

**City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting  
Agenda Item C  
June 11, 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, Amos Rojas, Jr.  
City Clerk, Billy Urquia**

**Public Speaker(s)**

**Maria Cruz  
Roberta Neway  
Jackson Rip Holmes  
Jessica Keller  
Mark Trowbridge  
Akee Fernandez**

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Agenda Item C [9:30 a.m.]

**Public Comment**

Mayor Lago: Moving onto Public Comment.

City Clerk Urquia: The first speaker today Mayor is Mrs. Maria Cruz.

Mayor Lago: Before we move to Public Comment, really quickly, I want to make sure I take care of one issue. Item H-4 is being deferred at the request of staff. Good morning.

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Mrs. Cruz: Good morning. Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road since 1976. It's a beautiful day in the City of Coral Gables and let me remind you that this is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. Have a wonderful day.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Roberta Neway.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Ms. Neway: I'm Roberta Neway, 1236 South Alhambra Circle, 33146. I'm here to talk in support of Resolution F-4, which is bike lanes on Alhambra, and in support of complete streets in general. I know all of you are committed to Vision Zero, public health physical and emotional, lessening traffic whenever possible and equality. Complete streets address all of these goals. I went door-to-door along several blocks of Alhambra last Sunday and the support for bike lanes was overwhelming. It was really very, very positive and one thing I noticed was the younger the person, the higher the enthusiasm, and I thought, that's great, because young people are the future. And that got me to thinking, I'd like to close with a quote from Enrique Penalosa, the ex-Mayor of Bogota, quote, "Children are kind of indicator species. If we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for everyone." Complete streets can do this. Thank you for your time and have a great day and stay dry.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Thank you for joining me on Alhambra to do that.

Ms. Neway: You're welcome.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Rip Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Good morning, sir.

Mr. Holmes: Greetings. Let's see if I can give you something to ponder as a solution. We have a police and union agreement today. I'm going to let it speak for itself, but I'm sure that all of you are aware and even the people at home that the underlying problem is lack of police applicants, that is young people maybe don't want to be police anymore. We're not getting enough applicants and it turns out that this is actually a nationwide problem. I Googled that NBC has reported on it, a number of quasi police agencies have reported on it. It's a national problem. So, I started thinking, why. So, what happened nationally that would discourage people from wanting to be police officers and you think of George Floyd. So, when you look at that incident, you know four years ago, you had the police officer choking out an innocent man. Can we get the slide up.

City Clerk Urquia: Cable TV will put up the video for you, sir.

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Mr. Holmes: Can you believe this. I think I can convince you right now and the people watching on TV. We may come up with an answer for this nationwide problem. They arrested the wrong police officer and the wrong police officer as to who choked out George Floyd is in prison. So, if you look at this slide you see the guy that we saw on the video. He has an elongated face. Then if you look at the one on the right of that slide, that's the guy who was arrested and who's in prison, and these are not the same people. If you remember that video, it was the guy on the left, so how come he's not under arrest. He's the one that choked out George Floyd. Why is the guy on the right now supposedly of the same name, the one who got arrested and is in prison. Something strange here. Can we go to the video. If we can get the public to realize that this whole case doesn't add up, maybe we'll get more police applicants. Trying to get the video.

[Video playing – Technical problems]

City Clerk Urquia: It's not playing sir.

Mayor Lago: I think we're having an issue with the video. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes. It's not playing. It seems to be an issue with the video.

Mr. Holmes: Should I come back and finish up. The video is important. Shall I just sit down, and we'll straighten it out.

Mayor Lago: Perfect. Thank you very much. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Jessica Keller.

Mayor Lago: Ms. Keller, good morning.

Ms. Keller: Good morning. I'm out of breath. My name is Jessica Keller, I've been a member of this community for more than twelve years now. I came to speak today regarding the legislation sponsored by Kirk Menendez, Rhonda Anderson and Ariel Fernandez. I'm happy to see this legislation for city staff, four items that I think need to be addressed. The Trial Board needs to be addressed in order for this legislation to have any teeth. Number one, specific procedures need to be outlined in the Charter for the Trial Board. No one knew what to do when the Trial Board was assembled when I personally participated. The Trial Board members were not aware of the limits, if any of their power; two, appoint Trial Board members like any other board, not only when needed. This eliminates stacking the board against employees; three, develop and administer training for employees so they know when to do, so they know what to do, if they find themselves in a position and need protection; four, elected officials...

Mayor Lago: Sorry to interrupt you. Can you repeat number three. I didn't catch it.

Ms. Keller: I'm sorry Mayor.

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Mayor Lago: No, take your time. You're the one that's rushing. I let people speak as long as they have to speak.

Ms. Keller: Number three, develop and administer training for employees so they know what to do if they find themselves in a position and need protection. Four, elected officials should not be permitted to communicate with Trial Board members to avoid tampering. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk would you do me a favor, please. Will you take those minutes and hopefully when this item comes up, we can include those minutes in that item.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes sir.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

City Clerk Urquia: So, we're going to go to Zoom next. The first speaker on Zoom is Mark Trowbridge.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Trowbridge, good morning. Mr. Trowbridge.

City Clerk Urquia: He's on.

Mr. Trowbridge: Good morning, everybody.

Mayor Lago: Good morning.

