

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST



REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

#K12-136

Date Opened: 09/06/12

Date Closed: 10/02/12

Investigator: Sylvia Batista

On September 4, 2012, Denise Covington (Covington), a member of the City of South Miami Budget and Finance Advisory Committee, complained of the rude and offensive behavior exhibited by Commissioner Valerie Newman (Newman) during the August 30th budget workshop. Covington stated that her comments to the commission regarding International Data Consultants (“IDC”) quote for IT services set Newman off in an offensive tirade which indicates that there may be a questionable relationship between Newman and IDC.

The COE’s issue relates to a possible violation of Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance Section 2-11.1(g) *Prohibition on exploitation of official position*.

Investigation:

This investigator reviewed the video recording of the workshop and listened to the comments made by Covington and Newman’s response. Newman became upset and verbally abused Covington when Covington addressed her concerns over a City expenditure of \$400,000

for computer equipment in the upcoming budget year, and for her assertion that the principal of IDC was overcharging the City.

Covington was mostly concerned with the fact that the IDC quote for a computer lab at the Gibson-Bether Community Center in South Miami was excluded from the budget leaving no plans to contract IDC to work on it in the future. The Gibson-Bether Community Center is located inside the City's Community Redevelopment Agency, the board of which Covington is a member.

Newman did not contain her contempt for Covington's criticism. Newman attacked Covington's qualifications in IT and then angrily stated that this is why she did not want "you people" on the Budget and Finance Committee. Ms. Covington continued expressing disapproval of the IT outsource company and accused City Manager Mirabile of "pimping out" the CRA budget by excluding it from the IT contract. Newman concluded her feedback to the Budget and Finance Committee by calling Covington "ignorant" for not accepting Mirabile's explanation.

Conclusion:

On the whole, discussion at the workshop was heated with the most offensive behavior attributable to Commissioner Newman¹. However, not anything on the record implies previous wrongdoing by the Commissioner in relation to the IDC contract that would warrant a continuation of this matter. Thus, this matter can be closed without further action.

¹ City of South Miami Commissioner Valerie Newman was issued a Letter of Instruction by the COE on May 2011 wherein she is told to be mindful of the way she acts when representing her City. The letter stems from a complaint accusing Commissioner Newman of threatening an AT&T manager for not doing certain things. A true and correct copy of the COE's Letter of Instruction is attached hereto and made a part hereof.