

MEMORANDUM

Agenda Item No. 14(A)(5)

TO: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

DATE: March 18, 2025

FROM: Geri Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

SUBJECT: Resolution renaming the Miami-Dade Justice Center the “Osvaldo N. Soto Miami-Dade Justice Center”; directing the County Mayor to, in coordination with the Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, recommend a suitable County facility to name in honor of Harvey Ruvin and to provide a report; suspending Rules 9.02 and 5.06(A) by a two-thirds vote of Board members present as related to the public hearing and background research requirements, and legislative approval period, for this item

The accompanying resolution was prepared and placed on the agenda at the request of Co-Prime Sponsors Commissioner Eileen Higgins and the Safety and Health Committee.



Geri Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

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MEMORANDUM

(Revised)

TO: Honorable Chairman Anthony Rodriguez
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

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FROM: 
Glen Bonzon-Keenan
County Attorney

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Please note any items checked.

- ☐ "3-Day Rule" for committees applicable if raised
- ☐ 6 weeks required between first reading and public hearing
- ☐ 4 weeks notification to municipal officials required prior to public hearing
- ☐ Decreases revenues or increases expenditures without balancing budget
- ☐ Budget required
- ☐ Statement of fiscal impact required
- ☐ Statement of social equity required
- ☒ Ordinance creating a new board requires detailed County Mayor's report for public hearing
- ☒ No committee review
- ☐ Applicable legislation requires more than a majority vote (i.e., 2/3's present ☒, 2/3 membership ____, 3/5's ____, unanimous ____, majority plus one ____, CDMP 7 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3)(h) or (4)(c) ____, CDMP 2/3 vote requirement per 2-116.1(3) (h) or (4)(c) ____, CDMP 9 vote requirement per 2-116.1(4)(c) (2) ____) to approve
- ☐ Current information regarding funding source, index code and available balance, and available capacity (if debt is contemplated) required

Approved _____ Mayor
Veto _____
Override _____

Agenda Item No. 14(A)(5)
3-18-25

RESOLUTION NO. _____

RESOLUTION RENAMING THE MIAMI-DADE JUSTICE CENTER THE “OSVALDO N. SOTO MIAMI-DADE JUSTICE CENTER”; DIRECTING THE COUNTY MAYOR OR COUNTY MAYOR’S DESIGNEE TO, IN COORDINATION WITH THE CHIEF JUDGE OF THE ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, RECOMMEND A SUITABLE COUNTY FACILITY TO NAME IN HONOR OF HARVEY RUVIN AND TO PROVIDE A REPORT; SUSPENDING RULES 9.02 AND 5.06(A) BY A TWO-THIRDS VOTE OF BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT AS RELATED TO THE PUBLIC HEARING AND BACKGROUND RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS, AND LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL PERIOD, FOR THIS ITEM

WHEREAS, the Miami-Dade County Courthouse, formerly known as the Dade County Courthouse, is a historic courthouse located at 73 West Flagler Street in Miami, Florida (the “Historic Courthouse”) and has served as the primary civil courthouse of Miami-Dade County since its construction in 1928; and

WHEREAS, at 361 feet tall with 28 floors, the Historic Courthouse when it was built was Miami-Dade County’s first high-rise and the tallest building in both Miami-Dade County and the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Courthouse has previously served as a County jail, criminal courthouse, and government seat for both Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami, and some of its courtrooms, including the iconic courtroom 6-1, have served as the setting for important trials over the past century such as the Al Capone trial; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Courthouse has been noted as significant in Miami-Dade County’s history of government, community development, and architecture; and

WHEREAS, more specifically, the Historic Courthouse has been hallmarked as an outstanding work of two prominent architects, an outstanding example of architectural design, notably its use of materials, ziggurat roof, and Neo-Classical style, and as one of the County's most visually defining landmarks in the rapidly evolving skyline; and

WHEREAS, on January 4, 1989, the Historic Courthouse was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, due to concerns over the building's age, space constraints, and cost of required upkeep, among others, this Board adopted Resolution No. R-151-15, directing the County Mayor to issue a competitive solicitation for the replacement of the Historic Courthouse; and

WHEREAS, on December 17, 2019, this Board adopted Resolution No. R-1343-19 which awarded the contract for the construction of a new civil and probate courthouse at 20 NW 1st Avenue in Miami, Florida (the "New Courthouse") to replace the Historic Courthouse; and

WHEREAS, on February 19, 2025, this Board adopted Resolution No. R-207-25 which renamed the New Courthouse as the "Miami-Dade Justice Center"; and

WHEREAS, the Miami-Dade Justice Center, expected to be completed in 2025, will provide 620,000 square feet of modern facilities to be occupied by the Administrative Office of the Courts for the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, the Miami-Dade Clerk of the Court and Comptroller, and the Law Library; and

WHEREAS, the Miami-Dade Justice Center will include 46 finished jury courtrooms, four shelled courtroom sets to accommodate future projected growth in the judicial system, and 59 secured parking spaces for judicial officers and clerk staff; and

WHEREAS, notable judicial and legal community leaders, representing the region's culturally diverse population, have played a pivotal role in shaping Miami-Dade County's legal and court system; and

