

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: June 25, 2025

TITLE: A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, ACCEPTING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE CITY MANAGER PURSUANT TO REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS NO. 2025-284-ND FOR WATER TAXI SERVICE; AUTHORIZING THE ADMINISTRATION TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH WATER TAXI OF FORT LAUDERDALE LLC, AS THE TOP-RANKED PROPOSER; FURTHER, IF THE ADMINISTRATION IS NOT SUCCESSFUL IN NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT WITH WATER TAXI OF FORT LAUDERDALE LLC, AUTHORIZING THE ADMINISTRATION TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH AQUA-JET MIAMI LLC D/B/A AQUA PARTY BOAT, AS THE SECOND-RANKED PROPOSER; FURTHER, IF THE ADMINISTRATION IS NOT SUCCESSFUL IN NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT WITH AQUA-JET MIAMI LLC D/B/A AQUA PARTY BOAT, AUTHORIZING THE ADMINISTRATION TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH CODE NAME E-LIXR INC., AS THE THIRD-RANKED PROPOSER; AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER AND CITY CLERK TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT UPON THE CONCLUSION OF SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS BY THE ADMINISTRATION. (TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY)

RECOMMENDATION

The City Administration (“Administration”) recommends that the Mayor and City Commission (“City Commission”) approve the Resolution.

The solicitation is currently under the cone of silence.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The City of Miami Beach (“City”) has long recognized the potential benefits of waterborne transportation as a sustainable, efficient, and congestion-reducing alternative to traditional road-based transit. To that end, on June 28, 2023, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 2023-32644, waiving, by 5/7th vote, the formal competitive bidding requirement and accepting the recommendation of the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee (“FERC” or “Committee”), directing the Administration to (1) negotiate a one (1) year Agreement with Poseidon Ferry LLC (“Poseidon”); (2) identify funding; (3) identify locations where the operation will be conducted; and (4) define the City contribution and fare structure; and further requiring that the final Agreement be subject to approval by the City Commission.

On September 13, 2023, the City Commission adopted Resolution No. 2023-32746, approving the term sheet reflecting the essential business terms of a one (1)-year pilot program and authorizing the Administration to negotiate and execute the Agreement with Poseidon.

The City and Poseidon held two (2) community meetings with the Sunset Harbour Neighborhood Association on March 27, 2024 and June 11, 2024, respectively, to provide information and obtain community feedback on the one (1)-year pilot program. Additionally, regulatory approvals from Miami-Dade County’s Division of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) and the

issuance of a Business Tax Receipt (BTR) enabled the service to commence operations. As such, in June 2024 the City launched a one (1)-year Water Taxi Pilot Program (“Pilot Program”) with Poseidon connecting Miami Beach and Miami.

The Pilot Program aimed to assess operational viability, passenger demand, and public reception, while also exploring options for reducing fares through subsidies to enhance accessibility. As part of the Pilot Program, Poseidon operated a cross-bay service from/to the south side of Maurice Gibb Memorial Park (18 Street and Purdy Avenue, Miami Beach) and the Venetian Marina & Yacht Club, also known as Sea Isle Marina (1635 N. Bayshore Drive, Miami).

Despite the Pilot Program’s intent to serve as a stepping stone toward a long-term water taxi solution, the Pilot Program experienced many operational challenges, including repeated service interruptions, mechanical failures, and customer service issues. Therefore, following discussions at the July 24, 2024, FERC meeting, the Committee expressed significant concerns regarding the viability of the Water Taxi Pilot Program. As such, the Committee passed a motion recommending that the Administration terminate the Agreement with Poseidon and return to the September 11, 2024 City Commission meeting for acceptance of the Committee’s recommendation. Furthermore, the City Commission accepted the recommendation of the FERC and adopted Resolution No. 2024-33247 directing the Administration to terminate the Agreement with Poseidon for the operation of the Pilot Program. This decision underscored the importance of further refining the water taxi service model, operational structure, and financial sustainability before proceeding with a permanent implementation.

