

# MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST

## Summary of Minutes and Agenda Actions

### Meeting of July 8, 2015

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics (COE) convened in Suite 820 of the Biscayne Building, at 19 West Flagler Street, Miami, FL, on July 8, 2015. Present were Chairman Nelson Bellido, along with Commissioners Judith Bernier, Marcia Narine and Judge Lawrence Schwartz. Also present were Joseph Centorino, Executive Director; Michael Murawski, Advocate; Gilma Diaz-Greco, Staff Attorney; Martha Perez, Staff Attorney; Robert Thompson, Community Outreach Coordinator; Rachele Cedeno, Executive Secretary; Ethics Commission Intern James Dafonte; Eston "Dusty" Melton; Al Crespo; and other members of the public. The meeting minutes were kept by Forensic Accountant/ Investigator Karl Ross in the absence of Communications Director Rhonda Victor Sibilia. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Bellido. A quorum was present.

#### **I. Approval of Minutes from June 17, 2015**

The minutes from the previous month's meeting were unanimously approved.

#### **II. Public Comments**

Lobbyist Eston "Dusty" Melton, acting in his capacity as a private citizen, addressed the Commission to state his concerns about the handling of complaints against developer Donald Trump, Ed Russo and Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez. Blogger Al Crespo, who filed the aforementioned complaints against Trump and Mayor Gimenez, also addressed the Commission to state his concerns about the findings of No Probable Cause against Trump and Gimenez at last month's meeting. Chair Bellido recessed the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

#### **III. Monthly Summary of Inquiries/ Housing Requests**

The meeting re-opened at 10:23 with a presentation by Staff Attorney Gilma Diaz-Greco about recent inquiries concerning lobbyist registrations, outside employment, and housing. She noted an increase in the latter two categories of inquiries due to recent efforts to raise awareness among County employees.

#### **IV. City of Miami Beach Lobbyist Appeals**

There was no discussion on this item.

#### **V. Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Joseph Centorino reported he hoped to fill the vacant investigator's position by August after receiving approximately 100 résumés from applicants. With respect to plans to relocate the agency to the Overtown Transit Village South building, Mr. Centorino advised that he was happy with the space that had been designated on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor, but said he was not pleased it would take almost two years for the build-out. He noted the Office of the Inspector General secured space on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building. Mr. Centorino gave a report on his recent experience hosting members of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). He said YALI is a program sponsored by Florida International University. He said some of the members of YALI were surprised by the hallmarks of a democratic society, especially freedom of the press. He noted that the event was one of many such events at which COE hosts groups of visitors from around the world.

Mr. Centorino asked COE Outreach Coordinator Robert Thompson to give a presentation about the agency's outreach efforts, and Mr. Thompson highlighted a number of recent presentations, including those featuring government employees who had been convicted on public corruption charges. The employees were chosen, so they could relate their experience to other government employees. Mr. Thompson said the agency has put on

358 outreach events between October 2014 and June 2015, and more than 1,200 over the past three years – including Ethical Governance Day and the recent Ethics in Education Seminar on May 1 and 2. Mr. Centorino thanked Mr. Thompson and COE staff for their continued hard work in spreading the word.

## **VI. Complaints**

Advocate Michael Murawski presented a Letter of Instruction in complaint (C 15-05) against environmental consultant Ed Russo for ratification by the Commission. The proposed Letter of Instruction was tabled, however, after commissioners voiced concerns about “new information” provided during the Public Comments section of the meeting. They asked the Advocate to examine these concerns and report back at the next meeting. Mr. Centorino agreed this would be an appropriate course of action. Commissioner Narine made a motion to table the item, which was seconded by Chairman Bellido. The motion was approved (3-0), with Commissioner Schwartz recusing himself from the vote.

The Ethics Commission went into closed session at approximately 10:50 a.m. and returned at 11:14 a.m., at which time the following actions were taken:

Commissioner Narine made a motion to accept a No Probable Cause finding in a complaint against Miami-Dade Transit (MDT) management (C15-15) since there was insufficient evidence to prove a violation under the Citizens’ Bill of Rights as it related to a public records request by Metromover technician Lorenzo Jones. The motion was conditioned on the inclusion of a requirement that MDT management and others involved in fielding Mr. Jones’ records request take training on public records law, and that MDT management report back to COE with any follow-up actions since it was found agency personnel took an unreasonable amount of time to respond to the request for employee time cards and other records. Commissioner Schwartz seconded the motion by Commissioner Narine, and the motion was unanimously approved (4-0).

Commissioner Narine made a motion to grant the Advocate an extension to respond to a complaint (C15-16). The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (4-0).

Commissioner Narine made a motion to find two complaints filed by MDT employees (C15-19 and C15-20) Not Legally Sufficient because they involved union and personnel matters outside of the agency’s jurisdiction. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Schwartz and unanimously approved (4-0).

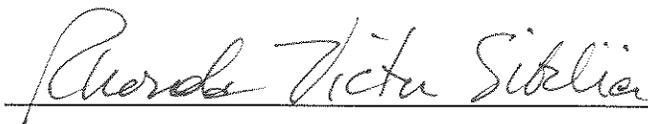
## **VII. Old Business**

There was no discussion on this item.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Ethics Commission, Chairman Bellido moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Narine, and it passed unanimously (4-0). The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:40 a.m.

Prepared by Karl Ross, Forensic Accountant/ Investigator



Amended at COE meeting August 12, 2015, by Rhonda Victor Sibilica, Communications Director