WHEREAS, two of the most prominent and impactful of such leaders are the late Osvaldo Soto and Harvey Ruvin; and

WHEREAS, Osvaldo Soto was a Cuban exile and lawyer who, over the years, became a revered figure who fought on behalf of Miami's Hispanic, minority, and legal communities; and

WHEREAS, born in Havana, Cuba in 1929, Mr. Soto later attended law school alongside Fidel Castro, and was part of the revolution to oust Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959; and

WHEREAS, when Fidel Castro became a brutal dictator, Mr. Soto left Cuba for exile in South Florida; and

WHEREAS, ever the champion for freedom in Cuba, Mr. Soto was a part of the Brigada Asalto 2506, a CIA-sponsored group of Cuban exiles formed in 1960 to attempt the military ouster of Fidel Castro; and

WHEREAS, having survived the Bay of Pigs, Mr. Soto returned to Miami unharmed and undeterred in his beliefs and efforts to advocate for a free Cuba; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto later became a teacher out-of-state, eventually becoming a tenured professor at Iowa State University, before returning to South Florida in the mid-1970s; and

WHEREAS, once back in Miami, he earned his law degree and became a respected lawyer; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, when the Mariel refugee crisis brought many thousands of Cubans to South Florida, some local residents blamed those refugees for rising crime and societal ills; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of such sentiments, an ordinance was adopted declaring English the official language of the County, and prohibiting the use of County funds for translating documents or offering non-emergency services in Spanish or any other language; and

WHEREAS, in addition, in 1984, the then-Dade County Clerk of Courts began to prohibit marriages from being conducted in languages other than English; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto, as president of the Spanish American League Against Discrimination (“SALAD”) and other coalitions, spoke out against those discriminatory measures and fought for equality for Hispanics and minorities; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1980s, Mr. Soto, along with SALAD, launched a campaign called English Plus, which was aimed at preserving the Spanish language locally as well as nationally; and

WHEREAS, thanks in large part to Mr. Soto’s efforts, the County Commission repealed the English-only ordinance in 1993; and

WHEREAS, among other important endeavors, Mr. Soto’s legacy also includes advocating for minority officers to be promoted in police departments and ending discrimination in Miami Beach; and

WHEREAS, he was also active in the local legal community, advocating for more diversity among lawyers and judges; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto was a former member and past president of the Cuban-American Bar Association (“CABA”) in Miami, and, in 1991, he was among those who pushed the group to open its membership to non-Cubans; and

WHEREAS, he also courageously supported qualified, minority candidates for judicial office, such as Scott Bernstein, an openly gay judicial candidate who first ran for judge in 1998; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Soto was also proud to see his daughter Bertila “Berdy” Soto become a judge during his life and, in 2013, to make history as the first female Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida; and

WHEREAS, on January 9, 2021, Mr. Soto passed away from natural causes at the age of 91, survived by his wife, Bertila Soto, his sister, and his four children; and

WHEREAS, he will forever be remembered as a champion of the Hispanic community, minorities, and the causes of justice and freedom; and

WHEREAS, Harvey Ruvin was Miami-Dade County's longest-serving elected official, having devoted over 50 years to public service, including 30 years as Clerk of the Courts for Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, yet as an early environmentalist he was as proud of his service to the planet as he was of his service to the County; and

WHEREAS, in both endeavors, he was both universally respected and well-liked; and

WHEREAS, born in New York City on June 1, 1937, Mr. Ruvin later moved with his family to Miami and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in 1959 followed by his Juris Doctor from the University of Miami School of Law in 1962; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ruvin was elected to his first office in 1968, when he became mayor of North Bay Village at age 30; and

WHEREAS, he then served as a Miami-Dade County Commissioner from 1972 until 1992, when he was elected as the Miami-Dade County Clerk of the Courts, a position which he held—winning reelection seven times—until his passing in 2022; and

WHEREAS, as Clerk, Mr. Ruvin helped launch what is known as SPIRIT, an electronic case management system to handle the extremely large amount of traffic citations levied every year in Miami-Dade County; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ruvin is credited, in the mid-1990s before documents could be digitized as quickly as today, with helping implement a system to help his attorneys get case files quicker; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ruvin was also instrumental in helping former felons restore their voting rights under Amendment 4, which passed in 2018; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ruvin’s popularity among voters was unmatched, as evidenced in 2020 when more Miami-Dade residents voted for him—nearly 759,000 people—than any other candidate on the ballot, including presidential and congressional candidates; and

WHEREAS, as an elected official, he was humble, diplomatic, and positive, always shifting credit for his lasting public favor to his staff, and preferring to persuade rather than attack those who opposed him on an issue; and

WHEREAS, from his earliest working years Mr. Ruvin was also a staunch supporter of the environment; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ruvin is widely recognized as one of the earliest and most vocal advocates for the protection of Biscayne Bay, and he played a pivotal role in pioneering “Baynanza,” a longstanding environmental initiative dedicated to preserving and restoring the bay’s ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, many of today’s core environmental efforts in Miami-Dade County are the result of ordinances and policies that Mr. Ruvin set forth as a commissioner decades before climate change was a commonplace concern—among them, Miami-Dade’s residential and commercial recycling system, efforts to curb greenhouse gases that offset 40 million-plus metric tons of carbon emissions, an endangered land preservation program that at the time of its creation was the largest of its kind in the nation and, more recently, leading the county’s Sea Level Rise Task Force; and

