

MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST

Summary of Minutes and Agenda Actions

Meeting of December 16, 2015

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics convened in the Biscayne Building, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 820, Miami, FL, on December 16, 2015. Present were Commission Chair Nelson Bellido, Vice Chair Lawrence Schwartz and Commissioners Judith Bernier, H. Jeffrey Cutler and Marcia Narine. Also present were Joseph Centorino, Executive Director; Michael Murawski, Advocate; Gilma Diaz-Greco and Martha Perez, Staff Attorneys; Rhonda Victor Sibilia, Communications Director; Rachelle Cedeno Ross, Executive Secretary; and Sylvia Batista and Breno Penichet, Investigators. Also present were Assistant Miami City Attorney Matt Haber, Miami-Dade Transit Director Alice Bravo, Henry Stolar, Andrew Dickman, Roney Mateu, Jose Sanchez, Al Crespo, Dusty Melton, and other members of the public. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Bellido. A quorum was present.

I. Election of Officers

Commissioner Narine made a motion to select Vice-Chair Schwartz as Chairman. It was seconded by Commissioner Cutler and unanimously approved (5-0). Commissioner Narine made a motion to name Commissioner Cutler as Vice-Chair. It was seconded by Commissioner Bellido and unanimously approved (5-0).

II. Recognition of Outgoing Chair

Executive Director Centorino presented a plaque to Mr. Bellido and thanked him for his service.

III. Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Cutler moved to approve the minutes of the Nov. 18, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bellido and unanimously approved (5-0).

IV. Public Comment

Henry Stolar presented suggestions to improve the complaint filing and notification process and expressed concern that the Citizens' Bill of Rights be amended to include the right to copy public records as well as inspect them. Mr. Centorino said he would pursue the issue with the County Attorney's Office and would provide a response to Mr. Stolar's other suggestions.

Al Crespo complimented the Chair on his appointment and echoed Mr. Stolar's concerns about how complainants are kept out of the process.

V. Request for Opinion

Miami-Dade Transit Director Alice Bravo, who requested an opinion from the Commission and was asked to attend once again in regards to **RQO 15-06**, answered several questions from Commissioner Narine, who still had concerns about a separation of Ms. Bravo's husband's role concerning County projects within the Transit Department. Staff agreed to come up with suggestions in the opinion that meet her concerns and the item was deferred until the next meeting.

VI. Section Eight Requests

Staff Attorney Diaz-Greco reported that three County employees sought to contract under the federally-funded Section 8 program, and, since they are not associated with the Miami-Dade Public Housing and Community Development Department, recommended approval of their requests. Vice Chair Cutler made a motion to support the recommendation. It was seconded by Commissioner Narine and unanimously approved (5-0).

VII. Monthly Summary of Inquiries/Housing requests

Staff Attorney Diaz-Greco presented a Summary of Inquiries issued since the last meeting and highlighted several of them. She also presented the requests of two County employees and family members to seek assistance through programs overseen by the Miami-Dade Public Housing and Community Development Department, none of whom are involved with the administration of the programs. Commissioner Narine made a motion to approve their participation. Commissioner Bernier seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved (5-0).

VIII. Miami Beach Lobbyist Appeals

Three lobbyists registered in Miami Beach, who were late in filing their required financial statements, appeared before the Commission seeking a reconsideration of the fines. The following actions were taken:

- Commissioner Narine made a motion to fine Andrew Dickman \$1,175. It was seconded by Commissioner Bernier and approved 3-2 (Bellido & Cutler dissent).
- Commissioner Bellido made a motion to waive the fine for Roney Mateu. It was seconded by Commissioner Narine and unanimously approved (5-0).
- Vice-Chair Cutler made a motion to fine Jose Sanchez \$1,055. It was seconded by Commissioner Bellido and unanimously approved (5-0).

IX. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Joseph Centorino reported briefly on his attendance at the annual COGEL conference and accolades made there regarding the Ethics Commission. He updated commissioners on the status of the claims case against Hialeah Mayor Carlos Hernandez and the Florida Election Commission action that was initiated by the Ethics Commission. Mr. Centorino noted that legislation is under consideration by the Board of County Commissioners that would require candidates for County and municipal office to disclose their financial ties to Political Action Committees and Electioneering Communication Organizations. A similar measure is under consideration in Miami Beach, but may be put on hold pending County action.

X. Complaints

The Ethics Commission convened in closed session at 11:35 a.m. The Commission returned to open session at 11:39 a.m. and took the following action:

Vice-Chair Cutler made a motion to find No Probable Cause to a complaint (C 15-23) filed against Evan Ross accusing him of improperly lobbying officials in North Miami Beach on behalf of Waste Management of Florida, Inc., but all parties denied he spoke to them about sanitation. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Narine and unanimously approved (5-0).

Commissioner Narine made a motion to grant the advocate's request for a 60-day extension on probable cause determinations for C 15-27, C 15-29 and C 15-30. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bernier and unanimously approved (5-0).

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Cutler moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bellido and it passed unanimously (5-0). The meeting adjourned at 11:41 a.m.



Prepared by Rhonda Victor Sibilio, Communications Director