castro: Uh-huh.

Police Sergeant Mager: So currently in backgrounds, we have eight applicants. Now to come to the background office and to be one of our applicants, you've passed the oral board, and you received a conditional offer. So, now these eight applicants they're in various stages because there's a big process before hiring. So, some are still waiting for polygraphs, psychological, physical agility tests, vision tests, a medical, and then the background. So, they're in various stages. So, we have eight currently.

Commissioner Castro: So, eight in background right now.

Police Sergeant Mager: Correct.

Commissioner Castro: Okay. And we have a very, very good background here in the City of Coral Gables. So, there's no guarantee to the people that are really in the background. And then after that, they need to go to field training, which still isn't -- there's no guarantee that those are going to go through.

Police Sergeant Mager: Correct, those eight that are in backgrounds, at any point through the steps, they could be disqualified.

Commissioner Castro: Beautiful. How many officers transferred in 2023, transferred out of the - out of City of Coral Gables?

Human Resources Director Elejabarrieta: So, separations to date for this year for this calendar year we've had 16...

Commissioner Castro: No, last year.

Human Resources Director Elejabarrieta: In 2023. Let me see if I have those numbers.

Commissioner Castro: My count is 26 but correct me if I'm wrong.

Human Resources Director Elejabarrieta: I don't have that number with me but that -- I don't have that number with me in 2023.

Commissioner Castro: And by April 30th, 11 officers will be retired.

Human Resources Director Elejabarrieta: Correct.

Commissioner Castro: Right? So, these numbers keep on racking up.

Human Resources Director Elejabarrieta: Right, the 37 includes those four that are retiring at the end of April.

Commissioner Castro: Yeah. We already spoke about exit interviews if we can implement that I think that would be a benefit not only for police, but for the whole city.

Human Resources Director Elejabarrieta: Absolutely.

Commissioner Castro: And why do we think that the officers are leaving? I know this is a question that I know the answer to but...

Police Chief Hudak: Well, I mean, your -- my position on why they're leaving may be different than yours or the union's. I just -- and that's why I think for a robust discussion, if there are issues out there that the union leadership thinks there are, other than having me respond to them before. The reality of it is, I think, and I can make it very clear, the highest US rookie salary is now in San Francisco. It starts at \$112,000. But, and according to this article, you know, that's not even enough. Why they're leaving, I can tell you a myriad of things that people have convinced or have talked to me about. Some of our officers moved. The officer that left last week was moving to Tamarac, so he went to work at Coral Springs, where my friend is the chief there. I thought he got a good deal as well. I've got some people, as we talked about previously, Commissioner, that they think they're going to get a better deal with the current contract in place that they're going to go to the County. That's why -- some people, it's family members. I know of other people within the organization now that have already talked to me confidentially that they're going to move on as well. The days of people being a police officer for 20 years are long gone. And as I've said to the union on December 11th, when we were at negotiations as well, the way to recruit is to handle this like a transfer portal. And as I've discussed with all of you, either collectively or individually, that's the way I look at it. And I'm sure the union leadership has taken issue with that. But I mean, we have a recruiting process in place. I mean, Sergeant Mager actually put together a video that has been acclaimed throughout the country on recruiting and we started that a very long time ago, not my decision. I think it was the Director of Public Safety that we started this back in 2017,

where we started coming up with recruiting strategies. We got to zero vacancies. And then again, people are going to move on. I think, you know, the contract obviously, and we've had these discussions, is part of the issue. And once that is resolved and we have a mutual agreement, we're going to be able to offer even more depending on what happens. You know, what people want now and from the chief side, this is everywhere. I mean, my last count, I think Doral has about 27 or 30 vacancies. Hialeah has 30 people in their academy class, which I couldn't get the one person in. So, I think we've taken pretty good measures to get -- we're using both academies now and talking with the Manager, you know, for the longest time, we had the highest standards, absolute highest standards. Everybody else has now caught up to us about what they said or what they require. So, what do I believe is the issue? I think immediate gratification. I think if you've been to any of my swearing-ins and talking to officers that come on, this has got to be a noble calling. This is not a nine to five job. And if it is, then you shouldn't be doing it. And I'll be very honest with you. So, you know, I think there's a lot of other issues that go into play of why they're leaving.

Commissioner Castro: But if you were to choose like the common denominator, or if there's a pattern of maybe the most common reason, what would you say it is?

Police Chief Hudak: Within our department?

Commissioner Castro: Yes.

Police Chief Hudak: The visceral conversations within the organization. I don't think I can put it any other different way. I -- and I'm not -- I'm going on what officers have said to me. I don't know if you know, I have an open-door policy. So, all of my staff will tell you that if anybody wants to talk to me from any employee and they are not allowed to stop them from setting an appointment to come in and sit with me. And I've met with several of them when they go on. I think financially, in Ed Hudak's opinion, their chief, they made a financial bad decision because of maybe not looking at everything else. So, I think that's part of the conversations they've had with me is they don't want to be accused of being the chief's boy or this or that. So, I think that's some of it. And I don't know if it's -- I'm not blaming one side or the other. I think that the coping mechanisms that we see, and Sergeant Mager can talk about this one. You know, we do psychological testings. We do polygraph tests, not so much to exclude anybody, but to check the validity of their answers. And some of the coping skills that we see aren't just there. And, you know, the reality is, I am so happy that we're -- our people are buying into the struggle well, which is specifically geared toward police officers and our employees for what they see every day. I mean, I know me, I know my why. I think some of the younger officers that we're seeing now don't understand that. And don't get me wrong. Some people are going to go to other jurisdictions because they want that call to call. And some people have taken issue with my next recruitment strategy that we've talked about, which is going after people that are going to retire, but don't really want to hang it up. And I believe there is a certain area there that we can benefit as the City of Coral Gables by bringing in some of those officers.

Commissioner Castro: So, you don't think compensation is playing an issue?