WHEREAS, in such efforts, he crossed party lines and alliances, working with all and listening to everyone’s concerns; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, he was a founding member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) as a representative of what was then Dade County, later serving as vice chairman of the international ICLEI and then president of ICLEI USA; and

WHEREAS, he also served as president of the National Association of Counties in the late 1980s and remained on the board of directors until his passing; and

WHEREAS, Harvey Ruvin passed away on December 31, 2022, at his home surrounded by his wife, Risa, and their family; and

WHEREAS, he will forever be remembered as an exemplary public servant and leader, and a champion of the environment; and

WHEREAS, to honor the legacies of Osvaldo Soto and Harvey Ruvin and their tremendous contributions to the community, this Board desires to rename the Miami-Dade Justice Center the “Osvaldo N. Soto Miami-Dade Justice Center”, and to direct the County Mayor or County Mayor’s designee to, in coordination with the Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, recommend a suitable County facility to name in honor of Harvey Ruvin; and

WHEREAS, the Miami-Dade Justice Center is a County-owned facility located in County Commission District 5; and

WHEREAS, Rule 9.02(a) of the Board’s Rules of Procedure provides that resolutions regarding proposed naming, renaming or codesignation of Miami-Dade County roads, facilities or property shall be sponsored by the district commissioner where the road, facility or property is located and shall be considered at a public hearing; and

WHEREAS, Rule 9.02(g) of the Board’s Rules of Procedure requires the Commission Auditor to complete background research and prepare a report on any person, organization, place or thing that is the subject of a naming, renaming or codesignation item or an item approving the codesignation of state or municipal roads; and

WHEREAS, Rule 5.06(a) of the Board's Rules of Procedure governs legislative approval periods and the preparation of ordinances and resolutions by the county attorney, including in situations where requests for the same or substantially similar ordinance or resolution have been made by multiple commissioners; and

WHEREAS, Rule 5.06(a) provides, in pertinent part, "During the pendency of the 90-day period . . . the county attorney shall not prepare the same or substantially similar ordinance or resolution for another Commissioner until the county attorney receives from the Commissioner who first made the Legislative Request or his or her staff, in writing, one of the following: approval of the requested ordinance or resolution for submittal to the Chairperson of the County Commission for placement on an appropriate agenda; or withdrawal of all or a portion of the initial Legislative Request"; and

WHEREAS, Rule 7.01(o) of the Board's Rules of Procedure provides that no rule of procedure adopted by this board shall be suspended except by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the Board members present; and

WHEREAS, this Board desires to suspend, by a two-thirds vote of Board members present, Rules 9.02(a), 9.02(g), and 5.06(a) of the Board's Rules of Procedure as related to the public hearing requirement, background research requirement, and legislative approval period, respectively, for this item,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, that this Board:

Section 1. By a two-thirds vote of the Board members present, suspends Rules 9.02(a), 9.02(g), and 5.06(a) of the Rules of Procedure of the County Commission as related to the public hearing requirement, background research requirement, and legislative approval period, respectively, for this item.

Section 2. Renames the Miami-Dade Justice Center the “Osvaldo N. Soto Miami-Dade Justice Center”.

Section 3. Directs the County Mayor or County Mayor’s designee to, in coordination with the Chief Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, recommend a suitable County facility to name in honor of Harvey Ruvín and to prepare a written report regarding such recommendation within 90 days. The County Mayor or County Mayor’s designee shall further coordinate with the district commissioner in whose district the recommended facility is located. The completed report shall be placed on an agenda of the full Board without committee review pursuant to Rule 5.06(j) of the Board’s Rules of Procedure.

The Co-Prime Sponsors of the foregoing resolution are Commissioner Eileen Higgins and the Safety and Health Committee. It was offered by Commissioner _____, who moved its adoption. The motion was seconded by Commissioner _____ and upon being put to a vote, the vote was as follows:

Anthony Rodriguez, Chairman	
Kionne L. McGhee, Vice Chairman	
Marleine Bastien	Juan Carlos Bermudez
Kevin Marino Cabrera	Sen. René García
Oliver G. Gilbert, III	Roberto J. Gonzalez
Keon Hardemon	Danielle Cohen Higgins
Eileen Higgins	Raquel A. Regalado
Micky Steinberg	

The Chairperson thereupon declared this resolution duly passed and adopted this 18th day of March, 2025. This resolution shall become effective upon the earlier of (1) 10 days after the date of its adoption unless vetoed by the County Mayor, and if vetoed, shall become effective only upon an override by this Board, or (2) approval by the County Mayor of this resolution and the filing of this approval with the Clerk of the Board.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA
BY ITS BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

JUAN FERNANDEZ-BARQUIN, CLERK

By: _____
Deputy Clerk

Approved by County Attorney as
to form and legal sufficiency.

MSM

Michael J. Mastrucci