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New Miami-Dade Ethics Commissioner appointed

A St. Thomas University Law Professor and former champion swimmer is the newest member of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE). Carol L. Zeiner, who was sworn into the post last week, will begin her tenure at the August 9th meeting of the Ethics Commission. Her appointment was announced at today's meeting of the Ethics Commission.



Prof. Zeiner has been a member of the law faculty at St. Thomas University since 2002. Prior to that, the Key Biscayne resident practiced law with two prestigious Florida-based firms and the in-house legal department of Wometco Enterprises. In 1991, she became the first College Attorney of Miami-Dade College where she created and managed the in-house legal department and provided legal advice and services to the College and the Board of Trustees for more than a decade. A magna cum laude graduate of University of Miami School of Law, Prof. Zeiner earned her undergraduate degree at Florida State University. While in Tallahassee in 1970, Zeiner became the first female from FSU to compete in the women's NCAA national swim meet, before the federal Title IX made gender discrimination illegal in college sports. In 2015, FSU presented her with its prestigious "Champions Beyond the Game" award. "I think it's a great honor and a wonderful way to give back to the community," Prof. Zeiner said of her appointment. She will complete the term of Marcia Narine Weldon, who resigned when she left St. Thomas University to accept a position at the University of Miami.

In today's action, the COE found No Probable Cause to allegations made in a complaint (**C 17-07**) by Sweetwater Mayor Orlando Lopez that two City Commissioners exploited their official positions by ordering or intimidating the Sweetwater City Clerk to deliver recall petitions to the County Elections Department without first making copies. Commissioners Manuel Duasso and Idania Llanio were members of a committee behind the recall movement and were among those delivering the signed petitions on February 8, 2017. At the previous (May) meeting, Ethics Commissioners found No Probable Cause that the Mayor violated the Ethics Code by ordering City Clerk Carmen Garcia – who was unfamiliar with the petition process -- to return to her office to make the copies. Today they determined there was no evidence that the Sweetwater Commissioners committed any violations.

The COE found No Probable Cause to a complaint (**C 17-13**) filed against North Miami Beach City Commissioner Phyllis Smith, alleging that she has lied on financial disclosure statements because the Commissioner publicly stated that she worked three jobs, while only formally listing two. The investigation concluded that her sources of income come from her work as a real estate broker/associate and city councilwoman. When interviewed, Commissioner Smith said she considered her 50 years as a wife, mother and grandmother to be a full-time job, but did not disclose it on financial statements because she could not list a dollar value for her time and dedication. Another complaint (**C 17-14**) filed against Commissioner Smith was found Not Legally Sufficient because it concerned allegations involving election law violations that are not within the jurisdiction of the Ethics Commission.

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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