

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item E-1
March 10, 2026
Public Safety Building, CMR
2151 Salzedo Street, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago

Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson

Commissioner Melissa Castro

Commissioner Ariel Fernandez

Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez

City Manager, Peter Iglesias

City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Assistant City Attorney, Gus Ceballos

Public Speaker(s)

Agenda Item E-1 [Start: 11:01 a.m.]

An Ordinance of the City Commission amending Chapter 74, “Traffic and Vehicles,” of the City Code, creating Article X – “Golf Carts,” authorizing and regulating the operation of golf carts on designated city streets; providing for severability clause, repealer provision, codification and providing for and effective date. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: We’ll move onto item E-1, ordinances on second reading.

City Attorney Suarez: E-1 is an Ordinance of the City Commission amending Chapter 74, “Traffic and Vehicles,” of the City Code, creating Article X – “Golf Carts,” authorizing and regulating the operation of golf carts on designated city streets; providing for severability clause, repealer provision, codification and providing for and effective date. Assistant City Attorney, Gus Ceballos will summarize the changes from first reading.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Ceballos, good morning.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Good morning, Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor and Commissioners, Assistant City Attorney Gus Ceballos. So, we made a fair amount of changes to the golf cart ordinance. Specifically, we added some additional language to distinguish between low-speed vehicles to confirm that there is no confusion by our residents that that particular process does not affected by this change. Additionally, we've added some enforcement mechanism, change a few minor tweaks to the language. We've created an entire enforcement section that allows our police officers to stop a golf cart that is driving a vehicle, in the city that is not LSV, under the assumption that you need to have the registration, we need to be able to check that. So, you are consenting to being stopped in the city if you are driving a golf cart under this program, at least for the purposes to determining whether you are driving with valid registration and you are driving with a valid license. Vetted a few different other items in terms of insurance, but that is the majority of the changes. We also allowed the ability to revoke this program if the case we believe is just not the best for our residents or for public safety. We have the ability to rescind this or remove this program. Not sure if anyone has any particular questions or any recommendations, happy to help.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes sir.

Commissioner Lara: Just a quick question Gus. With rescinding, could you clarify would that be a majority of the Commission or some other.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: So basically, the way that it's currently drafted, the City Manager is authorized to suspend or revoke any particular registration issued pursuant to this Article. So also, the entire system as a whole, but if you would like for me to change that, I can always put it to come back to the Commission.

Mayor Lago: Commissioner.

Commissioner Lara: No, no, I'm fine with that. I was just asking the question, not advocating a position.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor. I want to thank you for the language on the insurance, that was a concern that I had. I think you guys have done phenomenal work on this legislation. One of the suggestions that I was going to make was to have a short one-minute video perhaps on best practices and safety. I think that would be good to circulate when we roll out this legislation, so that people are aware of how they should operate the golf carts, reenforcing what the regulations are, what you need to do, just to make sure that the information is out there. You often see children driving these golf carts. I think it's important for adults to watch these videos and realize they are driving on a street with other cards, it needs to be an adult who is licensed who is driving and make sure that we put that out there so that nobody can say, I didn't know. But the information is out there.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: We can definitely work on that. We're working with IT to create a map so that you can easily identify the streets that are designated. Basically, all the residential streets that have a speed limit of 25 or less, are going to be part of that GIS map and we'll put together some sort of a video to include this part of the rolling out.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Through the Mayor. I think the video is an excellent idea. There are differences between how you drive a vehicle and some of these vehicles, because of the center of gravity is a bit different. So, I think that's an excellent idea. Thank you.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. I'll entertain a motion.

Commissioner Fernandez: I'll move it.

Vice Mayor Anderson: Second.

Mayor Lago: Mr. Clerk, do we have any public comment?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, Mr. Mayor. Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road. Anybody who knows where I live, a lot of people do. I get a lot of stuff dropped off in front of my door knows how dark that area is. Last night after the Town Hall meeting, I was on not San Amaro, Camposano, getting to San Amaro to get home, and it was dark already, and a golf cart came out of the University and I'm going to tell you, by the mercy of God I didn't hit it, because it had no lights. All they had was the little triangular orange thing and that's what I saw. It was absolutely an accident; a bad accident could have happened right there. I do not know what the rules are about lights. I don't have any idea. Let me tell you, it was a scary moment, very scary moment. I did not know who was driving. I couldn't even see who was driving it. Eventually they went back into the University so that was that, but that little few seconds could have been very, very bad.

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

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

Mayor Lago: That's it. Okay.

