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New Ethics Commission leaders named

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) today selected retired Judge Lawrence Schwartz to serve as its chair for the next two years. Judge Schwartz is a native of Miami Beach who taught school before earning a law degree. He retired from the 11th Judicial Circuit in 2012 after serving more than two decades on the County and Circuit Court benches and was appointed by the Chief Judge to the Ethics Commission in January 2013. Also today, Commissioners elected H. Jeffrey Cutler, Esq. as Vice-Chair. Mr. Cutler, a Partner in the Coral Gables-based law firm of De La Cruz & Cutler, LLP, served as a Councilmember and Vice-Mayor of the Village of Pinecrest from 2006 to 2013 and was appointed to the COE by the Miami-Dade League of Cities this past September. Commissioners and staff also paid tribute to outgoing chair Nelson Bellido.

The COE found No Probable Cause in a complaint (**C 15-23**) filed by a citizen against campaign consultant Evan Ross, accusing him of improperly lobbying officials in North Miami Beach on behalf of Waste Management of Florida, Inc. (WMI), for the privatization of the city's sanitation services. The investigation found that Ross was a paid consultant for WMI, focusing on communication outreach and messaging. He previously lobbied on behalf of another company on issues relating to North Miami Beach's water plant, but Ross, along with City Councilmembers and administrators, denied he ever spoke to them about sanitation, and so the complaint was dismissed.

Fines were imposed on two individuals who registered as lobbyists in the City of Miami Beach but failed to file the required lobbyist expenditure reports until long after they were due. Attorney Andrew Dickman will pay \$1,175 and Architect Jose Sanchez must remit \$1,055.

The Ethics Commission was created in 1996 as an independent agency with advisory and quasi-judicial powers. It is composed of five members, serving staggered terms of four years each. Through a program of education, outreach and enforcement, the Commission seeks to empower the community and bolster public trust.

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Outgoing Ethics Commission Chairman Nelson Bellido and newly-selected Chair Judge Lawrence Schwartz.