Police Chief Hudak: Oh, no, no. Listen, I think compensation, it isn't the only reason because I think, as you can see throughout the country, throwing money at the problem is not the only thing that a police chief needs to consider, okay? I mean, to think about making \$90,000 a year, you know, and again, I understand that. Some people at this age are chasing the money. When I was a rookie, I was chasing the money. I didn't care about retirement. I didn't -- just give me my money and give it to me right now. You know, thank God there were certain smarter people in the room later on in my career that allowed us to do catch-up clauses. So, I do believe the compensation is a part of it. I can tell you that the quicker we get a deal, the quicker that the recruitment people can do it. I mean, do we lose people, Sergeant Mager, to higher salaries?

Police Sergeant Mager: Absolutely.

Police Chief Hudak: So, our benefits package is part of it. Believe me, this group, this recruiting group, we are working as hard as we can with what we have right now. When the agreement is done, I think we're going to hit our stride. We're one of the few departments in the state that got to a zero vacancy. And the fact of the matter is that the Attorney General herself came down here and lauded us to be at zero. So, this is not endemic to us. I believe it's happened throughout the entire state. And you know, we get -- the State gives bonuses, we propose bonuses going forward. You know, I think the one thing I can tell you, and I could tell anybody watching this, as I've told you all individually, I don't care what the vacancies are. Our officers are working even harder than ever, but you all have given us the funds to fund that through salary savings. And not one shift has ever gone short because we have always staffed it. We have taken care of -- you know, there was a high-impact weekend here where we needed just about everybody to work off-duty jobs. And my office negotiated a better rate to make sure that we could cover Carnival on the Mile, the Moda event, and everything else. And those officers worked their tails off. We allowed them to work more hours, but we watched it closely to make sure that no fatigue or anything else set in. So, I'm willing to motivate or manipulate, if you will, any of our plans to get our officers as much coverage as they can.

Commissioner Castro: Do you feel morale is bad?

Police Chief Hudak: I think morale is bad, yes. I think for a myriad of different reasons. One is I've already stated, and I think any officer will tell you when the Commission put me in this position, I'm not in this for a popularity contest. My job is to make what decision I think is best for the department at the time. I have always slept with my decisions well, and I continue to, you know, do what I think is best. Have I pivoted a few times on what originally my thought process was, yes, because of my staff. I think they have brought up good ideas, working with HR as well. So, overall, I think there's a lot of factors that go into a morale issue. I don't say it's just one-sided. I think, you know, I would imagine anybody, and there's a bunch of people that have

sustained disciplines from me. That's my job. My job is to have it investigated, look at it, have my staff make recommendations and for me to make a decision. That's not going to make you popular. However, I ask any of you to check with anybody that I've disciplined. They may not like the discipline but ask them if they were treated fairly. Some will say no because they don't like what it is. But we have followed the process through our accreditation every time, regardless of who it is. And some people think I'm too lenient on certain individuals and other people think I'm too stringent on it. We pretty much follow a matrix.

Commissioner Castro: From my perspective, this is a big issue, the vacancies, my perspective. What is your plan to fill these vacancies?

Police Chief Hudak: Well, the plan comes into play when the union and the City have a negotiated, agreed to contract. Okay, right now, with the money we have -- so we're working with 27, let's say, real vacancies because we do have the money for the other 10. So, our staffing issues stay the same. The downtown unit of which you all approved us to have that did not take place in its full implementation because we didn't have the bodies. So already we have a 4/10 -- we had a 4/10 work schedule and it started in 2009. It was the first time the City of Coral Gables Police Department had a 4/10 schedule for the Patrol Division. We lost it at around 2012 when we started a unit called the SIT team. It was 15 reassigned people. It was before me. I'm sorry, it's 2012, is that what I said? So, we took 14 bodies. It went back to 5/8s in the Patrol Division. It took us until 2020 to get all the shifts back to 4/10s, which I believe is the most beneficial shift for the employees. It's not the most economic. If tomorrow, Commissioner, I get pushed that we have more people leave, I have -- there's a plan. The plan for staffing would be we go to 12-hour shifts. But as I've said to the employees, that's not something I want to do to the families of our employees. But will it give us enough bodies? Yes, while we continue to have detectives, while we continue to have motorcycle officers. To get all of those things, you have to look at how you're going to do that. The recruiting side of it, I think we're doing pretty good. I can tell you, you know, just looking at the workload assessment from the Professional Standards Division, I mean, and this is our latest, our workload assessment. In 2021, we had 111 files that were processed, 40 individuals were hired. The individual decreased to 28.4 percent respectively over 2020. In 2022, there was another decrease of 8.1 percent in applicant files processed, but an increase of 2.5 applicant hires means we got less, but we hired more in that ratio. Conversely, in 2023, we had 124 applicant files processed, which reflected a 21.6 percent increase in applications and a 19.5 percent decrease with 33 applicant hires. Today, today, and I understand there's a narrative out there. The oral boards have been trending upward as of 2021 with 22 and in '22 -- in 2022, oral boards increased by 81 percent and another 32 percent in 2023. So the matrix or the measurements that we use is we are getting applications. We are getting applications. I have other thoughts about what the issue is or what makes us attractive or not, but I'll reserve my comments for later if you allow me.

Commissioner Castro: She said that we had eight applications or at least eight that are going into background.

Police Sergeant Mager: Well, eight within backgrounds. The eight within backgrounds -- so, HR receives the applications. I'm not sure of the numbers that they receive monthly. We do oral boards. We've been consistently doing them on average, at least once a week. There was a time last month we were doing twice a week, and it's usually four applicants per oral board, not everybody passes of course. So, eight who have passed are currently on the board, like I said, in various stages.

Human Resources Director Elejabarrieta: We currently do monthly orientations for our police officers, and so that's when they receive, or when they turn in the second part of their application. And so we had one once a month and we usually get an additional 20 applicants. And so right now we have 16 that are scheduled for interviews. So, we hope to have close to 20 in background probably by the end of this month. So, we are getting plenty of applications. We host -- not we, with, you know, obviously the Background Unit, we host monthly orientations with the police -- with the police applicants to assist them in turning in their applications. We have oral board interviews once a week, sometimes twice a week. We're moving these candidates in quickly because we want to make sure that we process them, and we transfer them to background so then they can continue with the background.