Commissioner Fernandez: I just have one question. Regarding the registration, are we doing an inspection of the golf cart to make sure it has everything it needs and are we assigning a decal or something.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: So, there will be a decal that will be assigned to your particular cart that needs to be affixed to the cart. In regard to inspection, we're still working with the police department to determine what level of inspection we're going to do, or most other cities use an affidavit that they have to complete, that's submitted. I think we are leaning towards that particular direction, but that's still up for debate.

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Creating Article X, "Golf Carts"*

[Date]

Commissioner Fernandez: One suggestion on that, maybe an affidavit in pictures where they can submit photos of the seatbelts, the reflectors, the lights, operational lights, just to make sure they are working. I think that will remove the requirement from staff. And nowadays with technology, it should be something that our own system would be able to process without taking a lot of staff time.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: And this program is consistent with state statutes specially for LSVs, the same requirements in terms of lights, turn signals, all of those things need to be on the vehicle and operational.

Mayor Lago: Anything else? By the way, I'm not going to be tackling this today, but I'd like to tackle it in the near future. I'd like to see if we could potentially maybe have parking spaces for low-speed vehicles. I think it's an opportunity. I know that other cities do that, but I want to be very careful because I know that each one of these parking spaces, again, costs a lot of money. I want to make sure that they also having to pay for parking. I want to study it. I want to understand a little bit better through our City Attorney Mr. Ceballos and through the Manager, to see what other cities are doing. If we're going to do this appropriately and correctly, we are really going to promote this type of lifestyle, I think we have to do our part in regard to ensuring that parking is available or are we going to treat them like every other vehicle, just have to park in their designated areas.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: So currently, we're working with Parking on that particular issue and enforcement. Currently, our system will allow for them to pay with the decal number, so instead of putting a license plate, they can pay for parking there. That being said, currently the way that it's proposed, it is limited to 25 mile an hour speed area, so you wouldn't be really driving through the CBD. I'm not really sure where we're going to have this parking, but we can definitely take a look at it.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor. The Mayor is correct on this, you know. I used to drive an LSV, I don't drive it anymore, but it would take up an entire parking space when it really shouldn't. If we had designated parking spaces and I've spoken to our Parking Director about this a couple of weeks ago. As we see that use go up, like they've seen in Key Biscayne where you do see that usage, maybe we can designate one parking space that can fit three carts. All of a sudden, you're not taking up an entire parking space for one. And I remember when Director Kinney was here, we had the conversation about the scooters taking up the parking spaces and as long as one had paid for the space, the space was considered paid for. I want to make sure that if you have three carts that are taking up spaces, the three are paying for the parking as they should.

Assistant City Attorney Ceballos: Understood. We'll take a look at that.

Mayor Lago: We're just putting it out there. I'll co-sponsor with anybody in the near future. Let's study it. Let's talk about it, that's why I didn't include it in this legislation. I want to be very thoughtful about that. Okay. By the way, another thing I'd like to bring up too, and this is just a

matter of personal concern, since we're talking about parking, the Coral Gables Theater has a designated parking space for drop-off in front of their property which it's not their property, it's our property. I've already gotten multiple phone calls from other businesses. If they have it, why don't I have it. Each one of those spaces is – how much are they, Mr. Manager? - \$25,000 a year, \$20,000?

City Manager Iglesias: \$10 to \$14,000.

Mayor Lago: \$10 to \$14,000 in lost revenue for the city. So, if the theater is going to get one, then we've got to start giving them out to everybody, because they are not the only ones that have disabled individuals. So, I'm wholeheartedly in opposition of that, because if we do it for one, we've got to do it for all. I've gotten multiple phone calls already. And they're not talking about designated 15-minute parking, they want their own parking space in front, just like the theater does. I want to understand that. And I know that people are getting ticketed because when they parked in that, they've gotten tickets.

Vice Mayor Anderson: We've had a number of individuals who have limited mobility, but there are not enough handicap parking spaces in that block. So, I did contact our Parking Department and suggest that we have a drop-off area, because sometimes you have an able-bodied person driving an individual with a disability and can drop them off. I know that it is the desire of every business to have somebody able to be drop-off at the door. It's not feasible, but a theater has a high volume and that was the reasoning behind doing this drop-off area. It doesn't mean that it's exclusive to the theater. If someone wants to drop somebody or pick somebody up there, they can use that drop-off area. We also have a drop-off area for the valet parking. It's hard to make everybody happy. There are not enough handicap spaces throughout our city and in a high-volume area where you have a theater that has, how many seats, I don't know, but we're not talking about ten seats. We're talking about a volume of people that need to come in there, some of them have walkers, some of them have limited mobility that they can only walk a short distance. There are many different reasons. So that is how that came to be. It was a spot that, correct me if I'm wrong, memory, that was a handicap parking spot, and it was being misused. So, that is part of the reason. There are just not enough spaces in our city for our community.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor. Vice Mayor, I want to congratulate you. I think that was a great move and I think that, not only for the Actor's Playhouse, for the Miracle Theater, I think that's for the whole block and crossing the block across, I think that it's a great idea. So, thank you for putting your hands on that.

