



**Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust**

**Investigative Report**

**Investigators:** Manuel W. Diaz

<b>Case No.:</b> K14-074/ C14-032	<b>Case Name:</b> Ragoo vs. Ighodaro	<b>Date Open:</b>	<b>CASE CLOSED</b>
<b>Complainant(s):</b> Francis D. Ragoo	<b>Subject(s):</b> Erhabor Ighodaro	8/25/14	Date: <u>10/1/14</u>

**Allegation(s):**

Francis David Ragoo (Ragoo) filed a COE complaint alleging that City of Miami Gardens Councilperson, Erhabor Ighodaro (Ighodaro), used his office as a councilman to change the dates of a Church sponsored annual march to protest violence. The dates were changed to assist the councilperson in his re-election campaign.

**Relevant Ordinances:**

“(g) *Exploitation of official position prohibited.* No person included in the terms defined in Subsections (b) (1) through (6) and (b)(13) shall use or attempt to use his or her official position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or herself or others except as may be specifically permitted by other ordinances and resolutions previously ordained or adopted or hereafter to be ordained or adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.”

## **Investigation:**

### ***Interviews***

#### **Francis David Ragoo**

Ragoo was interviewed and explained that the Mt Zion A.M.E Church, located in Miami Gardens, holds an annual march against violence. The “Operation Stand Against Violence It’s Our Responsibility” (SAVIOR) march has been held for the last five years during the month of December. The previous two years (2012 and 2013) Ighodaro sponsored a City of Miami Gardens resolution to award Mt Zion money in support of the march. This year (2014) Ighodaro rescheduled the march to be held on August 21, 2014, three days before an election where he was running for office. During the march, Ighodaro and other supporters carried a campaign banner announcing that Ighodaro was a candidate for election to Seat 6 on the Miami Gardens Council.

Ighodaro voted on Miami Gardens Resolution # 2014-127-2106. The resolution requested that the City of Miami Gardens donate \$2000 to Mt. Zion A.M.E. to support the SAVIOR march.

Attached to his complaint Ragoo provided copies of City of Miami Garden’s Resolution No. 2012-160-1755 and Resolution No. 20123-234-1930. The 2012 resolution identified the date of the march as December 18, 2012, and the 2013 resolution identified the date of the march as December 14, 2013. Both resolutions approve the donation as a sponsorship to Mt. Zion AME Church for the S.A.V.I.O.R. march. The resolutions to not identify how Mt Zion is to use the donation.

#### **Cameron Benson** (Benson) City Manager, Miami Gardens

Benson was recently hired by the City. He recalled the resolution and Ighodaro requesting the donation to the Mt. Zion for the SAVIOR march. He explained that he did not see anything unusual in the changing of the dates for the march.



**Erhabor Ighodaro** ( Ighodaro) – Councilman, City of Miami Gardens

Ighodaro was interviewed. Ighodaro was advised as to the scope of the Ragoo complaint. According to Ighodaro, the Pastor of Mt. Zion scheduled the date of the march. The Pastor of the contacted him and he initiated the council resolution to donate the money. He noted that the contribution was approved unanimously by the Council.

According to Ighodaro, he did nothing to re-schedule the march to August so as to assist in his re-election.

Ighodaro acknowledged that a banner was carried by his supporters in the march. According to Ighodaro, the banner did not endorse his re-election. The banner identified him as a City Councilman. It was the same banner that was carried by his supporters in the 2013 march.

**Reverend Rogery Adams** (Adams) – Pastor Mt. Zion AME Church, 15250 NW 22 Ave, Miami Gardens, Florida 33054.

Adams was interviewed. According to Adams, the church has coordinated the march with MG for the last six years. The focus of the march is to stop violence. The church has a committee which works along with the MG to coordinate the march. In the past, the march has been held at various times of the year. Besides the stop violence theme of the march, the march encourages people to register to vote and to get out the vote.

The committee is comprised of several members of the church including; Thelma Calloway (Calloway) and Perry Anderson (Anderson). This year the committed involved younger members of the church community. There was some communication between the committee and the City to set the date of the march. He did not attend meeting of the committee. He did attend meeting of the Board of the church where the march was discussed. He was not involved in the setting of the date nor does he know why the date of march was selected. Ighodaro was not a member of the committee.

Ighodaro is a member of the church. He serves as an associate minister. According to Adams, Ighodaro is in training to be a pastor. He is not compensated.

He is not aware how the request for funding for the march was made. The committee may have contacted the City. There may be correspondence, but he does not recall signing the correspondence. He acknowledged that he, as senior pastor, would sign any correspondence from the church to the City.

He is not aware of how the date for the march was set. It may have been re-scheduled from December to August because of the high crime problem in the City or to get individuals to participate in the election three days after the march.

According to Adams, Ighodaro did nothing to reschedule the march to assist his re-election efforts.



Adams agreed to research church records and to provide the COE with any correspondence in the files between the church and the City in reference to the march. He also agreed to contact Calloway and Anderson as ask them to contact the COE.

**Perry Anderson**, Member Mt Zion AME Church, 15250 NW 22 Ave, Miami Gardens, Florida 33054.

Anderson was contacted. He confirmed that Ighodaro was not involved in the setting of the date for the march. The date was set by a committee of the church. He sat as member of the committee. The date was set to coincide with the beginning of the school year. The march also emphasized the need for community involvement as a solution to prevent crime in Miami Gardens. The march also encouraged citizen involvement in the election process.

**Thelma Calloway**, Mt. Zion AME Church, 15250 NW 22 Ave, Miami Gardens, Florida 33054.

Calloway was interviewed. She advised that she was one of the march's founders. According to Calloway Ighodaro was not involved in the setting of date for the march. As Anderson previously stated the date was set by a church committee. She sat as the chair of the committee. The date was set to coincide with the beginning of the school year. The march also emphasized the need for community involvement as a solution to prevent crime in Miami Gardens.

Calloway said that Ighodaro was at the march, but only stayed for a short time.

**Documents Reviewed:**

Public Records Request.

A public records request was made to the Miami – Gardens City Clerk’s office for the supporting documents for Resolution No. 2014-127-2106. The city provided a copy of the Resolution, City of Miami Agenda Cover Memo for the Resolution, City of Miami Gardens Elected Official Expense Account Requests for Payment or Reimbursement and a copy of the City of Miami Gardens Check to Mt Zion AME.

Copy of City of Miami check for \$3000.00 made out to Mt Zion A.M.E.

Profile of Councilperson Ighodaro which lists that he is an Associate Pastor at Mt Zion A.M.E.

Statement of Financial Responsibility filed by Ighodaro for 2013.

**Conclusions:**

Turned over to Advocate for probable cause recommendation.