Mayor Lago: And if I may add something, if I may, just very briefly. We have a very stringent background check and also a level of quality control that is unheard of in Miami-Dade County. And I want to be very careful what I say because I know he's going to look at me already and I know he's going to burn a hole through me, the chief. There's an individual who I had the pleasure of meeting who came to see me one day, and they told me that they were not hired by the police department. I looked at that individual's resume. I was taken aback by the quality of the individual. They didn't meet one of the requirements. And it wasn't the tickets, it wasn't crime, it wasn't any issue, I mean, the résumé was impeccable. I want to be very careful, very thoughtful what I say, but they didn't meet the requirements. It's very interesting to see the process when you see somebody on paper and you meet them, you're like, oh, this person is stellar. They'd be amazing, they'd be a great police officer. But then there's so many other things that I'm not saying, and the City Manager knows what I'm talking about, and so does the chief and everybody in front of you, that deals with analysis of that individual, and they don't meet the requirement, which is very frustrating, I imagine, very frustrating. And there has to be a level of confidentiality that you just can't say, listen, you tell internally to the Manager, listen, this person didn't meet the requirements when you give them the document based on the following reasons. It wasn't because they committed a crime, because they had too many parking tickets, because they didn't meet the amount of studies that are required, they didn't do well. It's the examinations that's certain -- and I was taken aback by the fact that this person didn't meet the qualifications to be a police officer because of certain tests that they have to go through that are so rigorous in regards to their, I want to be very careful what I say, and it just -- it opened my eyes a lot in regards to why it's just not that easy to fill these positions. It's very multidimensional. So, I just wanted to add that because

that's part of the conversation that sometimes we don't really talk about when we lose certain candidates as a result of other outliers that are critical to being approved.

Commissioner Fernandez: Are there any in the academy right now?

Police Chief Hudak: We have two in the academy that graduate next Friday and we have one more starting coming up. Two in the academy -- two had just entered and we have another one that's coming out of the City of Miami Academy. So, we're using both academies at the same time for the first time in my tenure as chief, we're sending them both, Miami or Miami Dade Community College.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

Commissioner Castro: If we can have the president of the FOP talk and I think I had asked the Clerk if we can have open...

City Clerk Urquia: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Okay.

Christopher Challenger: Christopher Challenger, Coral Gables, Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge 7. Commissioner, thank you for putting this on the agenda. Obviously, it's very important and my voice or job as the President of the Union is to be the voice of the members. Unfortunately, we feel that our voice is being ignored because a year ago, I brought this up. I brought it up to here, and it was almost like a warning that this is what's going on because I am an officer. I'm not a lieutenant. I'm not a sergeant. I'm not a major. I am on the bottom floor. I know what people are thinking because they -- we talk. And when you hear that everybody's applying out, it's a problem. It's a problem. And it gets worse when it's brought up and the Mayor says, we're top five. You say we're top five and then you bring Raquel up and she has to correct you and say we're top third. There's a big difference in that. Top five, top third. So, the belief that we are in the top is incorrect and it's evident that it's correct or incorrect by the amount of people leaving. And when I brought it up a year ago, along with the morale issues, you immediately cut me off, allowed Chief Hudak to add color to it, and then proceeded with a vote of confidence for him. That's how you treated the union president, who was a representative of the police department. And if you don't think that resonates with the members, they see that. Now, we did a morale survey. At that time, we were only a few down and you made it sound like, oh, it's going to -- I thought we were going to have a fiasco, 15. I was wrong. We've lost 26 in one year, 26 officers. Now if you want to know what 26 officers looks like, that front row is 12, the next one is another 12, that's 24, and you can add -- so you can have all these people get up and leave and that's what it looks like in one year. Since January of this year, we've lost 15 officers. And similar to Chief Hudak, I have an open-door policy too. And officers come to me and talk, but I do semi-exit interviews on why people are leaving. So, I have an idea of why people leave. And he mentioned

the officer that just left on Sunday to Coral Springs. He didn't move. He lives in Margate. And I talked to him on Thursday. Sunday was his last day. And what he told me was, Chris, I didn't want to leave. He goes, but day one at Coral Springs, I'm going to get a \$10,000 raise, day one. And then he said, in three years, I'll be making \$130,000. And that hit me because I said, that's amazing, because I've been here 22, and I make 98. So, if there's a question why people leave, it's not the environment here. This is a great environment, great residents. Nobody compares, but nobody can pay their bills. You can't buy a house. The benefits that come along with other departments -- because everybody's struggling to hire. We're all fishing from the same small pond of applicants. There's no difference. If you want to be a cop, you either want to go to whoever's going to hire you first. That's typically how it goes, but not now because everybody's hiring. But City of Miami, Miami Beach, Miami-Dade, we are all fishing for the same candidate. So, it's not on our training to hire people because they're doing a good job. They're doing the best they can. We're trying to take the same candidates from everybody and then it gets to who's paying more, who's doing this. But that's just part of it. The other part is morale. And Mayor, you've tossed around the term morale multiple times today. And I wish you tossed it around when I did the morale survey. When I did the morale survey, because some people might think or try to portray the narrative that it's just me, that I don't like Chief Hudak, or I'm telling people to leave. It's not just me. We did an anonymous survey, nobody knows, went through a third party, and I'll share some of the results of it. So, it is money that people want and benefits. But this is the other part that people that want to stay, this makes them leave. How would you rate the overall morale within the department? 90 percent said extremely poor or below average. So if there's a question why people are leaving and you blame it on money, this isn't just money. How would you rate the communication between the department's leadership and the officers on the front line? 72 percent said poor. Do you feel that the department has a strong ethical culture that treats all officers fairly. 79 percent said no. Now when I did that survey, only three people in this Commission responded back. Commissioner Castro, Commissioner Fernandez, and Commissioner Menendez. Now, I did get an email from Commissioner Anderson, and it said, thank you. It can't be done overnight. So I know what you're going to say. You guys have been here forever. What have you done? Well, they've reached out and they showed concern, similar to the concern that you showed when the Zoom call came up and someone said that a head of a board, Sue Kawalerski, said something and you wanted to look into it, you actually genuinely looked concerned. I wish you had that concern when I was a police officer and I stopped your friend, the person you placed on a board, Manny Chamizo. I wish you had that concern when I wrote a incident report on him and it went up the chain of command through Chief Hudak. It was the day after you got elected in 2021. And I saw you that day. I don't know if you remember. And I said, have you talked to your friend Manny Chamizo? And you said -- you looked at me and you said, thank you. That's what you said.

