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## Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

# Memo

**To:** Mike Murawski  
**From:** Karl Ross  
**Date:** February 25, 2016  
**Re:** K05-17, RONALD M. GOTLIN

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Final memo and update:

Payroll records dating from Jan. 1, 2001, to the present show Chief Gotlin recorded 608 hours of court time and received \$28,642.09. For overtime, by contrast, he put in 55 hours during that period and received \$2,906.30. Gotlin, by his own admission, noted that few if any of these hours were in fact court-related. He could not recall making a single court appearance in 2004 tied to his official duties.

On April 22, Gotlin met with COE investigators along with his lawyer, James K. Rubin, to explain what appears to be an excessive and perhaps improper use of court time. He said that, for years, he has been putting in for court time instead of overtime because of a computer glitch. He said the village's accounting system considers him a salaried employee and therefore rejects his overtime entries. He said he discussed this matter with Finance Director Tom Calderon, who instructed him to substitute court time for overtime. This investigator spoke to Calderon, who could not recall having such a conversation with Gotlin. Calderon said it was possible to enter overtime for Gotlin by pressing the F12 function key as an override key.

Chief Gotlin said during the meeting that "99.9 percent" of his court time in 2004 revolved around his investigation into officer Henry Casabo. As noted in the April 8 memo, Casabo has been out on a worker's comp claim since March of that year and is suspected of defrauding the system. Gotlin could not explain why more than 25 percent of his court time hours in 2004 – 20 hours out of 78 hours – pre-dated

Casabo's alleged injury on March 24. He claimed he spent the bulk of this time conducting surveillance on Casabo's home, but said he tried to avoid leaving a paper trail in order to keep other officers from learning about the inquiry. He agreed to provide this office with any investigative notes or supporting evidence. Through his attorney, he subsequently delivered two pages of handwritten notes that reflect surveillance of Casabo's home on Dec. 10, 2003, and on Feb. 21, 2004. (Both instances pre-date Casabo's latest injury.) He also provided two memos from 2002 that deal with Casabo's absences, including a July 15, 2002, reprimand. None of the evidence presented by Gotlin pertains to the period after Casabo filed his claim.

During the April 22 meeting, investigators raised the concern that, unlike overtime, court time requires a minimum three hour's pay, at time and one half, if any such time is reported. Gotlin responded by saying he only put in for court time if he worked the minimum three hours. He said he did not put in for any additional compensation if he worked less than three hours. The evidence he provided this office indicates only one time in 2004 during which Gotlin conducted surveillance. Gotlin's handwritten note states: "Feb. 21, 2004, watch Casabo @ home address + kariokee [sic]. DIdn't find him inside. Not at home \_\_\_\_\_ Casabo sick."

Conclusions: Gotlin and his lawyer essentially ask us to stretch the definition of court time beyond conventional interpretation and, in essence, to take him at his word that he didn't abuse the system. The lack of evidence supporting Gotlin's claims about his use of court time in 2004 and inconsistencies in his story are troubling. It is difficult to take him at his word when important elements of his story cannot be corroborated – i.e. the glitch in the accounting system and the conversation with Calderon. While Gotlin may believe the ends justify the means in pursuing Casabo, he seems to have taken administrative liberties that now jeopardize his own good standing.

Biscayne Park officials, at a minimum, should review the practices brought to light by this investigation and take corrective action. They should clarify the terms of Gotlin's employment, especially as it pertains to the 1998 memo signed by former Police Commission Joseph Lamazzo regarding court time and overtime. They should rule as to whether Gotlin can use funds from his department's court time and overtime budgets interchangeably, as he stated he has been doing for himself and for his assistant chief, Lt. Mitchell Glansberg. They should issue clear administrative guidelines on the use of court time. They might also consider asking Gotlin to repay any "court time" he took but can not substantiate, at least in 2004. Lastly, if village officials, or others, believe Gotlin exploited his public office as a result of his unorthodox use of court time they may file a formal ethics complaints with this office or a criminal complaint with the Miami-Dade County State Attorney's Office.