Building on the lessons learned from the Pilot Program, the City now seeks to establish a more robust and integrated water taxi network that aligns with broader transportation goals. This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) invited experienced water taxi operators to propose sustainable, innovative, and financially viable service models that enhance connectivity, reduce roadway congestion, and integrate seamlessly with Miami Beach’s existing transit infrastructure. The envisioned service will incorporate lessons learned from the Pilot Program, ensuring a well-planned, strategically located network that meets passenger needs and regulatory requirements while supporting regional mobility initiatives.

The Miami-Dade County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) conducted a Waterborne Network Feasibility Study (“Feasibility Study”) to evaluate the feasibility of a regional waterborne transit network, identifying potential routes, docking locations, infrastructure needs, and integration with existing transit systems. The Feasibility Study aims to enhance mobility, reduce roadway congestion, and provide sustainable transportation options. The City will utilize the Feasibility Study’s findings to develop its water taxi service, ensuring alignment with the broader regional vision for waterborne transit.

To support the successful implementation of a water taxi service, the City is in the process of engaging a consultant with expertise in waterborne transportation. The consultant will assist the City in refining the service plan, infrastructure assessment, and financial feasibility analysis to ensure that the selected vendor can deliver a well-integrated and sustainable transit solution.

ANALYSIS

On March 19, 2025, the City Commission authorized the issuance of RFQ 2025-284-ND for a Water Taxi Service. On March 21, 2025, the RFQ was issued. A voluntary pre-proposal conference was held on April 2, 2025, to provide information to proposers submitting a response. One (1) addendum was issued, and 28 prospective bidders accessed the advertised solicitation. RFQ responses were due and received on May 5, 2025. The City received three (3) proposals from Aqua-Jet Miami LLC d/b/a Aqua Party Boat, Code Name E-Lixr Inc., and Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale LLC.

On May 14, 2025, the City Manager appointed an Evaluation Committee via Letter To Commission (LTC) # 203-2025. The Evaluation Committee convened on May 23, 2025 to

consider proposals received. The Evaluation Committee was comprised of Irene Hegedus, Chief of Transportation Enhancements and Special Projects, Department of Transportation and Public Works, Miami-Dade County; Valeria Mejia, ADA Manager, City of Miami Beach Public Works Department; Lindsey Precht, Assistant Director, City of Miami Beach Environment and Sustainability Department; Mikhail Ryabov, Transportation Manager, City of Miami Beach Transportation and Mobility Department; and Linda Stevens, Assistant Director, City of Miami Beach Marketing and Communications Department.

The Evaluation Committee was provided an overview of the project, information relative to the City's Cone of Silence Ordinance, and the Government in the Sunshine Law. The Evaluation Committee was also provided with general information on the scope of services and a copy of each proposal. The Evaluation Committee was instructed to score and rank each proposal pursuant to the evaluation criteria established in the RFQ. The evaluation process resulted in the ranking of proposers as indicated below (see Attachment):

1st ranked – Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale LLC
2nd ranked - Aqua-Jet Miami LLC d/b/a Aqua Party Boat
3rd ranked - Code Name E-Lixr Inc.

The Evaluation Committee deemed Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale LLC (“Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale”) the most qualified firm to provide a water taxi service. The Evaluation Committee noted that Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale has over 30 years of experience providing safe, reliable, and customer-focused water-based transit services throughout South Florida. The Evaluation Committee also mentioned that Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale’s vessels are equipped with outward and inward-facing cameras that support training, incident documentation, and liability protection. Moreover, the vessels are equipped with GPS, allowing management to monitor fleet activity and enabling passengers to view real-time arrival updates via a user-friendly interface. The Evaluation Committee emphasized that Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale maintains an in-house engineering team, which includes mechanical and electrical technicians, boat repair specialists, and cleaning/detailing crew members who ensure the company maintains a high reliability and operational uptime. Finally, the Evaluation Committee also highlighted that Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale would not only be bringing water taxis to the City but also enhancing connectivity, convenience, and character to the City’s landscape.

Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale is a licensed operator with over three (3) decades of experience operating complex transit systems with scheduled service routes, private charters, and high-capacity event transportation that consistently meet both public and private sector goals. Its team, made up of 128 personnel, including 107 crew members, has a deep understanding of the operational, regulatory, and logistical requirements involved in launching and sustaining a water-based transit system - a system that has been implemented in the City of Fort Lauderdale, City of Pompano Beach, and Informa Markets for the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. All references provided positive feedback. Finally, Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale successfully operated a temporary water taxi service for the City during Art Week 2024, and the City was satisfied with the services provided.

Aqua-Jet Miami LLC d/b/a Aqua Party Boat, the second-ranked proposer, and Code Name E-Lixr Inc., the third-ranked proposer, are also deemed by the Evaluation Committee to be qualified in the event that negotiations with Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale are unsuccessful.

Founded in 2013, Aqua-Jet Miami LLC d/b/a Aqua Party Boat (“Aqua Party Boat”) is a Miami-based charter and passenger vessel company specializing in private boat tours, corporate outings, private water transportation, filming support, and custom event services. Operating from the Venetian Marina (formerly Sea Isle Marina), Aqua Party Boat owns and manages a fleet of eight (8) vessels, including four (4) U.S. Coast Guard–inspected 49-passenger vessels. Aqua Party Boat transports thousands of clients annually, maintaining an excellent reputation for safety, professionalism, and customer service in the Miami marine industry. Aqua Party Boat has provided similar services to the Miami River Commission, Placida Harbour Club, Inc., and Akima

Protective Services Group, among others. All references provided positive feedback.

Code Name E-Lixr Inc. (“E-Lixr”) was founded in Delaware in 2024. However, it was initially launched as ARKHAUS Club Inc., a private water taxi service for the maritime hospitality business. Since ARKHAUS Club Inc. is now operating seamlessly, E-Lixr has been operating a pilot water taxi service program in Miami for about nine (9) months. This pilot program is an on-demand service for hospitality companies, restaurants, and private citizens. E-Lixr’s references include Yachting Promotions, Inc. of Fort Lauderdale, American Social Bar & Kitchen, and Michael Malone, a private citizen. All references provided positive feedback.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The City has been awarded a \$600,000 grant from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for operating expenses related to a cross-bay water taxi service, with matching funds contingent on approval during the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget process. The City will continue to pursue additional funding opportunities, including grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Passenger Ferry Grant Program and the Florida Inland Navigation District (FIND) Waterway Assistance Program, to support both operational and capital infrastructure costs related to the Water Taxi Service.

Services pursuant to this RFQ shall be subject to successful negotiations and the availability of funds through the City’s budgeting process. The total cost of the water taxi service will be determined in collaboration with the selected vendor, once key service details – such as route alignment, fare structure, operating schedule, vessel type, and docking locations – are finalized.

Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate? Click or tap here to enter text.
(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

If applicable, the Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on:

See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

106-9615-000349-30-403-529-00-00-00- \$600,000 pending approval via FY 2026 Budget Enhancement.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that the City Commission approve the Resolution authorizing the Administration to enter into negotiations with Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale LLC, as the top-ranked proposer; further, if the Administration is not successful in negotiating an Agreement with Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale LLC, authorizing the Administration to enter into negotiations with Aqua-Jet Miami LLC d/b/a Aqua Party Boat, as the second-ranked proposer; further, if the Administration is not successful in negotiating an Agreement with Aqua-Jet Miami LLC d/b/a Aqua Party Boat, authorizing the Administration to enter into negotiations with Code Name E-Lixr Inc., as the third-ranked proposer. The Resolution also authorizes the City Manager and City Clerk to execute an Agreement for Water Taxi Service upon conclusion of successful negotiations by the Administration.

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Procurement

Sponsor(s)

Co-sponsor(s)

Condensed Title

Award RFQ 2025-284-ND, Water Taxi Service. TR/PR

Previous Action (For City Clerk Use Only)