

# MIAMI BEACH

## COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: City Clerk Rafael E. Granado

DATE: March 12, 2025

TITLE: DISCUSSION REGARDING THE RELOCATION OF THE CITY HALL EARLY VOTING SITE AND THE ADDITION OF A THIRD EARLY VOTING LOCATION FOR THE 2025 RUN-OFF ELECTION.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (PSNQLC) is requested to discuss whether City Hall should remain an Early Voting site for 2025 or be replaced for both the General and Run-Off Elections, or just for the Run-Off Election. PSNQLC is also requested to review the Elections Department's findings regarding South Shore Community Center, and to consider the feasibility of Muss Park as a Mid-Beach Early Voting location for the possible Run-Off Election, pending the Elections Department's review.

### **BACKGROUND/HISTORY**

On February 3, 2025, the Miami Beach City Commission considered an agenda item regarding the potential relocation of the City Hall Early Voting site due to concerns about accessibility during Art Basel (December 3-7, 2025). The overlap between Art Basel and Early Voting for the 2025 Run-Off Election (December 5-7, 2025) raised concerns about traffic congestion and limited parking at City Hall, which could negatively impact voter turnout. (See Item C4 C discussed on the February 3, 2025 City Commission meeting, a copy of which is attached.)

Commissioner Alex Fernandez separated the item from the Consent Agenda to highlight concerns about voter accessibility and the potential disenfranchisement of residents. The Commission agreed by acclamation to refer the item to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee (PSNQLC) for further discussion.

As part of this initial discussion, the City Commission expressed preference for maintaining the existing two Early Voting locations for the General Election's 14-day Early Voting period:

- Miami Beach City Hall (South Beach)
- North Shore Branch Library (North Beach)

However, in the event of a Run-Off Election, the City Commission expressed interest in adding a third Early Voting location in Mid-Beach.<sup>[1]</sup>

Additionally, the Commission appeared inclined to retain Miami Beach City Hall as the South Beach location for the three-day Early Voting period for the Run-Off Election to ensure continuity, as voters are familiar with the City Hall site. However, the Commission also requested that the Elections Department provide recommendations for alternative South Beach Early Voting locations, should relocation be necessary.

The Office of the City Clerk and the Miami-Dade County Elections Department initiated a review process to evaluate alternative Early Voting sites. In response, the Elections Department

identified the South Shore Community Center as their preferred South Beach alternative should the Commission wish to replace City Hall as an Early Voting site.

To address the Commission's interest in a Mid-Beach location, on February 27, 2025, the City Clerk, accompanied by Elections Department personnel, toured Muss Park to determine its feasibility as a third Early Voting site for the Run-Off Election. The Elections Department is currently reviewing Muss Park to determine if it meets all necessary legal, logistical, and accessibility requirements for Early Voting.

<sup>[1]</sup> On February 2, 2025, the City Clerk spoke with Christina White, Chief Executive Officer of the Miami-Dade Elections Department. Ms. White stated that the Elections Department would be willing to consider a third Early Voting site in Mid-Beach. However, she also confirmed that the Elections Department would not consider extending the number of Early Voting days for the Run-Off Election, and the Early Voting period for the Run-Off Election would remain at three days.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **1. Voter-Approved Run-Off Election Date Change**

A Charter Amendment approved by Miami Beach voters on November 5, 2024, changed the City's Run-Off Election date to the second Tuesday in December following the General Election. For 2025, the Run-Off Election is scheduled for December 9, 2025, with Early Voting occurring from December 5-7, 2025. Under Section 38-6 of the Miami Beach Code, Early Voting for a Run-Off Election is limited to three days (Friday-Sunday) before the election.

### **2. Identified Concerns with City Hall as an Early Voting Site for the Run-Off Election**

City Hall has traditionally served as an Early Voting location along with the North Shore Branch Library. However, its proximity to the Miami Beach Convention Center, the primary venue for Art Basel, presents several logistical challenges during the Run-Off Election period:

- **Severe Traffic Congestion**: Art Basel attracts a significant influx of visitors, leading to substantial traffic congestion around City Hall. This congestion could impede voter access to the Early Voting polling site.
- **Limited Parking Availability**: City Hall's parking facilities are heavily utilized during Art Basel events, reducing the number of spaces available for voters and potentially discouraging voter turnout.
- **Increased Pedestrian and Vehicle Traffic**: The high volume of attendees and activities associated with Art Basel results in increased pedestrian and vehicle traffic in the vicinity of City Hall, which may deter voters from accessing the Early Voting site.

### **3. Early Voting Site Requirements Under Florida Law**

Under Florida Statute 101.657, the Supervisor of Elections is authorized to designate the following types of locations as Early Voting sites: City halls, permanent public library facilities, fairgrounds, civic centers, courthouses, county commission buildings, stadiums, convention centers, government-owned senior centers, and government-owned community centers.

