



Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust

Report of Preliminary Inquiry

Investigator: Larry Lebowitz

Case No.: PI 13-027	Case Name: Johnson	<u>Date Open:</u>	<u>Date Closed:</u>
Complainant(s): Ellen Abramson	Subject(s): Stephen E. Johnson	October 8, 2013	12/24/13

Allegation(s):

Potential Citizens Bill of Rights violation. Private citizen accuses North Miami city manager of failing to respond to her questions regarding a four-year gap in the resume of Vernon Paul (Paul), the city Finance Director, and why the Finance Director did not have a specific professional credential.

Applicable Law:

Citizens Bill of Rights as detailed in Miami Dade County Code, Sec. 2-1072

Investigation:

Interviews

Ellen Abramson, private citizen, lives in Keystone Point.

Abramson said that she never received a response to her inquiries from City Manager Johnson seeking the missing four years from Paul's resume. Nor did the manager answer her questions regarding Paul's lack of a CPA credential.

Q: "Did you ever get an answer, in any form, from the city manager in regard to your questions?"

A: "Did it start to snow in Miami? Of course not..."

Abramson was aware that Paul resigned for the second and final time in early November, shortly after this case file was opened. She was unaware that Johnson replaced Paul with Camelia Siguineau (Siguineau), who is the wife of former state Representative (and failed Congressional candidate) Philip Brutus. Siguineau is a Certified Public Accountant.

Document/Audio/Video Review:

Emails forwarded by Abramson to COE Executive Director Joseph Centorino.

Copy of Paul's resume separately obtained during unrelated investigation when Paul was called as a witness.

Conclusion(s):

After consulting with Advocate Michael Murawski, it was determined that we would close this preliminary inquiry without a finding.

While some might consider it appalling for a professional public administrator such as the city manager to ignore relevant questions from a taxpaying citizen about city business, there is nothing specifically detailed in the Citizens Bill of Rights requiring Johnson or his designee to respond to Abramson's pointed questions.

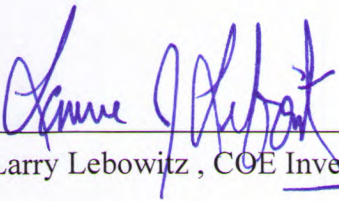
Abramson was provided a public record – the resume from Paul's personnel file. The resume, she accurately notes, contains the aforementioned 4-year gap in Paul's professional timeline,

between 1991 and 1995.

While Abramson believes that the city should be hiring a Finance Director with the CPA credential, there is nothing in the Citizens Bill of Rights that would require the city manager to do so.

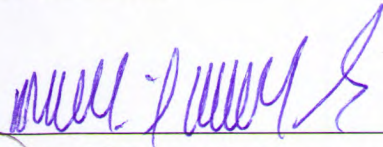
It should be noted for the record that the city's job description website currently states that the Finance Director "*may*" --- not *shall* -- "be a Certified Public Accountant." It should also be noted for the record that Paul's successor as Finance Director, Siguineau, is, in fact, a CPA.

In conclusion, there are several potentially more fruitful lines of inquiry to pursue regarding Citizens Bill of Rights claims in North Miami.

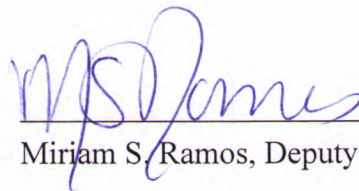


Larry Lebowitz , COE Investigator

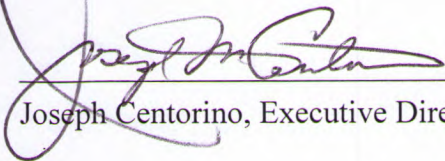
Approved by:



Michael Murawski, Advocate



Miriam S. Ramos, Deputy General Counsel



Joseph Centorino, Executive Director

12/23/13

Date