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Summary of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust Meeting Held on September 9, 2020

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust held a virtual Commission Meeting on September 9, 2020 by way of the ZOOM virtual platform. The following actions took place:

Miami-Dade Inspector General Recognized

The Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) recognized retiring Miami-Dade County Inspector General, Mary Terpstra Cagle, for almost forty years of public service, and her support for the Ethics Commission.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Jose Arrojo provided the Commission an update on the Ethics Staff Office move to their new location at the Overtown Transit Village North Tower. Mr. Arrojo mentioned that the move is almost complete, and that staff is now working out of the new location.

Executive Director Jose Arrojo provided the Commission with an update on the Board of County Commission's September budget meetings and the COE 20-21 FY budget.

Loressa Felix was introduced as a new COE Staff Attorney. Ms. Felix spent seven years as an Assistant State Attorney and was ultimately assigned to investigate and prosecute first degree and life felonies. She also spent four years in private practice as a principal in her own firm and as a firm associate.

No Probable Cause Found in Case Involving North Miami Beach Commissioner

C 20-18-04 (b): The Ethics Commission unanimously found No Probable Cause that North Miami Beach Commissioner Michael Joseph violated the Truth in Government or the Public Records Section of the Citizen's Bill of Rights.

Hearing Date Set for Case Involving State Representative Michael Grieco

The COE set September 25th as the hearing date to begin the Public Hearing in case **(C 18-17-04)** involving State Representative Michael Grieco. The case will be heard virtually via Zoom.

No Probable Cause Found in Complaint Filed Against City of South Miami Attorney

C 20-28-07: The Ethics Commission unanimously found No Probable Cause that City of South Miami Attorney, Thomas Pepe, violated the Public Records Section of the Citizen's Bill of Rights. Former Mayor of South Miami, Horace Feliu, the complainant, alleged that Mr. Pepe did not provide public records in a timely manner and attempted to charge a sum that exceeded the allowable cost provided by law.

No Probable Cause Found in Complaint Filed Against Interim Village of El Portal Attorney

C 20-30-08: The Ethics Commission unanimously found No Probable Cause that Village of El Portal City Attorney, Norman Powell, violated the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics. The complaint alleged that Mr. Powell negotiated his own contract with the Village after verbally agreeing to serve as the Interim Village Attorney.

Complaint Filed Against Miami-Dade County Mayor Dismissed

C 20-30-08: A complaint filed against Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez was found to be Not Legally Sufficient and was dismissed. The complaint alleged that Mayor Gimenez exploited his official position, in violation of the County Ethics Code, by permitting Miami-Dade County Commissioner Eileen Higgins the use of public assets and funds to further her campaign.

Probable Cause Found in Complaint Filed Against Award-Winning Architect

C 20-27-07: The Ethics Commission unanimously found Probable Cause that architect, Bernard Zyscovich, violated the Lobbying Section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics.

Complaint Filed Against County Commissioner Withdrawn

C 20-29-07: A complaint filed against Miami-Dade County Commissioner Esteban Bovo was withdrawn by the complainant, Juan Carlos Planas.

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 training, outreach and enforcement, the Commission seeks to empower the community and bolster public trust.