Mayor Lago: That's exactly what I didn't say. What you did was you tried to intimidate me. As you've done -- hold on, I'm responding to you.

Mr. Challenger: I'm still speaking.

Mayor Lago: But let me finish, because you made a comment. You're attacking my integrity. What you did was you tried to intimidate me at that moment. And as I've been very, very clear, if anybody breaks the law, you should throw the book at them at the end of the day. And it's your responsibility as a police officer, and it shows poor moral character in my opinion, to not hold somebody accountable if they did break the law. You shouldn't do anybody a favor at the end of the day. So don't try to stand up here and tell me...

Mr. Challenger: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Because hold on, hold on one second.

Mr. Challenger: Okay.

Mayor Lago: Because you know very well, very respectfully to you, you visited me multiple times at my office. I've always met with you. You've stayed over an hour and a half, two hours meeting with me. We've had conversations. We've agreed, we've disagreed, but we've had conversations. There's no need to come up here and attack me and say that I did -- that you did a favor for somebody who I know.

Mr. Challenger: I didn't. I didn't do a favor.

Mayor Lago: And I said thank you.

Mr. Challenger: I didn't do a favor.

Mayor Lago: What I looked at you was very clearly astounded that you would try to intimidate me and use force on me the day after I got elected as if you did me a favor that I had to repay to you. I have no allegiance, no allegiance to anybody except for the community here in the city. So if somebody breaks the law, make sure you hold them accountable.

Mr. Challenger: I'll address that. I didn't intimidate you. I had no power to intimidate you. I wasn't union president. I wasn't trying anything. I actually, honestly, if you want to know the truth, I thought you were going to take care of it because I did fail that day. I dropped the ball, he got me. And I thought after you reading the report, you would do the right thing and remove him from the Waterway Advisory Board.

Mayor Lago: I'll respond to you.

Mr. Challenger: Yes.

Mayor Lago: First off and foremost, everyone is innocent until proven guilty. If the gentleman was guilty, I would have removed him. Just like we have multiple people here who have people on boards that, again, have had issues or run ins with the law before, or with the Ethics Commission, and they have not been removed. At the end of the day, every single person is innocent until proven guilty. But as you admit, and I'm happy you admit it, you failed that day.

Mr. Challenger: I did.

Mayor Lago: And what you tried to do, what you tried to do was intimidate me in a way that as if I owed you a favor, but I continued to always have an open-door policy with you, even when you did become the head of the union. And I told you that I would work with you, and I told you it would be an opportunity, but that we wouldn't always agree. And everyone knows -- everyone knows that sometimes you're going to agree or disagree on issues, especially when it comes to an extensive union contract, which is long overdue. But please also remember, for those listening, we had another meeting today to discuss the union negotiations, and we're going back to the unions, hopefully to present a deal that will be ratified. But it's your responsibility to show the union members that deal, which you have yet to do. So...

Mr. Challenger: Can I -- can I address that issue?

Mayor Lago: (INAUDIBLE) because...

Mr. Challenger: A lot of today...

Mayor Lago: Can I explain to you why? Can I explain to you why?

Mr. Challenger: Yes, explain.

Mayor Lago: Because I've had police officers come to me and ask me, I haven't seen any deals that you've offered us. Where are the deals that you've offered us? And I said, you have to speak with your union representative. We're in the middle of negotiations, but you have a deal on the table that we offered, and you haven't shown it. And that's your responsibility to show. And what you're doing is again, like you did with me, trying to leverage yourself without a care for the actual people that you represent. So, please don't try to grandstand in front of everyone here...

Mr. Challenger: Can I respond?

Mayor Lago: And act like I did something wrong.

Commissioner Castro: I actually find it fascinating how everybody tries to intimidate the Mayor when it's the opposite. He intimidates everybody else.

Mr. Challenger: Can I address that? Can I address that point that I...

Mayor Lago: Of course.

Mr. Challenger: Because I know your response, the term false narrative has been thrown out today. It has been thrown.

Mayor Lago: I used it.

Mr. Challenger: Yeah, you've said it and you're saying it. The fact that I haven't provided the contract, every member has seen it. Every member has seen it. And I have a group chat with everybody.

Mayor Lago: Let them vote.

Mr. Challenger: That's -- first of all, if anybody knows about deals, that's not how you do a deal. You know good deals, you do. You had one on Ponce. So, we vote -- we vote when we believe it's good for the City and us. And technically a vote was taken. We got that offer December 11th, December 11th. And I was just told Commissioner Anderson was saying we were stalling. I want to provide a timeline for everybody here. August 2nd, we provided our offer. We came back two weeks later, three weeks later, we created our own offer. The city came back with their only offer, their single, you say multiple offers, Mayor. It was one offer that wasn't changed. So, we come back and then in December, it took four months for the city to give us the offer, August 2nd and then December 11th. And I'll give the city some credit, they were ready December 2nd to give that offer. We had a meeting on December 11th, we got that offer. We showed it to the members that day, that day, and then we had a meeting 10 days later. We altered our offer. The city came back and said, we think our offer is good enough, and we are not going to change anything unless we know how it affects the pension, and we're not paying for it. So, from that meeting, we, the union, paid \$12,000 to get items costed out for the pension. Now at this time it's December 22nd. That's when this is. So, it's Christmas time, it's New Year's time. We get it costed out; they don't begin until after New Year's. At that time, it takes him a month, the actuary, the actuary that does our retirement board, takes him one month. He comes back and we set up a meeting immediately. And that's how long it took. Commissioner Anderson, you say we stalled. It takes two to tango. We rushed through the process. The longest process was from August 2nd to December 11th, and we had no control over that. So, the narrative that -- the false narrative that Mayor Lago and you, Commissioner Anderson, I know we spoke about it right here, that maybe you were...

