



For Immediate Release: April 11, 2018  
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### **Ethics Commission Issues Letter Critical of Miami Beach Commissioner**

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) today approved a Letter of Instruction to Miami Beach City Commissioner Kristen Rosen-Gonzalez regarding a complaint (**C 17-38**) that she exploited her official position when she got involved in the police investigation of a political supporter. Last month the Commission voted to issue the Letter, which admonishes Rosen-Gonzalez. The Ethics probe determined that Rosen-Gonzalez was unaware of illegal activities, for which the friend was under police investigation, when she forwarded an email from him containing distorted facts about an event he claimed led to the investigation, but that she did not intentionally try to prevent his arrest. The Letter of Instruction warns that, in the event she decides to forward information from constituents about possible criminal activity to the police department in the future, she must exercise caution “so that it does not appear that she is using her official position...to intervene in a criminal investigation.” It further states that “Rosen-Gonzalez’s rush to defend [her supporter] was ill-conceived and demonstrated a lapse in judgment” and adds, “the public’s trust is diminished when it appears that a City Commissioner has influence over members of the police department.”

The COE found No Legal Sufficiency to a complaint (**C 18-03-01**) filed against North Miami Beach City Commissioner Phyllis Smith for accepting a paid trip to Monte Carlo, Monaco, and not truthfully reporting the costs of the gift. The investigation found that, after the city accepted a sculpture donated by a French artist, he invited North Miami Beach City officials to attend his exhibition in Monte Carlo at his expense, including air fare, accommodations and meals for seven days. The City Commission agreed that Commissioner Smith could represent the City at the event, and Smith filed the required Gift Disclosure form for the travel expenses. Smith also submitted requests for reimbursement to the City for supplemental expenses not covered by the artist. The same complaint was filed with Florida Commission on Ethics, which last month also dismissed it as legally insufficient, finding that the disclosures made by Smith were adequate.

Ethics Commissioners were informed of a staff recommendation that the Board of County Commissioners deny a conflict waiver for three prominent lobbyists who supported private clients’ legislation during the 2018 state legislative session that would usurp the County’s local authority. Ron Book, Nelson Diaz and Sean Pittman are on Miami-Dade County’s lobbying team, but also represent the retail pet industry. They requested a waiver from the ordinance that prevents them from representing any entity that opposes a County position so they could continue to represent clients lobbying for a proposed state law that would prevent local governments from banning the sale of puppies and kittens. The legislation did not pass, but is expected to be reintroduced next session. The Ethics Commission staff determined that their supporting such a law would be directly at odds with the County’s longstanding and principled opposition to any legislation that would undermine Miami-Dade’s Home Rule powers, and will urge the County Commission to deny waiver for the three lobbyists.

In other action today, the COE adopted a procedure to find a replacement for **Executive Director Joseph Centorino** who announced his intention to leave his position at the end of August. Last month, Ethics Commissioners agreed on the wording of an advertisement that has been, and will continue to be, posted in several ethics and legal recruitment publications, as well as on the Ethics Commission website ([ethics.miamidade.gov](http://ethics.miamidade.gov)). Commissioners will receive copies of the resumes of all qualified applicants who meet the May 4, 2018, deadline, then narrow the choice to approximately six semi-finalists at their May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. They will conduct interviews with those individuals at open meetings in June. If all goes as planned, the Ethics Commission would approve a contract with the chosen candidate at the July meeting.

*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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