

DEC 15 2025

MIAMI BEACH

LTC #526-2025

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Honorable Mayor Steven Meiner and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk 

DATE: December 8, 2025

SUBJECT: **Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee Motion**

The purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to inform the Mayor and City Commission of a motion passed by the Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee at its meeting on November 18, 2025. The draft minutes of that meeting (as yet unapproved) are attached for reference. The full video recording of the meeting can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3CE2kZJnzo>

The Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee made the following motion on November 18, 2025:

The Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee urges the Commission, City Manager, and staff to take prompt action on the recommendations and issues discussed throughout the meeting.

Motion made by: Clare McCord, Chair

Motion seconded by: Seth Cohen

Motion Passed: 6-0

Members present: Clare McCord, Curt Dyer, Julie Basner, Seth Cohen, Barbara Montero, Ronald Starkman

Members absent: Karin Matos

Attachment 1: NRPAC 11.18.25 Meeting Minutes

 
MH/LP



Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee

Committee Members

Clare McCord, Chair

Curt Dyer, Vice Chair

Ronald Starkman

Karin Matos

Julie Basner

Barbara Montero

Seth Cohen

TO: Members of the Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee

DATE: January 22, 2026

SUBJECT: DRAFT Minutes of the Neighborhood Resiliency Projects Advisory Committee on November 18, 2025, Meeting

Present: Clare McCord, Chair, Curt Dyer, Vice Chair, Julie Basner, Seth Cohen, Barbara Montero, Ron Starkman

Absent: Karin Matos

City Staff:

Amy Knowles, Liaison

Eric Carpenter, David Martinez, Sabrina Batlle, Lauren Firtel, David Gomez, Ariel Guitian, John Norris, Kevin Pulido, Samantha Sliger

Mayor and City Commission:

Commissioner Bhatt, Commissioner Domiguez, Commissioner Fernandez, and Commissioner Suarez, Sydney Alonso, Blake Govan, Kara Petrella, and Albert Rosales

Members of the Public:

Nancy Duke (online), Stephan Genez

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

C. McCord calls meeting to order.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

C. McCord moved to approve September 9th, 2025, minutes. R. Starkman seconds. Approved unanimously.

WEST AVENUE PROJECT RESIDENT FEEDBACK FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

C. McCord welcomed the Committee, City staff, Commissioners, and guests, and provided an overview of the committee's purpose, emphasizing communication, process improvement, and offering recommendations to the City Manager and staff. McCord highlighted the City's innovative projects and clarified that the goal of today's meeting is not to resolve issues, but to gather input, identify priority concerns, and provide constructive feedback to city leadership.

C. McCord introduced Stephan Genez, owner of the Gaythering Hotel and a neighborhood advocate, noting that he had a presentation to share.



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West Avenue Project Major Issues: Communication, Coordination, Resident Impacts

Timeline Confusion / Segment Overlap

S. Genez shared his long-term involvement with the project. He expressed appreciation for the cooperation from city staff and commissioners and introduced a slide presentation to outline key issues for discussion. S. Genez began his presentation by outlining the timeline and phasing of the West Avenue project, noting closures and overlapping construction segments. He emphasized the **impact on traffic, access, and resident quality of life** and explained how the construction process involves multiple stages. He also raised concerns about **changes to the original segment-by-segment approach, which he feels has increased the project's footprint and duration.**

Commissioner Fernandez sought **clarification regarding the sequencing of work** across project phases. Based on the current update, the Commissioner noted that work appears to be occurring across all segments simultaneously, rather than sequentially as previously agreed. The Commissioner emphasized the importance of adhering to original commitments made to minimize disruption by ensuring substantial completion before advancing to the next segment. The Commissioner expressed concern about the current state of the project site, describing it as **significantly disruptive to the community's quality of life.**

A discussion followed among committee members, guests and City staff regarding the construction phasing and its impact. Clarification was provided on the step-by-step infrastructure process. The situation has presented ongoing challenges and continues to require close coordination. City staff explained that the change was negotiated with the contractor to allow work on multiple segments simultaneously and noted that while Phase 1 is nearly complete certain intersections remain closed due to ongoing work. Committee Members emphasized the **importance of transparency and timely updates to the community.**

S. Genez continued his presentation by highlighting updated timelines for Segment 2, noting that the estimated duration had increased. He also raised concerns about **unexpected utility conflicts such as water main breaks and gas line issues.** Noting that the contractor is conducting underground utility verification, he emphasized the need for clarity on how these issues may affect the overall schedule and cost and called for improved communication moving forward.