Vice Mayor Anderson: But it's April 16th, from December 11th to April 16th, you're talking over four months.

Mr. Challenger: Okay, I explained. So, we had a meeting after December 11th.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Right.

Mr. Challenger: We spoke -- an FOP meeting. We all spoke about it. They were all advised of the contract. Nobody wants to put it to a vote. You don't put every contract, every offer to a vote. You don't do that. That's not how it works. So, we went back and that's when they said, you need an act -- we're not paying, we're not changing anything. We think our offer is good. That offer wasn't good. We lost 15 people since that offer came out, 15 people. Now, there's these false narratives and all this comes out and it makes the union, like we're the bad guys. We're not -- we are trying to get a deal done. We wanted -- the city could have easily come back in October with their first offer, November with their first offer. They came back in December. So, saying that, that's where we are right now, but I'm telling you, just like I said a year ago, there's 15 applications out there, and it's not just pay. It's the morale and the leadership here. And when I say leadership, it's a systemic failure in our department right now. You don't get these numbers when everything is great. You don't. It does not happen. So, when Chief Hudak says this is what the issue is, and he doesn't address the one clear item that was done by every officer in the department? 143. That -- it was 82 percent of the membership. That's a good portion. That's how they feel. That's not how Christopher Challenger feels. That's how the police department feels. We have a problem here. We can't stick our head in the sand, we need to address it.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Challenger: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Thank you very much, Chris.

Mr. Challenger: Thank you.

Commissioner Castro: Okay, good night.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Chief.

Police Chief Hudak: The problem is still the same. We still need bodies. And I submit to you, one, I have never actually partake in that survey, although I'm still a dues paying member of the FOP, even though they don't represent me. So, if the membership feels that strongly about me, I would hope that maybe they would just remove me from the FOP. The concerns I have is not necessarily where we've been, it's where are we going. And you want to talk about recruiting Commissioner Castro? Here's what I know. Scroll down -- and this is not the member's fault. Scroll through the Instagram account in Coral Gables FOP. It's hard for me to understand why the union leadership would celebrate officers leaving more so than officers coming on. I get the retirements, that is -- and it's part of where I'm going to be shortly. But if you look at the Instagram pages that are out there, you want to know what a crux you have to get over as a chief of any department. As soon as you look at the FOP website, why would you want to work here? What

they don't say is that we give officers a recruiting bonus every day. If they wanted to make more money, bring us more people. If they get hired, they get money, we've paid it out. We pay it out for communications operators. Going forward, the existential threat to the police department's recruiting is going to be the narrative that its union leadership makes. I'm not taking -- and again, the contract's the contract. And as I said earlier, I don't expect everybody to like me. And I've said this to the members. I'm not in this for a popularity contest. I've been here too long. I'm going to make the decisions I think are right. The future of the department is off standing over there as far as the administration's concerned. And grievances, things like that, I was on the other side, I know how it works. It's not a one-point issue. And whether it was 140 or whatever volunteered, I mean, I would ask the question, has the union been asked to take a vote on what the proposal is? I don't know. But I do know this because I had cleared my calendar. The FOP waited and intentionally would not open negotiations with the HR director until you all had come to an agreement with the fire department. And that was months. I don't think any of us were anticipating that. So yeah, things have to get priced out. I understand it's late. And I'm sure people talk to Chris as much as they talk to me. But you know, I'm good at pivoting. I really am. I'm not a dancer, but I can pivot. And once we get on the same page, I'm good. But it's a trust thing. It's a trust thing. And I think if we are representing the good of our employees, whether it be the president of a union or the chief of department, we both have a stake in that. We both have a stake in that. And I don't think it's in everybody's best interest to spend money for union paying dues, because I am one, right, I pay the dues, that we're doing grievances or things like that for people that no longer work here. I don't get that. So, I'm sorry if that offends people within the organization, I don't care because I don't think that's right. So, I do believe we are going to be able to get back to where we were, which was zero. Okay, this department is a leader in the state, in the state. The only rhetoric that's out there that say we suck is our own union. And that I personally have an issue with, but I can work with anybody.

Mayor Lago: Can I ask you two questions, Chief?

Police Chief Hudak: Sure.

Mayor Lago: When were we at zero? What was the date?

Police Chief Hudak: When was it, 2022? I think it was 2022 for a short period. I know that I have the number somewhere. 2022.

Mayor Lago: A year ago, from today...

Police Chief Hudak: For about two months.

Mayor Lago: What were we?

Police Chief Hudak: I think we were about six down. I think I have -- I have my charts.

Mayor Lago: Well, one year, I'd like to get that on the record. In one year, we've gone from 6 to 37, which is not really 37 because it's 27 because 10 spaces are the ones that we opened up.

Police Chief Hudak: Right, right.

Mayor Lago: Okay, all right. I don't want to put any of the officers here because I have too much respect for you under the hot lamp, but if you didn't receive that survey, I'd like to know if the other police officers here received that survey.

Police Chief Hudak: I think it was just active union members or it might've been bargaining union members. I don't know.

Mayor Lago: All I know is that it was anonymous.

Police Chief Hudak: I don't know. I don't know.

Mayor Lago: So, I just want to try to get as much information as possible so we can make the decisions that we have to.

Commissioner Castro: So, leadership is not part of the union.

Mayor Lago: I understand that, but anybody -- but there could have been people who were not part of leadership (INAUDIBLE).