Mr. Trowbridge: Thank you for the opportunity to be with you today and to share with you a little bit about a potential opportunity for the City of Coral Gables. As Billy mentioned, I'm Mark Trowbridge with our Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce and we're located at 201 Alhambra Circle, Suite 100. The company I want to talk about is Jolt, some of you may have heard of them before. I believe that the city has been looking at this opportunity for some time now, but they have become active with our Chamber and of course, opportunities like this we'd love to promote on behalf of our greater business community. Jolt provides fast EV chargers, and they are operated and maintained at the highest level, at no cost to the city. As a matter of fact, they could be a potential resource of additional revenue to the city via their promotional support. And each day they give 7 kilowatt hours of free charging to every user who will utilize their services. The free energy encourages EV owners to visit Coral Gables, which is good for our restaurant and retail businesses, especially during that time of charging when they may want to run an errand, get a coffee, etc. Jolt establishes and exclusively installs these fast chargers that take about 31 minutes, which aligns well, as I mentioned before, with retail opportunities and getting that great cup of Joe. About 73 percent of their users responded that they will run an errand during that timeframe, supporting all of our local businesses downtown. We have also found that they have found that a single charger can generate up to almost \$90,000 in incremental local business revenue over the course of a year, and they do partner with local businesses to advertise on the charges themselves and via their IOS Android App. They'll be offering interactive wayfinding, which is important for our visitor community, allowing users and other pedestrians to locate and visit those local

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businesses. And as you know, the Chamber operates the city's welcome center, so we see that as a great partnership extension of the work Jolt will be doing. They use an inhouse marketing team to support local businesses in creation, design and development to use for their services, and they also give back about five percent of their screen time to the city to advertise community events, businesses or other city messaging that would be of importance and timeliness, including emergency issues. With that, I just wanted to recommend that as you talk about that today, you understand the residual effects of having a company like Jolt involved. We look forward to hearing your discussion on that. Thank you all very much from our Chamber.

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

City Clerk Urquia: Next speaker, Mr. Mayor is Akee Fernandez.

Mayor Lago: The floor is yours.

Mr. Fernandez: Good morning. Can you hear me.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Mr. Fernandez: Okay. Good morning, Commissioners, my name is Akee Fernandez, 1542 Mendavia Avenue. I'm speaking today because I wanted to request that item D-3, the appointment of Javier Banos to the Historic Preservation Board be pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion. The reason I'm doing so is because, while I do not know Mr. Banos personally, I do know that this individual is Editor and Chief of the political activist news site, Gables Insider. My fear is that this appointment will politicize a board that has the authority to infringe on people's property rights. This appointment should be one based on merit, not politics or personal relationships. I would ask Commissioner Fernandez to make his case to the voters and to the rest of the Commission why, in his view, Mr. Banos is the best choice, and I would welcome discussion from the rest of the Commission on this matter. Also, I wanted to echo the sentiments of Ms. Neway regarding F-4, in full support of anything that provides more transit options. I think it's a win for the city. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Cable TV is informing me that they are ready to go back with the video for Mr. Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Holmes, welcome back.

[Video Presentation]

Mr. Holmes: Okay, we're all familiar with the George Floyd murder video and murder case wherein a Minneapolis police officer named Derrick Chauvin in a video shows him choking Mr. Floyd to death and it's very shocking. However, it turns out that there appear to be some very startling discrepancies in the case, and you're actually looking at – I'm going to walk you through

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it, if you will allow me. First of all, we know that this is the officer we saw in the video choking out Mr. Floyd, Derrick Chauvin of Minneapolis. Now, this shocking thing is that the person who is under arrest appears to be this fellow. See how they say Derrick Chauvin's first court appearance. If you wonder, these two people don't look alike, do they. This fellow has an elongated face, right. That's the one we saw in the video. He is more of a round face. These are not the same person, and if we move up here, and now look, you wonder, do I know what I'm talking about. So, this is a CNN video, you can see here Derrick Chauvin charged with third degree murder, the same as the second guy down below. This also, ABC News, same as the second guy down below. So, the person who is in custody, see ex-police officer charged with George Floyd's murder, and they are both Derrick Chauvin, right, but they are not the guy that we saw in the video. So, something is very strange. I would submit to you since you presumably saw the same video, I did that this is the fellow who should be facing life in prison. You can see here he's also called Derrick Chauvin, he's the one we saw choking him out and this fellow is not. So why is this so-called Derrick Chauvin and not this one locked up and facing life in prison. Now, as you get further into it, it turns out that this fellow looks like, do you remember the TV show "Cash Cab." What do you think. You're the judge here. Do they look alike? – and that fellow's name is Ben Bailey and there is speculation that they might be the same person. You be the judge. In which case we have doubts thrown in about the authenticity of the video that presumably upset all of us where we're watching a police officer choke someone to death, no matter what his background, you know justice does not involve being choked to death without a trial and all that. However, we have this terrible discrepancy now. This is the one in jail, not him, and he looks like, you be the judge, an actor possibly Ben Bailey on the TV show "Cash Cab."

Mayor Lago: We keep going in circles. I understand.

Mr. Holmes: Okay. Look, unfortunately, the problem of the lack of police officer applicants continues, we're plagued with it, and is Coral Gables big enough to try to address a national problem, maybe solve a national problem. If any city is, it's us, and what I'm hoping is that with the various police officials and so on, we can push the media to raise these questions. What's the bottom line here. The guy who presumably murdered George Floyd got away with it and the wrong person is in prison. The whole case is suspect, and then maybe new police officers, young people thinking about becoming police officers say, oh well, let's see, that George Floyd thing maybe didn't even happen the way it supposedly, there's something wrong here, and they say, well, maybe I will become a police officer. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir. Just to put it on the record. Last week the Commission had the pleasure of attending the inauguration of three new officers that have joined our ranks and hopefully today will be ratifying a new agreement with the police department, which will provide additional benefits to our police officers. So, I think the police department, not that I think, I know the police department is moving in the right direction and we're doing everything in our power to make sure we are bringing the best. We have standards, we have the highest standards, and we will continue to find officers that again, suit our needs, who want to work in the City of Coral Gables and who are excited to make this a career of 20, 25, 30 years. Thank you for being here as always. Mr. Clerk.

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