



## Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust

### Investigative Report

**Investigator:** Karl Ross

<b>Case No.:</b> K12-177	<b>Case Name:</b> Joe Geller Voter Fraud Allegations	<b>Date Open:</b>	
<b>Complainant(s):</b>	<b>Subject(s):</b> Joe Geller, Betty Pedraza, et al.	Sept. 11, 2012	

### Allegation(s):

The initial allegation, made by now City Comm. Richard Chervony (Chervony), was that former North Bay Village Mayor Joseph S. Geller (Geller) was illegally stockpiling absentee ballots prior to the 2012 General Election at a property he co-owns at 7552 W. Treasure Drive with his ex-wife, Deborah C. Mash. Chervony stated that a private investigator had verified this. COE opened a case under the auspices of the State Attorney's Office voter fraud task force.

The allegation regarding the absentee ballots proved to be unsubstantiated. However, questions arose as to whether former Geller and members of his family – including his ex-wife and former in-laws – were legally registered to vote at the West Treasure Drive address (7552 W. Treasure Drive, NBV). It is believed that Geller lives at a Miramar residence belonging to his current wife, Betty Geller, a.k.a. Betty M. Pedraza , located at 12857 SW 54<sup>th</sup> Court.

### Relevant Laws or Ordinances:

F.S. 104.011 False swearing; submission of false voter registration information.—

(1) A person who willfully swears or affirms falsely to any oath or affirmation, or willfully procures another person to swear or affirm falsely to an oath or affirmation, in connection with or arising out of voting or elections commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084.

(2) A person who willfully submits any false voter registration information commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

F.S. 101.045 Electors must be registered in precinct.—

(1) A person is not permitted to vote in any election precinct or district other than the one in which the person has his or her legal residence and in which the person is registered. However, a person temporarily residing outside the county shall be registered in the precinct in which the main office of the supervisor, as designated by the supervisor, is located when the person has no permanent address in the county and it is the person's intention to remain a resident of Florida and of the county in which he or she is registered to vote. Such persons who are registered in the precinct in which the main office of the supervisor, as designated by the supervisor, is located and who are residing outside the county with no permanent address in the county shall not be registered electors of a municipality and therefore shall not be permitted to vote in any municipal election.

### **Investigation:**

#### *Interviews*

On September 11, 2012, COE contacted Rosy Pastrana (Pastrana), deputy supervisor for voter services for the Miami-Dade County Department of Elections, and requested information about registered voters at the above-stated address. Geller, and several others were registered there; records showed all had voted early since 2008. COE was advised no absentee ballots had been requested or issued to any of the voters. They were identified as Joseph Geller, 59; Betty Geller, 53; Deborah Mash, 59; Valerie Mash, 88; and Martin Mash, 55.

Voting history reports obtained on or about September 2012, show Geller voted early for the Aug. 14, 2012, Primary Election; that he voted early for the Miami-Dade County Special Elections held on March 15, 2011, on May 24, 2011, and on June 28, 2011; and that he voted early for the 2010 Primary and General Elections, held on Aug. 24, 2010, and on Nov. 2, 2010 respectively. The report showed he voted early for the Dec. 16, 2008, Special Run-off.

The reports similarly showed that Betty Geller voted early using the NBV address once in 2012, three times in 2011, twice in 2010 and once in 2008. Deborah Mash voted at that address once in 2012, twice in 2011, once in 2010, and three times in 2008. Valerie Mash voted twice in 2011, twice in 2010, and three times in 2008. And Martin Mash voted twice in 2010, and three times in 2008, according to the elections voter history reports.

Pastrana was re-contacted on Oct. 23, 2013, and she re-confirmed that all of the above-named individuals were still registered to vote at 7552 W. Treasure Drive in NBV.

On or about May 8, 2013, COE contacted John Lineweaver, a corporate security officer for Florida Power and Light, regarding the utility account at 12857 SW 54<sup>th</sup> Court in Miramar, the suspected home of Geller and his current wife, Betty Pedraza Geller. He advised that a subpoena would be required for account records and account information.

A subpoena was subsequently issued for said information on or about May 28, 2013. The return items showed the account was registered in the name of Pedraza Geller, and has remained active since January 25, 2002. The account is paid online, records show.

On or about June 11, 2013, COE contacted US Postal Inspector Joanne Winston, who advised that Betty Pedraza Geller receives mail at the address on SW 54<sup>th</sup> Court in Miramar.

On or about Feb. 19, 2014, COE spoke to the block captain of the local Crime Watch program for West Treasure Drive in North Bay Village, James Carter (Carter). Carter, a local activist, advised that he has kept regular tabs on the residence in question and stated it is his belief that nobody has resided at the home for many years – dating back to Geller’s time as mayor. He said the home has not been rented, nor has it been regularly occupied by Ms. Mash or any of her relatives. He said Geller stops by to pick up mail on occasion.