Mayor Lago: So, if I may, then I'm going to put together a list of about 15 different businesses in the downtown that have asked me for the same parking spaces that have mobility issues also. In our community, for example, my mother has mobility issues and sometimes she can't find a handicap

spot. So, at the end of the day, I think she should have the right to park in front of every business that she visits here in the City of Coral Gables. And by the way, it is strictly only for people that are dropping off individuals in front of that business. So, when nobody is being dropped off, you can't park and use that parking space, you understand what I'm saying. I want to make that very clear. Again, it's perfectly fine, if it stays that way it's fine, but there has to be also some uniformity for everyone else that wants to have that same situation. So, let's think about that.

Commissioner Fernandez: I have a suggestion may fix the...

Mayor Lago: I know – I want to just kind of have a little bit discussed that train of thought, that idea, because we're not targeting the theater. What we're talking about is if you provide that parking space and that parking space is not in use, except for when somebody is being dropped off, that means at night there's no show going on, you can't park there. How do I know that, because I know people who have gotten tickets for parking there when they are there for more than 15 minutes. They have gotten tickets.

Commissioner Fernandez: I have a suggestion that might – we have valet station, I think its one or two spaces over, would it be possible to merge the two and have it be also the valet space. You'd have the opportunity of dropping somebody off or dropping your vehicle off in the same location and that would open up the other valet area, because I've even seen when I'm driving around during non-valet times and the valets have their signs up so you can't use the parking spaces. I don't think the valet is open at 8 o'clock in the morning on a weekday, yet on Friday, the valets have their signs and their stations up on the valet spaces. So that may be a solution. The other spot that we have a similar drop-off is the Coral Gables Museum, which also has a designated drop-off right by the door, which is taking up two parking spaces there, in a block that's already limited in space. So, I'm just saying maybe it's something that we can just move the valet and have it right in front of the theater, so you have the opportunity to do both, drop somebody off or drop your vehicle off.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'm going to take you all back for just a moment so you understand the thinking of the ADA. The need for parking spaces for individuals with disabilities is based upon need. So, if I'm evaluating with an expert, a hospital, okay, you're not going to follow the minimums in the 2010 ADA Accessibility Code. You're going to increase the number of parking spaces needed for handicapped accessibility based upon what the draw of that facility is. You have a higher percentage of individuals with disabilities going to a hospital than you do to the dime store that you're getting an ice cream cone from, or some other type of need. So, you have to have some, what I call a commonsense evaluation as to how many handicapped spaces are needed in the distance that someone has to travel. The rule of thumb basically is that you want to have one space

generally per 1,000 feet for handicap parking. The drop-off analysis is very similar and it's a volume analysis and need and demand. Now, I have tried to use as a drop-off some of the valet stations and maybe its more of a policy item that the Manager's office can handle, but they should not be saying, no, no, you can't do a drop-off here, okay, but to have dual use sometimes, especially when you have a high draw, high need area, such as the museum or such as in front of the theater, is going to cause ultimate conflict. As it does right now when the valets are trying to do their valet operation and you have several cars stacked that it creates a conflict situation. We run into this problem, and I am the designated chauffeur for my husband. You have to wait in line to be able to drop him off in front of the facility where he's going to get some medical care, because there is such a high demand if it's a medical care facility, and its going to be higher demand on activities where people can go and enjoy themselves, but you're not going to the gym, you are going to watch a show and its something that people can do that have disabilities more so than they can do other things. So, that is the overall thinking behind the ADA guidelines on how much you should provide and its something that we, you know, I know that we're going through an additional study at the moment for our entire Central Business District and it's the thinking that needs to be incorporated into that study as well.