Mayor Lago: Yeah, there's a bargaining unit, non-bargaining unit.

Commissioner Castro: What's important to me is admitting that there is a problem and finding a solution.

Police Chief Hudak: Well, and again, I don't think it's specific to us, but Commissioner, there is a problem in law enforcement because nobody wants to do the job anymore. Whether it be situations like this or situations throughout the country where, you know, in Denver, they defunded their police department by \$800 million to help with some of the influx that they're dealing with. You know, New York City is going through the same thing. I told you, San Francisco. I mean, Miami-Dade, you know, they were putting people through the academy and they're going for laterals because they're getting ready for what's next. So, you know, are we -- you know, again, don't forget, if people leave us early, they have to pay back a certain amount of money that this City invested tax dollars into it. And one of the individuals, as we talked about earlier today, went through the academy and part of doing business on a small department is well, they'll pay the exit fee before he even got sworn in.

Commissioner Castro: And that's \$13,000.

Police Chief Hudak: It's a little bit more than that, but yes, that calls for the background people as far as everybody else. And that's part of the contracts that we have. Now, my policy going forward from this has always been, as I've told all of you individually, is if they go because they think the grass is greener, I'm not going to bring them back. But like I said, I can pivot. And my staff, they're pretty good dance partners. They want me to pivot.

Commissioner Castro: I want you just to tell me so that I feel comfortable, I'm going to do anything and everything that is necessary to fill these vacancies.

Police Chief Hudak: I do that every day. I do that every day, Commissioner. You have my commitment. I will tell you how many times my staff comes in and I will say, look at this person, look at this person. I mean, I got orders when I was first put in this position by people in these chairs, I was told to be the face of the department. Part of being the face of the department is recruiting, and I'm looking. And I know we have some conversations we have to have, but I'm already targeting those officers from other departments that are looking to, hey, I'm not ready to hang it up. I want to do a couple more years, and I just laud, come on down here, come to Coral Gables. I mean, it is, the Governor's giving out \$1,000 checks, \$5,000 checks for people coming from out of state. That's how big it is. That's how big it is. And we'll get there. I'm committed to it. I'm committed to it every day.

Commissioner Castro: Okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: So, will the two sides be willing to sit down with me and working on some of the morale issues that the union has and the concerns that you have, and we can...

Police Chief Hudak: I don't have a problem sitting down.

Commissioner Fernandez: Have a sit down and let's try to work through this. You know, I think that if we all work together, I think we can find a solution. I know that negotiations are underway, we're working on it. And I think the word you had to send back to the officers is you have a committed Commission that wants to compensate them adequately. And I think that's the message that we've been sending throughout, let's have a sit down the next couple of weeks if the Manager's okay with it. And let's air out the grievances and try to find a path forward.

Police Chief Hudak: Case in point -- yes, sir. Your first answer is yes, but here was something else that maybe the union president can agree to now. Between now and the time that the City and the union come to an agreement on a contract, we stop some of the anonymous videos and putting out some of the things to the residents that say the City is not safe because there's 37 vacancies, because that is the farthest thing from the truth.

Commissioner Castro: How many boots do we currently have on the ground?

Police Chief Hudak: Right now?

Commissioner Castro: Um-hmm.

Police Chief Hudak: We have what our minimum staffing is, 12 officers, supervisors. We pay the overtime. You can ask the gentleman over there and the ladies over there. They know what money we have and it's not costing taxpayers more. We're using the vacant positions.

Mayor Lago: So, what I find interesting, and this is directed to Mr. Challenger, there was a video that they put me on -- and I'm directing the statement, not asking for your comment. Mr. Challenger and the -- by the direction of Mr. Challenger, they put out a video recently that was a video to scare the residents. And I got a few phone calls from residents in regard to the position that we're in. And I talked to them a little about vacancies and the things that we're doing and how we're in the middle of a negotiation. But to me, I just think, again, I know that we're trying to achieve a goal here. And I know that you have an agenda in an effort to get the best deal. But to scare the residents and to tell them that, you know, that we may be short -- it's my understanding and I've asked the chief and the chief has told me that we've never been short in staffing in one iota in the last, would you say two years? We haven't had a staffing issue. Crime is not up. So to me, I think those videos, they don't help the cause. They may help your cause in, you know, riling people up, but I don't think they help in an effort to -- the Commission to be able to negotiate on solid footing. And I think that the effort is to maybe scare the Commission in an effort to give you the best deal but there's only certain limits that we have. There's certain -- I mean, I won't raise taxes. We have to find ways to cut expenditures. We have to find ways to be more efficient. You're going to get offered by one of the largest -- you're going to get the largest offer that's ever been given to your union in the history of the city. And it's going to put you in a very competitive position with all of the other police departments. But the idea of sending a video out there that I get -- I got, I think, maybe two or three residents send it to me. It wasn't overwhelming, so it didn't work that well. But the two or three people were elderly people who were a little distraught over the issue, asking me, oh my God, are we losing -- how much police are we losing? Are there people that are not going to be working at night? I just personally think that's distasteful. I don't think that's in the best interest of the city, and I don't think it's going to move me one way or another. What I think will move me is instead of coming up here and making a comment like insulting me or doing a video like that, I think what's most effective is like what Commissioner Fernandez says, sit down with the chief, have a conversation. You know, that's an effective way to come to some sort of common ground. The numbers are the numbers. When we negotiate them, we're trying to give you the best deal because we need the police. Without the police and no law and order, we're in a very tough position as a city.

Mr. Challenger: I'll address that video. The video is not to scare, it's not. It's to state fact. The union feels like we're ignored. And unfortunately, the only thing that gets anybody's attention is

telling them. And the video is a way to tell them we're short. I didn't make that video, guess what? We're not up here right now.

Mayor Lago: I disagree. I disagree.

Mr. Challenger: No, it's been a year.