D. Martinez clarified that the project is a design-build contract, meaning the contractor is responsible for both the design and construction, including all necessary due diligence. He explained that this structure makes certain issues contractual in nature, and while the city is not currently in a legal dispute, the contractor may present their perspective directly to stakeholders. D. Martinez advised residents should be mindful of this dynamic when engaging with the contractor.

Need for Improved Communication



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City staff engaged in a discussion regarding water service activity. It was explained that what was described as a water main break was a planned valve test affecting only one building. Staff noted that these tests are brief and typically not communicated in advance, but **acknowledged the need for better notification, even for short interruptions.**

Commissioner Fernandez emphasized the **importance of notifying residents in advance of any planned utility interruptions.** He noted that even brief disruptions impact daily routines and potentially trigger issues within buildings, such as pipe bursts. He stressed that residents should be informed of the expected timeframe so they can plan accordingly.

Staff responded that **communication policies are currently being revised to include advance notice for such tests moving forward.**

Commissioner Bhatt added that **timely communication also helps prevent unnecessary concern.** Without notice, residents may assume there is a significant issue, which can lead to confusion and panic within the community. Clear messaging, she noted, can help maintain calm and understanding.

C. McCord acknowledged that **communication around the project needs to be streamlined and improved across all areas.**

Commissioner Fernandez suggested exploring **improved communication tools** for major projects like West Avenue. He proposed checking with IT to determine whether a dedicated project site could be created where residents can subscribe to **text notifications.** He also encouraged considering a simple app or other streamlined methods to keep neighborhoods informed about project updates and disruptions. Commissioner Fernandez acknowledged the challenges of working with aging infrastructure, noting that unexpected issues are common in older cities. He emphasized that while such complications are normal, they reinforce the need for better communication with the public.

K. Pulido confirmed that a **WhatsApp broadcast group is being launched soon, with text alerts expected to follow in a few months.** Some members emphasize the importance of timely updates to reduce confusion and resident stress. Staff also noted that public records requirements contributed to the delay but confirmed that two-way communication options will be included.

S. Genez shared observations related to communication, coordination and project impacts. He noted that a finalized plan for the west end of Lincoln Road is still pending and emphasized the **importance of accurate GPS data and signage to support access for emergency services, deliveries and the public.** He highlighted instances where residents experienced confusion, suggesting that clearer communication and on-site support could help address these challenges. He raised questions about the city's relationship with the contractor and requested **greater transparency around project updates and decision-making.**

Managing Contractor Costs, Communications, and Project Timelines



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Commissioner Suarez acknowledged the contractor's financial concerns, noting that while they initially agreed to a lower price, rising costs have made the project less viable for them. He recognized the challenges posed by aging infrastructure and the unpredictability of underground conditions but emphasized the importance of maintaining the current contract to avoid significantly higher costs. He also expressed concern for local businesses impacted by the project. Commissioner Suarez asked **whether the timeline could be accelerated to reduce the overall duration**, noting that Phase 2 alone is projected to take three and a half years, with completion estimated around 2030.

City staff responded that negotiations with the contractor are ongoing, particularly regarding disputed costs and scope interpretations. They clarified that while the contractor has cited unforeseen conditions, the city maintains the work falls within the original contract. Staff also discussed the **need to balance project acceleration by minimizing disruption and committed to improving responsiveness and transparency moving forward**.

C. McCord and J. Basner emphasized the **importance of managing public perception**, noting that small issues can quickly escalate without clear communication. They stressed the need to explain project realities in plain terms to avoid confusion.

Commissioner Fernandez inquired about **daily communication with the contractor**, asking who serves as the primary point of contact overseeing day-to-day operations and coordination. City staff confirmed that the assigned project manager handles daily interactions with the contractor and coordinates with Neighborhood Affairs on more complex, interdepartmental matters.

Commissioner Fernandez reiterated his previous request for monthly Zoom sessions and on-site walkthroughs with residents and business owners to provide regular updates and maintain transparency. He asked who would be responsible for leading those efforts and ensuring residents receive clear, consistent information. **City staff confirmed that the project manager would take the lead on both the monthly virtual and in-person updates**.

More Focus on Communication Throughout

The conversation continued with a **focus on communication**. City staff confirmed that preparations are underway for Art Week, including maintaining traffic flow during construction. Plans were outlined for daily updates, monthly Zoom meetings and on-site walkthroughs. Concerns were raised about unresolved issues like streetlight outages and the need for better internal reporting by city employees.