Commissioner Fernandez: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Fernandez: Another thing that I've thought of before, the intersection of, I guess its Segovia and Miracle Mile, there's not a whole lot of traffic heading northbound. We have two lanes of traffic there. Would we be able to, if you come down Segovia or up Segovia, once you pass Alhambra, we only have one lane, would we be able to take up that one lane and create some handicap parking spaces, or maybe a drop-off zone there so that we're taking it off of Miracle Mile and we're putting it on a safer street. You also have Starbucks – you constantly have people getting off in the middle of the street to pick up their order and come back to their car. Maybe we can do something similar to what we did at the Plaza where you have that 15-minute drop-off, maximum drop-off zone there, and it's an intersection that does not have a whole lot of cars moving north on a regular basis because that light is constantly changing. So, just something to consider. I don't know if we need to do a traffic study just to see what the traffic is there. But you'll probably be able to get between there and, I forget what the next block over is, you'll probably be able to get a good five or six parking spaces there that would probably be able to designate as handicap and you have less of an aggressive driving base, so people would be able to get in and out of their car on the driver side a little more safely than they would be on Miracle Mile.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Lara: Well, I think we should also keep in mind that eventually we're going to have the Mobility Hub, right, very close to the theater and that should have designated, I would think ideal drop-off opportunities of space, of convenience, because if you put the drop-offs too far away from the main areas, like the Vice Mayor was saying, of where you would think you would have a higher draw, right, for individuals with disabilities, you kind of like cutting against the grain there on what we're trying to achieve. You want to make it closer to what it is they want. But I like your thinking, right. The Mobility Hub is coming and that should be an ideal place to be able to see some of that drop-off.

City Manager Iglesias: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

City Manager Iglesias: Mayor, the Mobility Hub is going to have five floors, it will certainly be designed for handicapped accessibility, with handicapped size elevators, and that whole project will be highly accessible.

Commissioner Castro: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: I understand 100 percent the perspective that the Vice Mayor is giving and I also understand that every business will want one of these in front of their business as well, but at the end of the day, I think we need to make like a strategic evaluation of the type of population that's going into the business and maybe put into consideration also, like senior facilities, right. Are they more prone or is there a higher percentage of population that is handicapped, depending on that then we should consider if there should be a drop-off or not. Like you should be able to check, okay, I qualify for this, depending on the location, not just because of business wants it because somebody else has it.

Mayor Lago: If I may. I just wanted to bring this up so you can have a conversation with staff and really flush this out. This is why I've had multiple conversations with the Tax Collector, Dariel Fernandez. What he's working on right now is tackling the issue of all the individuals in this community and its shameful, shameful, its disgusting the amount of people that we see parking in a handicap parking space and getting out of their Porche or their sports car and walking out and going to the Building Department. I see it every single day at City Hall. It's embarrassing. You are talking about veterans who are disabled in combat, you are talking about people like my mother, they are disabled on multiple different fronts, and they have to use that space, and they are not able to because somebody went and paid somebody \$150 and now, they have disability tag. It's rampant here in South Florida and I know that the Tax Collector is working on addressing that. I've been very, very clear and very vocal. I spoke to the Clerks, excuse me, the State Reps and to the Senators in regard to that saying, we need to tackle that immediately, immediately. It's a huge issue. That's why we're in the situation we're in right now. If we are able to remove all these fraudulent handicap

stickers then you wouldn't need 15-minute parking, because the people using the handicap parking spaces would be actually handicapped individuals. Right now, just look at the cars that are parked in handicapped spaces, it's embarrassing. I'm willing to say that a majority of them are not handicapped. So, we can go back and forth on this issue for an hour. I just wanted to bring it up because I'm getting a lot of calls and like the Commissioner said, you know, depending on the demographics of the people that are visiting that business. Well, if you do it now for, you've got to do it for hospitals, and you've got to do it for my dad's office. My dad's office would be one of these places. The majority of his clients are older individuals. So, he would have a parking space in front of his health care facility to make sure that his residents could park front and center or could be dropped off. So, it would be across the board that everybody could have a claim. What elderly people, disabled people don't eat ice cream, they don't go out to dinner, they don't go watch the cinema, they don't go shop at Merrick Park. They go everywhere. So, you can't just say that they visit the theater, I mean that's absurd. So, at the end of the day, I'm not asking to remove it. I'm just asking for us to have some accountability and look at it because I'm having people call me and say hey, you gave it to them, I want the same privilege, and it's a problem. It's a problem. So, moving on from that item, anything else for the good of the order. Mr. Clerk.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, we have not taken a vote yet.

Mayor Lago: I know. I know.

Commissioner Fernandez: Yes

Commissioner Lara: Yes

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes

Commissioner Castro: Yes

Mayor Lago: Yes

Mayor Lago: Two things. Thank you very much for your hard work and for your whole legal team. Thank you for working on this. I also want to thank J.C. Padron who brought me this idea a few years ago. He deserves the credit for sticking with it and moving forward on it.