



For Immediate Release: March 8, 2017  
Contact: Joseph Centorino, Executive Director  
(305) 350-0613 or [centori@miamidade.gov](mailto:centori@miamidade.gov)

### **Ethics Commission recommends creation of a policy for “protocol escorts” through MIA**

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) today recommended that local elected officials adopt a policy regarding the use of special escorts through Miami International Airport’s Office of Protocol and International Affairs. The decision came after a public hearing and discussion regarding a lengthy investigative report spurred by a citizen’s complaint after seeing a County Commissioner bypassing a long line at a security checkpoint at MIA. Aviation officials say escorts of the County and municipal officials is a small percentage of their 7,000-8,000 annual missions meant for ministers, kings and other foreign VIPs, and do not consider it a burden. However, the Ethics Commission agreed with the report’s finding, “that it is difficult to justify the use of such resources to offer free VIP service to local officials not facing some urgent public necessity.”

The report also concludes: “Accessing special protocol services that whisk a traveler through airport security lines, especially when that travel is for personal reasons or for non-urgent public business, evidences an air of superiority and entitlement by elected officials that causes an appearance of impropriety that strains the bonds of the public trust.” The report recognized that the Mayor of Miami-Dade County should be accorded some leeway in any new policy, due to the uniqueness of the office and the time constraints under which the Mayor operates.

The Ethics Commission found No Legal Sufficiency and dismissed a complaint (**C 17-01**) lodged against North Miami City Councilman Scott Galvin for allegedly violating the County Charter’s Citizens’ Bill of Rights by knowingly furnishing false information on a public matter. North Miami Police Commander Emile Hollant charged that Mr. Galvin violated his rights when the Councilman stated at a news conference a few days after the officer was involved in a July 2016 shooting that Hollant mislead investigators. A month later, the State Attorney’s Office close-out memo on the case found there was no evidence that Hollant mislead investigators. While the Ethics Commission concluded that Councilman Galvin should have been non-committal when he made the statement to reporters since the investigation was on-going, the statement was not false at the time and was “the result of simple miscommunication.”

Also today, it was announced that nearly 300 people have registered to attend the Ethics Commission’s day-long conference, ***Doing Business in Cuba: Legal, Ethical and Compliance Challenges***, this Friday, March 10, at the Barry University School of Business. The event 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. Registration for the event is closed; however, news coverage is welcome.

*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.*