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### **Fire chief admonished for failing to report game tickets**

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust today approved a Letter of Instruction as part of a settlement agreement to a complaint (**C 16-40**) against Hialeah's Fire Chief for failing to abide by gift disclosure rules. Chief Miguel Anchia accepted a skybox ticket to a December 2015 Miami Dolphins game worth \$1,000 – ten times the \$100 threshold required for officials to report a gift. Chief Anchia did not report it until he became aware of the ethics investigation in December 2016. The Letter of Instruction reiterates the gift requirements and states that, since the Chief holds a position of leadership, it is important that he learn from this experience to guide his future conduct and set an example for those under his command.

The Ethics Commission determined that a Parks Department employee participating in a non-profit organization's paid research program would be considered outside employment, but that it does not present a conflict with his County position. Eric Hansen is a manager in the Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department, responsible for researching trends and surveying community needs to develop programs to meet those needs. He has been invited to participate in the Interdisciplinary Research Leaders program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – the nation's largest philanthropy focused on health – along with researchers from the University of Miami and Florida International University. Mr. Hansen and the other team members will be paid \$25,000 each year of the three-year program and the team would receive an additional \$125,000 to conduct research. The COE response to **RQO 17-01** concluded that the stipend is considered outside employment and must be reported each year, but also determined that, since the duties of the research program are different from Mr. Hansen's responsibilities in the Parks Department and he is not associated with the expenditure of any other Foundation grants, there would be no conflict with his county position.

The COE found No Probable Cause to a complaint filed against Miami Parking Authority CEO Art Noriega that accused him of violating the Citizens' Bill of Rights "Truth in Government" provision for allegedly making a false statement during a public meeting last October regarding the installation of "Pay to Park" signs along NE 4<sup>th</sup> Court. A resident of the area, Elvis Cruz, charged Noriega with falsely claiming the signs had been approved by the Miami Public Works Department. The investigation determined that Noriega made the statement as a result of an administrative misunderstanding. Since there was no intention to deceive, the complaint (**C 16-38**) was dismissed.

The proposed "civility pledge" approved by the Ethics Commission last month has earned the support of two County Commissioners for its addition to oaths of office for County elected and appointed officials. The wording proposed by the COE during swearing in would be: "To my colleagues and to all of those I represent and serve, I pledge fairness, integrity and civility, in all actions taken and all communications made by me as a public servant." COE Executive Director Joseph Centorino also reported that the North Bay Village Council will take up the civility pledge, along with an "Honor Code for Elected and Appointed Town Officials and Town Employees" this month. The Honor Code, proposed by the Ethics Commission in 2015 and later adopted by the County Commission, calls on public servants to report criminal

misconduct, place public interest ahead of personal loyalties and cooperate truthfully with investigations regarding government operations.

Also today, it was announced that the Florida Bar has granted 6.5 Continuing Legal Education credits for attorneys who attend the Ethics Commission's day-long conference, ***Doing Business in Cuba: Legal, Ethical and Compliance Challenges***, on Friday, March 10, 2017, sponsored jointly with the Barry University School of Business. The event, for which nearly 100 people have already registered, will feature government, legal and academic experts discussing the changing relationship between the U.S. and the island nation and the ethical issues arising in the new business climate. Some panelists and speakers include Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine, Coral Gables Mayor Jim Cason, Doral Mayor J. C. Bermudez, Miami International Airport Director Emilio Gonzalez, current COE Commissioners Nelson Bellido and Marcia Narine Weldon, along with noted attorneys Anna Maria Hernandez, Richard Montes de Oca, Pedro Freyre, Peter Quinter, Yosbel Ibarra, Augusto Maxwell, Rebekah Poston and others. From academic circles, scheduled are FIU Law School Dean Alexander Acosta, Assistant St. Thomas University Professor, Sister Ondina Cortes, Dr. Jose Azel from the University of Miami and Dr. Nichole Castater and Dr. Sean Foreman of Barry University. The keynote speaker will be John Kavulich, President of the U.S. – Cuba Trade and Economic Council, Inc., in New York City and editor of *Economic Eye on Cuba*. The cost for the day-long event, which includes breakfast, lunch and all meeting materials, is \$50 per person. Organizations that purchase at least 20 registrations (\$1,000) will be acknowledged as contributing co-sponsors. Registration information and a complete program can be found at [ethics.miamidade.gov](http://ethics.miamidade.gov) or by calling 305-579-2594.

The Ethics Commission received a lengthy investigative report from COE staff regarding policies established by Miami International Airport's Office of Protocol and International Affairs for special escorts provided to VIPs including local elected officials. A public hearing will be held on its recommendations during the next COE meeting, Wednesday, March 8, 2017, beginning at 10 a.m.

*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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