Mayor Lago: Let me tell you, I disagree. First off, you don't need the video. The video reflects poorly on you. It does. And that's what people told me. The video doesn't, in my opinion, give the best -- we're still -- we were still scheduled to have a meeting to negotiate today, right?

Police Chief Hudak: Yes.

Mayor Lago: It wasn't like the video produced the negotiation today. It didn't. It didn't. So, at the end of the day, it didn't push me one way or another. So, I just think that Commissioner Fernandez makes a great point. Let's sit down with the Chief, find common ground. You know, I don't think that going out there and telling residents to call me or to call and then putting my face prominently -- by the way, it's very easy to blame the Mayor, but don't forget, the Mayor has only one power that the Commissioners don't have, and that is that I run the meeting here, and they can override me whenever they want, which they've already done it in this Commission meeting. So, it doesn't really -- so when you say that it's my fault, my fault, my fault, in the last year, we've gone from 6 vacancies to 37 vacancies, you can blame me all you want.

Mr. Challenger: I didn't blame you.

Mayor Lago: Hold on.

Mr. Challenger: I didn't blame you.

Mayor Lago: Hold on, yes, you did in the video.

Mr. Challenger: No, no.

Mayor Lago: In the video you did.

Mr. Challenger: I said you ignored it. That's not blaming, you ignored it.

Mayor Lago: Excuse me. In the video you did because you didn't include any other of my colleagues in the Commission because it doesn't benefit you, the narrative that you're trying to throw out there. And I never ignored you. You want to know why I never ignored you? Because when I haven't been able to meet with people on a weekly basis for one reason or another because my schedule is too busy, family, City, other obligations, work, they can meet with me on a Friday,

and I have to meet with you. I have no other choice but to meet with you with Open Fridays. Just like if you go see Fernandez, Castro, Anderson, and Menendez, they have no choice but to meet you because it's called Open Hours. They do it for an hour, they do it for two hours. I do it for almost four hours on a Friday. I can't not see you. You're just going to have to wait because there's 15 residents there. But to say that I ignored you, it's an impossibility to ignore you because we can't. We all have open office hours.

Mr. Challenger: You ignored us is what I meant.

Mayor Lago: I don't. I have the utmost respect for police. And I'm just telling you, let's move on from the rhetoric and the insults and let's get to an agreement and let's put this in solid footing and move on, move on. But the video doesn't shape the narrative for me. It just doesn't work so (INAUDIBLE).

Mr. Challenger: It brought aware -- it brought awareness, though.

Mayor Lago: It didn't (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Castro: Mr. Challenger, I don't think anything on the video was misleading. In fact, I think that most of the things there were facts. But if you disagree, go ahead and tell me what you think wasn't a fact.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner, again, I want to move forward on a positive note. I'm just telling you that those videos don't work. Let's move forward on a positive note and find a solution. We have an offer on the table that was going to be presented to them once again, I'm just asking them, present it in writing, present it in writing with the Manager's assistance to all your members and let them say yea or nay. It's simple, but you're getting the best deal that's ever been offered in the City of Coral Gables right now. It's the best deal.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Mayor, I just want, you know, just so you know that you're not ignored. Just because I write thank you to you doesn't mean that I'm ignoring you. I brought the issues up with the Chief. I had a discussion with the chief because these things need to be resolved. Take the opportunity, sit down with the Chief. If Mr. Fernandez is available, fine. If he's not available, any one of us, Manager I'm sure including, will be glad to sit down with you. I'm glad to sit down with you. Okay, and I'm available if you come. But I haven't seen you.

Mr. Challenger: Oh, so it's my fault, you haven't seen me?

Vice Mayor Anderson: No, but I'm saying I...

Mayor Lago: No one's blaming you for anything.

Mr. Challenger: Well, she said I haven't...

Vice Mayor Anderson: I just said I'm available.

Mayor Lago: I'm not blaming you, no one's blaming this Commission.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I did say -- I did say (INAUDIBLE).

Commissioner Castro: You know, it is that video and the fact that it was on other platforms, the reason that we are having this meeting. So, if you want to know if that video worked for something, yes, it did work for something. That's what pressured me to put this on this agenda.

Mr. Challenger: Thank you, Commissioner.

Commissioner Castro: Because I did get calls and I did get emails.

Police Chief Hudak: Just for a point of clarification, because of bodies that have sat here before, our officer to thousand ratio is set. And I need to be very clear that if you factor in the 37 vacancies based on our budgeted strength of 193 before the other 10, our officer to resident ratio is 3.17 to 1,000. If it's 27, which really it is that we're seeing based at 193, it's 3.37. The national average in 2019, last time it was checked for the entire country from the FBI, it's 2.3 per 1,000. So, even with the vacancies we have, we are still providing the services that our residents demand in one of the best cities in the country. And that's my job to make sure that we're out there and we will continue to be. Going forward, and to start to your point, Commissioner Castro, the recruiting has never stopped for me. I think the one thing that we need to do, and maybe when the contract is done, is to stop the rhetoric on our side and start working together to try and bring people in. Because we have worked with other unions that are putting out advertisements for us, which is kind of unique. So, I am committed to all of you. You all have reached out to me. You have, Commissioner, you have, Vice Mayor, you have, Commissioners, Mayor as well. When those questions come up from the union, I'm available. We haven't had one labor management meeting that I'm aware of now. So that's something that has to start, but it started before they were even elected. So, we'll get there.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll reach out to both of you, and we'll sit down.

Police Chief Hudak: Absolutely.

Commissioner Fernandez: And again, rank and file, you have the support of this Commission, whether you hear about it sometimes or not, and you know it better than anybody, we have your back.

Mr. Challenger: Thank you, Commissioner.

Police Chief Hudak: Thank you.

Mayor Lago: So, moving on, if there's nothing else, Commissioner Castro, I'd like...

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, before you move on, I have additional members of the public asking to speak on this.

Mayor Lago: Okay.

City Clerk Urquia: First speaker is Jackson Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon.