Commissioner Fernandez emphasized that his role as a commissioner extends beyond policymaking, noting that he actively reports and addresses issues he observes in the community. He questioned **why city staff are not consistently reporting such issues**. He expressed concern that it often takes a resident to bring these matters to the city's attention and suggested that identifying and reporting visible problems should be a routine part of all city employees' responsibilities.



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Commissioner Bhatt noted that the **issue of unreported concerns is citywide**. She suggested that all city staff should have the city's reporting app installed on their phones to allow them to quickly report issues, suggesting creating a department-wide initiative or friendly competition to encourage usage.

E. Carpenter and K. Pulido confirmed that, as discussed, **all city-issued phones are equipped with the reporting app, and staff have been instructed to use it to report deficiencies**. They noted that while many employees are actively participating, they **will follow up to ensure full compliance**. They acknowledged that while this case involved a construction zone where some issues may have been overlooked, many employees have been proactive in reporting concerns. The goal they emphasized is to foster a culture where all staff contribute to identifying and addressing problems in the field.

Commissioner Fernandez emphasized the need for greater accountability among city staff in identifying and reporting issues in the public realm. He noted that there should be stronger expectations that they report visible problems. He pointed out that the creation of area manager positions was intended to proactively address such concerns before they reach the level of resident complaints.

Commissioner Dominguez shared observations from the area near her bank, noting that due to nearby closures, many residents are using 15th and 16th Streets to exit the neighborhood. She highlighted the lack of left-turn signals at Alton Road, which causes significant congestion, with only a few cars able to turn per light cycle. She recommended the city work with the county to proactively request turn signals at those intersections and consider similar improvements in other segments of the project.

S. Genez continued his presentation, highlighting communication gaps and real-world impacts on residents and businesses, including confusion during king tides, GPS inaccuracies, and on-site coordination. He shared examples such as blocked hotel access and unclear street closures, emphasizing the need for proactive walkthroughs and direct engagement with stakeholders. City staff acknowledged the challenges, noting that some disruptions were due to aging infrastructure and unanticipated issues, but committed to improving communication and coordination.

Commissioner Fernandez emphasized the importance of conducting regular on-site walkthroughs explaining that these walkthroughs allow the contractor to communicate upcoming access restrictions and give residents opportunity to raise concerns. He cited this as a proactive way to ensure residents are informed and their needs are considered.

City staff agreed upon the importance of consistent updates to build trust and confirmed that efforts like the 24/7 control room, scheduled notices, and upcoming communication tools are in place or underway. The discussion also touched on unresolved design elements near 1450 West and the Baywalk, with calls for coordination and timely updates to residents. Committee members shared the **need for clear points of contact, regular look-aheads, and a more proactive approach to addressing recurring concerns.**



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S. Genez continued his presentation by emphasizing the need for **clearer signage, especially for businesses** affected by ongoing construction. He shared examples of confusion caused by missing or unclear wayfinding, including guests unsure how to access his hotel.

Commissioner Fernandez emphasized the need for clearer, more targeted signage to support local businesses affected by construction. He noted that while general "businesses open" signs have been installed, more specific signage naming individual businesses would help visitors, navigate through detours and access storefronts.

City staff acknowledged the challenges and their commitment to communication, including through signage, and coordination with departments like Transportation. They also discussed the complexity of balancing long-term infrastructure goals with immediate neighborhood needs, noting that while some suggestions may be practical, they must also align with funding commitments and citywide priorities.

Commissioner Bhatt **proposed that adjusting the approach to implementing infrastructure projects could potentially free up resources to address more urgent flooding issues in other neighborhoods.** While acknowledging the scale of ongoing projects she emphasized the need to evaluate whether reallocating funds and efforts could accelerate relief in areas currently experiencing acute flooding.

Commissioner Fernandez expressed concern about the potential financial implications of altering the project scope. He noted that the city's improved bond rating was based on its commitment to moving forward with these projects. He emphasized that maintaining momentum is critical to upholding the city's financial credibility and fulfilling its obligations.

City staff acknowledged the value of these ideas. The discussion closed with appreciation for the collaborative tone of the meeting and a shared commitment to follow through on the suggestions raised.

C. McCord made a motion to send an LTC urging the Commission, City Manager, and staff to take prompt action on the recommendations and issues discussed during the meeting. S. Cohen seconds. The motion was passed unanimously.

FUTURE MEETING DATES/TOPICS

The committee agreed to schedule the next meeting for January 22nd.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment.

ADJOURNMENT