### **4. Site Visits and Evaluation of Alternative South Beach Early Voting Locations**

The Office of the City Clerk, in coordination with the Miami-Dade County Elections Department, conducted site visits to evaluate potential alternative South Beach Early Voting locations. The sites visited and the subsequent recommendations from the Elections Department are as follows:

- **South Shore Community Center (833 6th Street)**:
  - **Assessment - Preferred Alternative**: The Elections Department recommends this site as the best alternative for a South Beach Early Voting location should the Commission wish to replace City Hall as an Early Voting site. The facility offers sufficient interior space

to accommodate all necessary voting equipment without the need for temporary structures. While parking is limited, the Office of the City Clerk has proposed implementing a shuttle system for Elections Department employees from a nearby parking garage to enhance voter accessibility at the existing adjacent surface parking lot. Final approval is pending confirmation of the facility's power amperage and circuit capacity.

- **Scott Rakow Youth Center** (2700 Sheridan Avenue) and **Miami Beach Regional Library** (227 27th Street):
  - **Assessment - Not Recommended:** Both sites were eliminated from consideration by the Elections Department due to their proximity to Art Basel's high-traffic areas, which could present similar logistical challenges as those associated with City Hall during the event.
- **Miami Beach Police Athletic League (PAL)** (999 11th Street):
  - **Assessment - Not Recommended:** This facility was eliminated from consideration by the Elections Department due to insufficient space to accommodate Early Voting operations, the need to build a temporary structure, and potential non-compliance with ADA accessibility requirements.

## 5. Exploration of a Third Early Voting Location in Mid-Beach – Muss Park

On February 27, 2025, the City Clerk, accompanied by Elections Department and Parks and Recreation Department personnel, visited Muss Park to assess its feasibility as a third Early Voting location for the Run-Off Election. Muss Park is the only Mid-Beach location that meets the requirements of Florida Statutes 101.657, as it is a government-owned community center.

- **Purpose of a Mid-Beach Early Voting Location:**
  - A third Early Voting site in Mid-Beach during the Run-Off Election would balance geographic accessibility, ensuring that voters throughout Miami Beach - North Beach, Mid-Beach, and South Beach - have a reasonable and accessible location to cast their ballots.
- **Current Status:**
  - The Elections Department is currently reviewing Muss Park's suitability to determine if it meets the necessary legal and logistical requirements for Early Voting.
  - If approved, Muss Park would complement the other two Early Voting locations during the Run-Off Election and help mitigate voter access issues created by traffic congestion during Art Basel.

As Muss Park hosts a weekday after-school program run by the Parks and Recreation Department, the Office of the City Clerk will work closely with the department to minimize disruptions to the children. To accommodate the program with as little impact as possible, two options are being considered. One option is to temporarily relocate the children to an alternate location on the two weekdays when Muss Park would be unavailable for after-school programming - Thursday, December 4th, and Friday, December 5th. Alternatively, a temporary air-conditioned tent could be constructed on-site to house the children during those two days.

The Elections Department is assessing whether the Muss Park Early Voting site can be set up on Thursday, December 4th, and dismantled by noon on Monday, December 8th, which would ensure that the after-school program is only affected on Thursday, December 4th, and Friday, December 5th. The cost of constructing the temporary tent would be covered using existing election funds. Additionally, the Election funds account will realize savings due to a recent authorization allowing the City to advertise election notices on a County-accessible website instead of a newspaper of general circulation. Since there is no cost to advertise on the County website, the funds previously allocated for newspaper advertisements could be reallocated to cover the cost of the air-conditioned tent.

**FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Not applicable at the moment.

**Does this Ordinance require a Business Impact Estimate?** N/A  
(FOR ORDINANCES ONLY)

The Business Impact Estimate (BIE) was published on .  
See BIE at: <https://www.miamibeachfl.gov/city-hall/city-clerk/meeting-notice/>

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Not applicable at the moment.

**CONCLUSION**

The Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee is requested to:

1. Discuss whether City Hall should remain an Early Voting site or be replaced for both the General and Run-Off Elections, or only for the Run-Off Election.
2. Review the Elections Department’s findings regarding South Shore Community Center as a potential South Beach alternative Early Voting site.
3. Consider the feasibility of Muss Park as a Mid-Beach Early Voting location for the possible Run-Off Election, pending the Elections Department’s review.

**Applicable Area**

Citywide

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

No

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

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**

City Clerk

**Sponsor(s)**

**Co-sponsor(s)**

**Condensed Title**

Discuss: Relocation of City Hall Early Voting (EV) Site and Addition of Third EV Site for 2025 Run-Off Election. (CC)