Jackson "Rip" Holmes: So, I'm going to be brief. Fortunately, it is true now with our heroes, Mr. Menendez and our new City Manager, Mr. Rojas, that the people are back in power. And so, we don't want to blow it. So, I have a couple of little, tiny pieces of the puzzle. No one knows as much about these pensions as you do, but if you have 999 pieces of the puzzle, and I only have one, I'm still going to share it, just in case. But I first want to say, the record is clear. Chris Challenger has 100 percent credibility and Chief Hudak and Mayor Lago have zero credibility. The record is clear. He warned us. Alright, so moving on then with my piece of the puzzle, because now, thanks to you, all of you, the people are back in, so we have a vested interest in your succeeding. And so, if -- let's go into a make-believe world. I'm going to say this, and then it will be short. If I were a City Commissioner, what I would say is I don't want to see these defined pensions where the policeman gets his total pension even if there's a depression. Even in the Great Recession, the police got their pensions, even if the pension funds were tanking. Even in coronavirus, the police got their pensions. It's as if the police are above the law. I don't want to be in such a place. So, if I were a Commissioner, I would say, nobody gets hired with this golden pension that puts them above the law where the country can go and did go into the great recession and the coronavirus and yet these people got their pensions, that the whole country could go up in flames, but the police still get their pensions. I would say no more of those pensions. Then -- and I'm going to make it short -- I would say we've got to be competitive with Miami and Miami Beach. And I think that Mr. Challenger's asks are, for me, sufficient. The police have to pay more. We can't lose this race against Miami and Miami Beach. We've got to have the best police around. So, I would give them everything else. I'd say kill these golden pensions, but to some extent, just I'll give them anything else. Thank you, Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Thank you for your insight.

City Clerk Urquia: Ignacio Alvarez.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Alvarez, how are you, sir?

Ignacio Alvarez: Mr. Mayor, Commission. Commissioner Castro, thank you for bringing this agenda up. My name is Ignacio Alvarez. As you stated, I am a candidate for sheriff in Miami-Dade County, but I'm not here because of that. I'm here because I'm a resident of Coral Gables. I'm a business owner in Coral Gables. And yes, that video that Officer Challenger put out is what brought this to my attention and it's concerning to me. And listening to everything that has been said. I first want to say is, I think that the Chief and his Assistant Chief who was a long-term colleague of mine done a great job filling those vacancies. If you have 37 vacancies, if you're meeting the minimum standings, you're doing an excellent job and I commend them both. But my message is not to them, my message is to the Commission. There's only so much that police officers can do over and over and over again. You have 37 vacancies. They're picking it up over and they're picking up the slack. But it's going to get to the point that they just can't do that anymore. I'm here to support the FOP. I'm here to support the Coral Gables police officers. And I'm here to support you guys, especially Mr. Rojas, who I've known for a long time and has a law enforcement background. But 37 vacancies, 27, like you said, Mr. Mayor, over the last two years is concerning to me as a business owner, and it's concerning to me as a resident. There are a lot of issues clearly that have been expressed here. I congratulate Mr. Fernandez for at least taking the effort to try to sit both sides down, or at least coming up with that idea, but we need to start somewhere. When I started 25 years ago, this is one of the places I applied for in 1992, 30 years ago. I applied for Miami-Dade Police Department, and I applied for Coral Gables Police Department. Why? Because of the reputation Coral Gables had. And the chief is right. The standards were very high back then. Miami-Dade Police Department called me first, took the job, and I have no regrets at all. But I moved into Coral Gables because not only the reputation of the City, but the reputation of the police department. We have to do something. And the reason why I'm coming up here to speak as a resident and as a business owner is where do we begin? And we need to begin by giving the officers a contract where -- I'm going to use the motto I've been using in the campaign. They need to be the highest paid and the best trained. I've been saying that on the campaign because I believe for MDPD, we also need to be the best paid and the best trained. And I call on the Commission to do that for the police officers. Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: Jaime Salamanca.

Mayor Lago: Good afternoon, sir. Whichever one you like.

Jaime Salamanca: I wasn't supposed to be here for this specific subject. I just want to -- I'm a resident of Coral Gables. I want to express my total gratitude to the Chief of Police. The police department is incredible. They have helped us in our neighborhood. We have a neighborhood -- neighborhood chat, probably 30 plus families. And we have an issue in our area and they're being very supportive. They're always there to help. The credibility is incredible. We feel safe. We feel happy. We've seen what's going on everywhere else and I feel blessed to have a police department, a Police Chief. I'm sorry, I yell, I get upset because what you said is a complete misrepresentation. Probably it's your experience, not mine, not everyone that I know. And I just

had to say it out loud. And my support for Mayor Lago, since he was a Commissioner, he was there with the people, with the residents, hearing them, hearing us, helping us. And I'm sorry, I lost my temper. It's -- what I just heard is a part of the universe. And just, again, the police, utmost respect, thank you so much. Me personally, I wouldn't mind raising my taxes if that implies keeping them the best pay. So, the police is everything. So, if there's anything that I need to do to support the cause, any affiliation, whatever it is, please let me know because I'm going to make sure I support that and I'm going to make sure all the people that are behind me will support it. Police, top priority, and that's at least what I want to say in this specific topic. I think there's another, I don't know if I'm late or not, but probably I will.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. Thank you for your enthusiasm.

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker -- Mr. Mayor, next speaker is going to be on Zoom, it's Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Cruz, the floor is yours.

City Clerk Urquia: Ms. Cruz is not unmuting. I'm going to go to the next speaker, it's Ian Sheldon.

Mayor Lago: Sir, the floor is yours.

City Clerk Urquia: And he is no longer here either, so alright, that's it.

Mayor Lago: So, we have another item now that we're 45 minutes late for. Would you have anything else you'd like to say?

Commissioner Castro: No. Thank you very much for everybody here.

Mayor Lago: Excuse me. I apologize. I'm going to take a five-minute break just so we can get everybody -- can get organized, and we'll be back to take Items E-5, E-6, E-7, E-8, E-9, and E-10. Thank you very much. See you in five minutes.