***Document/Audio/Video Review:***

Public records show Geller and Deborah Mash were married on Feb. 19, 1984. Following their divorce, Geller married Betty M. Pedraza on Nov. 25, 2006. At the time of the marriage, Ms. Pedraza (now Geller) lived in Miramar, records show.

Property records on file with the Broward County Property Appraiser’s Office show that Ms. Pedraza Geller, then a single woman, purchased a home at 12857 SW 54th Court in Miramar on or about January 2002 for \$168,600. As of March 2013, there was no homestead exemption on the property and the owner’s mailing address was listed as the address of the subject property, 7552 W. Treasure Drive, North Bay Village.

Property records on file with the Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser’s Office state that the residence at 7552 W. Treasure Drive is owned by Geller, and his former wife, Deborah Mash. The property was purchased on or about October 1987. Homestead exemptions are listed on the property. The property was deeded to Deborah Mash on or about March 20, 2013, as Geller surrendered his interest in the property at that time, public records show.

On Nov. 12, COE requested from North Bay Village a history of utility billing information on the subject’s property at 7552 W. Treasurer Drive. DMV records were also requested from investigator Robert Fielder at the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office. The DMV records showed that Mr. Geller’s driver’s license and vehicle are registered at the NBV address.

A billing history for the water utility account with the City of North Bay Village indicates that Geller was the registered account holder for the address on W. Treasure Drive until on or about November 2011. The records show that his former wife, Deborah Mash, was the registered account holder from that time forward – through at least November 2013.

A review of proprietary information from the Accurint database suggests that no other individuals other than Geller and members of his ex-wife’s family have lived or been linked to the residence at 7552 W. Treasurer Drive. Geller is linked to the property by 11 sources of information, including his driver’s license, utility data and tax assessor’s information. Deborah Mash is also linked to the property by 11 sources of information, including her driver’s license and a DEA Controlled Substances Registration. Betty Pedraza Geller is linked to the property by two sources of information, including a motor vehicle registration. Valerie Mash is linked

to the address by six sources of information. Martin Mash is also linked to the address by six sources of information.

It should be noted that Valerie Mash, now 90, has also been linked to an address at 2091 S. Ocean Drive (#322) in Hallandale Beach. The address is for Seaside Resort Retirement Community, a senior nursing home or ALF, and is likely her current residence.

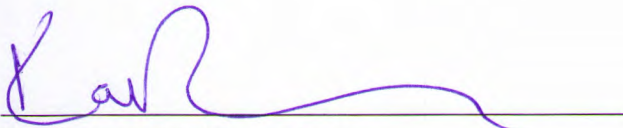
Martin Mash, 56, has also been linked by Accurint to an address at 5711 S. Dixie Highway for the period from December 2006 to January 2014. This property belongs to the Psycho-Social Rehabilitation Center Inc., a Florida Non-profit corporation created in 1973.

**Conclusion(s):**

An extensive review of available sources of information suggests that while Geller may live with his current wife in Miramar, he may still be able to claim legal residency at his previous address in North Bay Village. He co-owned the property until March 2013. He last voted there in November 2012, according to the county Elections Department.

Based on available records and other intelligence, there is no evidence that the property in North Bay Village has been rented to any third parties and has remained in the control of Geller, directly or indirectly, until the time he surrendered the property by quit claim.

Based on the foregoing, the investigation should be closed at this time.

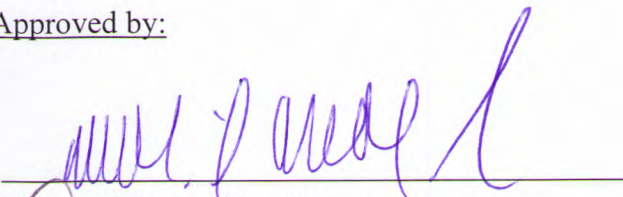


Karl Ross, COE Investigator

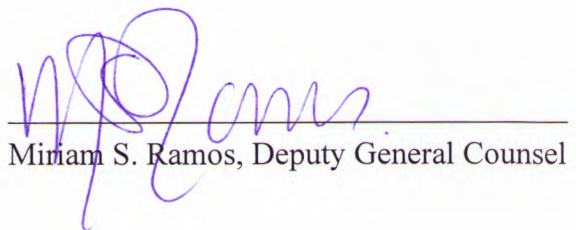
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Date: 2/21/14

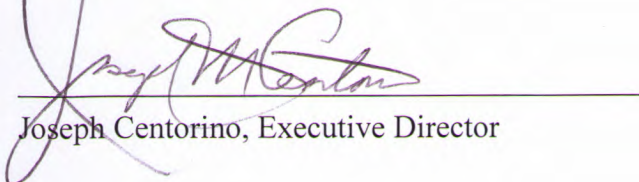
Approved by:



Michael Murawski, Advocate



Miriam S. Ramos, Deputy General Counsel



Joseph Centorino, Executive Director

2/21/14  
Date