

MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST

Summary of Minutes and Agenda Actions

Meeting of October 14, 2015

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics convened in the Biscayne Building, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 820, Miami, FL, on October 14, 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 Miami Beach Commissioner Jonah Wolfson, Assistant Miami City Attorney Matt Haber, Attorney Kendall Coffey and other members of the public. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Bellido, who welcomed newly installed Commissioner Cutler. A quorum was present.

I. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Narine moved to approve the minutes of the Sept. 9, 2015 meeting. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Schwartz and unanimously approved (5-0).

II. Requests for Opinion

Staff Attorney Gilma Diaz-Greco reported that County Transit Director Alice Bravo, who requested an opinion from the Commission and was asked to attend in regards to **RQO 15-06**, could not because she was required to appear before a County Commission Committee meeting. The item was continued to the next meeting.

III. 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 Schwartz made a motion to support the recommendation. It was seconded by Commissioner Narine and unanimously approved (5-0).

IV. 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 seven County employees 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. Vice Chair Schwartz made a motion to approve their participation. Commissioner Narine seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved (5-0).

V. Miami Beach Lobbyist Appeals

Two lobbyists registered in Miami Beach, who were late in filing their required financial statements, appeared to request that the Commission reconsider fines set at the prior meeting. The following actions were taken:

--Vice Chair Schwartz made a motion to reduce the penalty for John Chibbaro by half to \$2,950. It was seconded by Commissioner Narine and approved by a vote of **3 to 2** (Bellido and Cutler dissenting).

--Vice-Chair Schwartz made a motion to table the appeal by Jose Sanchez to allow him to present more evidence. It was seconded by Commissioner Narine and unanimously approved (5-0).

VI. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Joseph Centorino introduced Rina Gomez, who teaches a course at Florida International University on Values, Ethics and Conflict Resolution and brought five students to observe the meeting. They

were welcomed and invited to remain after the meeting to engage in a question-and-answer session. Mr. Centorino provided background on a proposed amendment to a Miami Beach ordinance to be heard later in the day that would prohibit the city mayor and commissioners and candidates for those posts to solicit contributions for Political Action Committees which donate to city campaigns. Miami Beach Commissioner Jonah Wolfson asked the Ethics Commission for its support. Attorney Kendall Coffey also spoke in its favor. Commissioner Narine made a motion to endorse the proposal. It was seconded by Commissioner Cutler and unanimously approved (5-0).

Mr. Centorino reported a good turnout and positive media coverage of the Environmental Justice and Municipal Governance luncheon last month at the University of Miami.

He stated that the proposed Honor Code for Miami-Dade County was scheduled for a final vote by the Board of County Commissioners on Oct. 20th and shared the column on it published in the Miami Herald Oct. 1st.

The director noted that this was the 30th day since Hialeah Mayor Carlos Hernandez was noticed of his fines and costs to be paid to the Ethics Commission for violations of the Citizens' Bill of Rights. He noted that, if payment was not forthcoming, legal action would be taken to recover the financial penalty.

With Ethical Governance Day coming up the following week, Mr. Centorino sought the Commission's approval to name Ingy Cruz, the social studies chair at Bob Graham Education Center, as the Ethics Teacher of the Year, and provided information on her civics educational achievements. Vice Chair Schwartz made a motion to approve the recommendation. It was seconded by Commissioner Narine and unanimously approved (5-0).

Finally, the director reported on the Ethics Commission participation and exhibition at the Miami-Dade League of Cities Best Practices conference on Oct. 9th.

VII. Complaints

Staff Attorney Martha Perez presented a status report on compliance with the Letter of Instruction for C 15-15 by two transit employees, noting that they provided inter-departmental procedures for dealing with public records requests and both attended training sessions on the subject.

The Ethics Commission convened in closed session at 11:25 a.m. The Commission returned to open session at 11:28 a.m. and took the following action:

Vice Chair Schwartz made a motion to grant the Advocate's request for an extension to make a Probable Cause determination for C 15-23. It was seconded by Commissioner Narine and unanimously approved (5-0).

VIII. Executive Director Performance Review

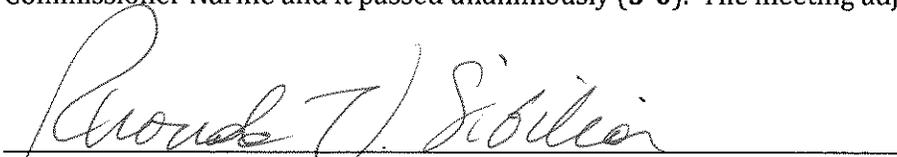
Joe Centorino presented a report on major initiatives, projects and accomplishments since his hiring in September 2011. Commissioner Narine made a motion to raise the Executive Director's salary by five percent, if afforded by the agency budget. It was seconded by Vice Chair Schwartz and unanimously approved (5-0).

IX. Old Business

Ethics Commissioners confirmed there would be quorum for the changed dates for the next two meetings: November 18 and December 16.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Schwartz moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Narine and it passed unanimously (5-0). The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.


Prepared by Rhonda Victor Sibilica, Communications Director