



For Immediate Release: October 23, 2018
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NBV Mayoral candidates spar over campaign material

A hearing examiner found Probable Cause that allegations regarding residency raised by one candidate for mayor of North Bay Village against another were violations of the Voluntary Fair Campaign Practices Ordinance during an expedited hearing at the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) today. The request for the inquiry prior to the November 6th election in the complaint (**C 18-39-10**) was filed by Brent Latham against Laura Cattabriga. Former Broward Chief Circuit Court Judge Victor Tobin found Probable Cause on three counts that North Bay Village Commissioner Cattabriga violated the pledge she took to avoid malicious untruths, unfounded accusations or personal attacks when she accused him of not living in North Bay Village. Additionally, a flyer mailed to all Village voters that alleged Latham is breaking the law by having two Homestead Exemptions should have been disavowed by Cattabriga, even though it was produced by an electioneering communications organization and not her campaign.

Judge Tobin ordered Commissioner Cattabriga to publicly disavow “any third-party allegations” against her opponent. The judge declined to issue an admonition or reprimand and other counts in Latham’s complaint were dismissed as Legally Insufficient or Not Having Probable Cause.

Here is the statement agreed to at the hearing: “I, Laura Cattabriga, hereby advise voters that I disavow any third-party allegation against my opponent. Voters are to only pay attention to official messages coming from my campaign and are to ignore any third-party advertising. While I had no participation in any third-party advertisement in this election, I have signed the fair campaign practices act, and agree to abide by the recommendations of the ethics commission hearing officer and will disavow the third-party attack against my opponent.”

The Ethics Commission was created in 1996 as an independent agency with advisory and quasi-judicial powers. It is composed of five members, serving staggered terms of four years each. Through a program of education, outreach and enforcement, the Commission seeks to empower the community and bolster public trust.

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