



Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust

Investigative Report

Investigator: Breno Penichet

Case No.: K13-080	Case Name: City of Doral Commissioner Sandra Ruiz	Date Open:	CASE CLOSED Date: <u>11/13/14</u>
	Subject(s): Sandra Ruiz	May 28, 2013	

Allegation(s):

The COE received an anonymous complaint alleging that City of Doral Vice Mayor, Sandra Ruiz (Ruiz), used the Doral Golf Resort and Spa (the Resort) as her campaign headquarters during the November 2012 campaign. The caller also alleged that Ruiz's husband Aldo Ruiz (Aldo) paid for the resort expenses and they were never reported on the CTR's.

Relevant Ordinances:

Violation of Florida State Statute: 106.08 (7)(a), 106.19 (1)(a), 106.19 (1)(b) and 106.08 (1) (a)(2), 106.08 (7)(a)

Investigation:

Interviews

The City of Doral had primary elections on November 6, 2012. In that race, Ruiz ran against Elena Ortega-Tauler (Tauler) and Carlos Ruiz (C. Ruiz).

As a result of that election, Ruiz and Tauler went to a run-off election. That election was on November 27, 2012 and Ruiz was elected as a City of Doral councilwoman Seat 1.

A review of documents obtained from the Resort show that Ruiz checked into the Resort (Room 0423) on November 6, 2012 and checked out of room 0423 on November 9, 2012.

Additional information from the Resort shows that Ruiz checked into room 0512S on November 6, 2012 and checked out on November 29, 2012 (two days after her victory in the run-off election.)

Other Resort documentation shows that charges were routed from Isabel Gonzalez (Gonzalez), a paid campaign worker for Ruiz from Gonzalez's room at the Resort (room 0515) to Ruiz's room. (11/27/12 check-in and 11/30/12 departure)

Other documentation shows that another paid campaign worker of Ruiz', Marco Giron, checked into the Resort on November 6, 2012 and departed November 10, 2012.

Ria Kahn, another person associated with the Ruiz campaign checked into the Resort on November 6, 2012 and departed November 8, 2012. It should be noted that the room bills for Gonzalez, Giron and Kahn were charged to Resort member # 3202. Resort member #3202 is Aldo Ruiz, husband of Ruiz.

Other individuals believed to be campaign workers and/or volunteers also checked into the Resort during the time period between the primary and the run-off. Those individuals include William Forte and Monica Vila. Numerous charges from their rooms were routed to Ruiz and/or Aldo Ruiz.

Resort records and bills show that numerous meals and other room charges from all the rooms mentioned above were charged to Resort member #3202's account.

A review of Ruiz' campaign treasury reports (CTR's) fail to reflect that the stay at the resort was paid for by campaign funds. Moreover, the CTR's do not show that Ruiz paid any rent for any campaign headquarters.

Resort records obtained via subpoena show that the bill for all the rooms, for all the individuals mentioned above (a sum of \$17, 915.58) was paid for by Aldo Ruiz by credit card.

An Ethics Commission investigator spoke to Gonzalez, who advised that she did work for the Ruiz campaign during the general election and the run-off. Gonzalez advised that Ruiz moved the campaign from the space it was sharing with the headquarters of the Cabrera campaign (another candidate in the Doral elections) to the Resort because they did "not feel safe." Gonzalez advised that the staff was housed in a big suite and that no one stayed overnight. The bill was paid by Aldo Ruiz, not by the campaign, as far as Gonzalez knew. Gonzalez confirmed that Giron, Forte, and Vila also made up the rest of the staff.

The evidence establishes that Ruiz utilized the Resort as a campaign headquarters between the primary and the run-off. Several campaign workers stayed at the resort with Ruiz and her husband during this time period. All the expenses were paid for by Aldo Ruiz and were NOT

paid for out of campaign funds.

Ruiz received campaign contributions in excess of the statutory limit and failed to report said contributions, in violation of FSS: 106.08 (7)(a), 106.19 (1)(a), 106.19 (1)(b).

Aldo Ruiz made campaign contributions in excess of the statutory limit. In violation of FSS: 106.08 (1)(a)(2) and 106.08 (7)(a).

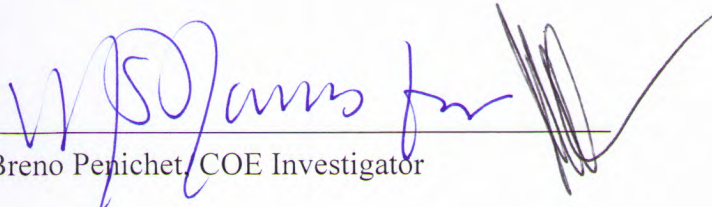
Note:

This investigation was referred to the SAO for review and possible criminal charges, and assigned to ASA Luis Perez (Perez). Perez subpoenaed documents and other pertinent documentation regarding who stayed at the Resort, and who ultimately paid the bill. After a discussion with the SAO it was decided that an Elections complaint would be filed by the COE.

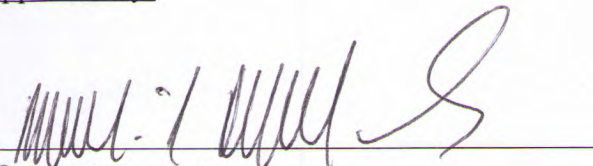
Conclusion(s):

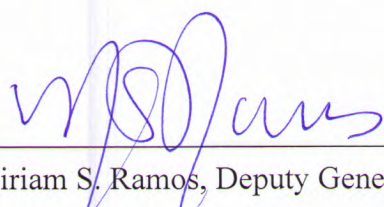
As a result of the interviews and records review, it appears that Vice-Mayor Ruiz did pay for campaign workers' stay at the Resort. There is reason to conclude that Sandra Ruiz along with Aldo Ruiz, may have violated provisions of the Florida State elections law.

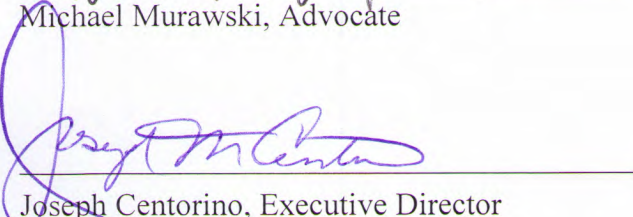
Therefore, Advocate Michael Murawski filed a complaint with the Florida Elections Commission for further action. Case closed


Breno Penichet, COE Investigator

Approved by:


Michael Murawski, Advocate


Miriam S. Ramos, Deputy General Counsel


Joseph Centorino, Executive Director

11/13/14
Date