

THE CITY OF CORAL GABLES



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY HALL 405 BILTMORE WAY
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA 33134

The City Beautiful

May 24, 2022

Hon. Andrew Fay, Chairman
Florida Public Service Commission
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Chairman Fay,

In April 2021 I had the distinct honor of being elected Mayor of the City of Coral Gables. Our residents receive electric service from Florida Power & Light Company. While the city has had disagreements from time to time with FPL, FPL has remained a steadfast source of effective, reliable and affordable electric service for the residents of the City of Coral Gables. Integral to their approach is the long-standing commitment of both FPL and the PSC to provide an increasingly strengthened and smarter electric grid including hardened distribution poles and the undergrounding of distribution lines. These initiatives were formally mandated by the Florida Legislature through storm protection legislation passed in 2019. The storm protection legislation has been implemented through the close coordination of FPL and the city on hardening/undergrounding initiatives on the orders of the Public Service Commission.

During the 2021 legislative session, the Legislature enacted CS/SB 1944 granting the Commission jurisdiction to address disputes and establish the rates, terms and conditions of pole attachments between the regulated electric utilities and the communications companies. This legislation was necessitated by AT&T's failure to properly maintain and replace its poles following deregulation of the company in the mid-1990s. I believe it is worth noting that the 2021 Florida pole attachment legislation was passed by an overwhelming majority of 37 state senators and 114 state

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representatives. Based on my experience and observation as a resident and now mayor of the city of Coral Gables, this legislation was badly needed. One need only traverse our city to observe AT&T's poorly maintained poles which represent an ever-increasing threat to life and property particularly during extreme weather such as tropical storms and hurricanes. While FPL has actively and aggressively taken steps to remove their equipment and lines attached to AT&T poles so that the facilities could be placed on the hardened pole or underground, the old AT&T poles have not been replaced or strengthened and remain an ongoing risk and threat to our community.

I know I speak not just for the city of Coral Gables but for mayors of many municipalities across our state that are counting on you and your fellow commissioners to constructively implement the 2021 pole attachment legislation. This can only be accomplished by requiring AT&T and the other telecommunications companies to closely coordinate with FPL in the undergrounding of distribution lines so that the work can be accomplished quickly and efficiently with minimal disruption to our residents. I would also strongly encourage the adoption of a robust set of rules that require AT&T and the other telecommunications companies to: (1) install and maintain hardened infrastructure similar to electric companies; and (2) adhere to a rate structure that incentivizes these telecom companies to work closely with the electric utilities and coordinate on the placement of facilities underground. For example, in the case of telecom companies attached to FPL poles that fail to "go underground" with FPL, a Commission policy, rule or tariff that requires these telecom companies to purchase the old FPL pole at a price above net book value accompanied by pole inspection and compliance with the highest level wind loading requirements. Such an approach would clearly encourage mutual coordination on undergrounding for the protection and betterment of the residents of our city. Indeed, action by the Commission on this important matter will help ensure the timely removal of overhead poles that have not been properly maintained or that have no attachments on them (unused and useful).

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Thank you again for your consideration of my concerns which reflect those of the residents of the city of Coral Gables.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "V. Lago", is written over the word "Best,".

Vince Lago

Mayor

City of Coral Gables

CC: Hon. Art Graham, Commissioner

Hon. Gary Clark, Commissioner

Hon. Mike LaRosa, Commissioner

Hon. Gabriella Passidomo, Commissioner