

MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST

Summary of Minutes and Agenda Actions

Meeting of March 13, 2014

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics convened in the Biscayne Building, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 820, Miami, FL, on March 13, 2014. Present were Commission Chair Nelson Bellido, Commissioner, Vice Chair Lawrence Schwartz and Commissioner Copeland. Also present Michael Murawski, Advocate; Miriam Ramos, Deputy General Counsel; Gilma Diaz-Greco, Staff Attorney; Rhonda Victor Sibilia, Communications Director; and Rachelle Cedeno Ross, Executive Secretary. Also present: Kira Grossman, Jose Azze, Vice Mayor Josh Liebman, Ben Kuehne, Michelle Delancy, Councilwoman Marie Sterile, Lillian Ser and Al Crespo. The meeting was called to order at 10:12 a.m. A quorum was present.

I. Approval of Minutes from February 13 and March 5, 2014

Commissioner Schwartz moved to approve the minutes of February 13. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Copeland and it passed unanimously (3-0). Commissioner Schwartz moved to approve the minutes of the hearing of March 5. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Copeland and it passed unanimously (3-0).

II. Public Comments

Jose Azze of "Save our youth Hialeah" discussed his complaint regarding the city's baseball fields.

Al Crespo congratulated the board on the Carollo case and requested an explanation for the dismissal of his complaint against Victor DeYurre.

III. Section 8 Requests

Commissioner Schwartz moved to approve one contract involving a County employee seeking to become a Section 8 landlord since the firefighter is not an employee of the Miami-Dade Public Housing and Community Development Department. Commissioner Copeland seconded the motion and it passed unanimously (3-0).

IV. Monthly Summary of Inquiries

A Summary of Inquiries issued since the last meeting was presented to Commissioners for review.

V. Executive Director's Report

In the absence of Executive Director Joseph Centorino, Deputy General Counsel Miriam Ramos shared her article in the Dade County Bar Bulletin on lobbying and distributed the most recent version of the program for the Political Campaign Ethics Conference in May.

Advocate Michael Murawski discussed the Ethics Commission participation in the Corporate Run on April 24.

VI. Complaints

Following the March 5th settlement with Miami City Commissioner Frank Carollo, who pled no contest to the complaint (C 12-32) of exploitation of official position for calling the city police chief after being stopped for a traffic violation, a Letter of Instruction was presented. Respondent's attorney Ben Kuehne declared his support. Commissioner Schwartz made a motion to approve the Letter. It was seconded by Commissioner Copeland and unanimously approved (3-0).

A Letter of Instruction for C 13-33 to the City of Hialeah was presented, but after discussion, the Advocate agreed to amend it for the next meeting.

Following the Probable Cause finding that that the former public works director for Miami Lakes violated the "reverse two year rule" by approving public business to a company that previously employed him, Hiram Siaba agreed to settle the complaint (C 13-51). Commissioner Copeland made a motion to approve the settlement, in which Siaba agreed not to contest the charge, pay a fine of \$500 and accept a Letter of Instruction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

The Ethics Commission convened in closed session at 10:45 a.m. The Commission returned to open session at 12:22 p.m. and took the following action:

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to approve the Advocate's request for an extension of time to make a probable cause determination in C 13-29 through May. It was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to find probable cause to C 13-38, in which Kira Grossman, an attorney for the Miami Parking Authority, violated the Ethics Ordinance by using her City email account and computer to promote a political fundraiser for then-mayoral candidate Francis Suarez. Chair Bellido seconded the motion but it failed. (1-2 - **Bellido voted yes**). Commissioner Copeland made a motion to dismiss with a Letter of Instruction and it was unanimously approved. (3-0)

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to approve a settlement with South Miami Vice Mayor Josh Liebman, accused (C 13-41) of violating the "use of public property" section of his city's Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance when he endorsed a candidate for office in his official capacity during a televised and web-streamed city commission meeting. Liebman entered a plea of No Contest and agreed to pay a fine of \$250 and investigative costs of \$500. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to find No Probable Cause to a complaint (C 13-48) filed against Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Authority Director John Renfrow by an employee seeking documents that were provided. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

After hearing a request from respondent's attorney Ben Kuehne, Commissioner Copeland made a motion to accept the defense request for a 30-day continuance to C 13-50, noting it would be the final deferral. It was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to find No Probable Cause to a complaint (C14-05) filed against City of Miami Communications Chief Angel Zayon for trying to get a traffic ticket "fixed" since the investigation shows he did respond to the infraction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to find No Probable Cause to a complaint (C14-07) against Jason Korn for lobbying County staff without registering, when the investigation proved otherwise. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to find a Lack of Legal Sufficiency to a complaint (C 14-15) against several City of Miami police officers because there were no allegations of ethics violations. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

Commissioner Copeland made a motion to find Probable Cause to a complaint (C14-19) against North Miami Councilwoman Marie Steril, accused of exploiting her official position by demanding that her mother receive upgrades denied to other buyers when she bought a home through a federally-funded program run by the city. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (3-0).

VII. Old Business

There was no unfinished business.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business before the Ethics Commission, Commissioner Schwartz moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Copeland and it passed unanimously (3-0). The meeting adjourned at 12:29 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rhonda V. Sibilia". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Prepared by Rhonda Victor Sibilia, Communications Director