

[Trouble viewing? Click here to view online](#)

# EYE ON ETHICS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST



## Issue 14 - October 2020 Happenings



### Commission on Ethics & Public Trust by the Numbers:

*The Enforcement Section has been significantly engaged during the 2019-2020 fiscal year in over 100 preliminary and formal investigations.*

## Director's Message



Dear Friends & Colleagues,

We have just completed local County and municipal elections in Miami-Dade County. Congratulations to all newly elected or re-elected officials and also to those who did not succeed but nevertheless stepped up to the plate and participated in our election process.

Now begins a particularly busy time for the Ethics Commission as we provide training for newly elected and re-elected local officials. These officials are required by County ordinance to complete an ethics course offered by the Ethics Commission. Topics include the County Ethics Code, and Florida's Sunshine and Public Records Laws.

### Quick Links

**24 Hour**  
Complaint  
Hotline  
786-314-9560



Visit Us

**Commissioners**  
Nelson C. Bellido Esq.,  
Chair

Local officials also have a state ethics training requirement, and in order assist officials in complying with these dual obligations, the Ethics Commission will continue to partner with the Miami-Dade County League of Cities to provide joint local and state training. Sessions will begin in December 2020 and will be advertised on the Ethics Commission website.

The Ethics Commission will also be providing ethics training to those persons that are newly elected members of the County's Community Councils. The new board members' swearing-in installation, orientation, and ethics training is scheduled for the second week of November.

Additionally, for those elected officials that are new to local government, the Ethics Commission will be busy providing ethics guidance regarding their new roles and those of their staff. This process has already begun in earnest with the Ethics Commission providing several written opinions to newly elected County officials.

Over the last several weeks, as part of our training and outreach duties, , the Ethics Commission has partnered with the Florida Chapter of the International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators, the South Florida Building Officials Association, and the South Florida Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration. Their memberships were trained on the Ethics Commission's mission and the application of the County and municipal Ethics Codes to their professions.

Finally, the Ethics Commission, in partnership with County website developers, has begun the process to upgrade and modernize our website. It has been many years since the website has received a soup-to-nuts upgrade and we are excited to start the process so that citizens can more easily access information and services.

Best regards,  
Jose Arrojo

Dr. Judith Bernier,  
Vice Chair  
Judge Lawrence A.  
Schwartz  
Jan Jacobowitz, Esq.  
Wifredo Gort

#### Executive Director

Jose J. Arrojo, Esq.

#### Advocate

Michael P. Murawski, Esq.

#### General Counsel

Martha Perez, Esq.



# FAQ



**Florida Commission  
on Ethics**

## Let's Help Stop the Spread of Coronavirus



## COVID-19: Back-to-Work Safety

# Protect Yourself

FloridaHealth.gov/COVID-19 • Florida Department of Health

**Wear a cloth face covering** over your mouth and nose. Go to [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and search "cloth face coverings" or scan the code with your phone app. Face coverings should:



- Fit snugly and comfortably on your face.
- Allow you to breathe easily.
- Be machine washed and dried every day.



**Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth** with unwashed or gloved hands, or when you adjust or remove your face covering or safety glasses.

**Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds** or use a 60% or more alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Clean hands:



- Before and after shifts and breaks.
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- After using the restroom.
- Before eating.
- Before and after preparing food.



**Keep 6 feet between you and your co-workers or customers.**

- Avoid groups of 10 or more during work meetings and breaks.
- Don't shake hands with co-workers or customers.
- Don't share drinks or food, and don't carpool, with co-workers.
- Keep your distance from co-workers or customers who look sick.



6 feet



**Don't share work surfaces, phones, computers, supplies or work tools with co-workers—if possible.** If you must share, disinfect surfaces and things before you use them. Also:

- Disinfect surfaces and things that customers touch.



**If you feel sick or have COVID symptoms, stay home or go home.**

- Call your health care provider and follow-up with your supervisor.
- Go to [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and search for "COVID symptoms" or scan the code with your phone app.

**COVID Symptoms:**

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell



**For health and safety steps for specific occupations,** go to [CDC.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/worker-safety-support) or scan the code with your phone app.



## Important Notice to Newly Elected & Re-Elected Officials



On June 4, 2013, the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners amended Section 2-11.1 of the County Code to require that all County and Municipal elected officials "shall, within ninety (90) days after being sworn into office, submit to the Clerk of the Board a certificate of completion of an ethics course offered by the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust." The course is to include, at a minimum, a review of the Conflict of Interest and

Code of Ethics Ordinance; the Sunshine Law; the Public Records Law and the Citizens' Bill of Rights. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in a complaint being filed against a non-compliant elected official for a violation of the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics ordinance.

Depending on circumstances, some courses may include more than one municipality. For questions about the requirements or to schedule a course, please call 305-579-2594 or email us at [ethics@miamidade.gov](mailto:ethics@miamidade.gov).

## September Ethics - Commission Meeting Actions



### Summary of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust Meeting Held on October 14, 2020

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public held a virtual Commission Meeting on October 14, 2020 by way of the ZOOM platform. The following actions took place:

#### **Letter of Instruction Ratified in Case Involving Lobbyist Bernard Zyscovich**

**C 20-27-07:** The Ethics Commission ratified a Letter of Instruction for award winning architect and lobbyist, Bernard Zyscovich. The Commission previously found Probable Cause that Mr. Zyscovich had violated the Lobbying Section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics.

#### **No Probable Cause Found in Case Involving Miami-Dade Commissioner Eileen Higgins**

**C 20-32-08:** The Ethics Commission unanimously found No Probable Cause that Miami-Dade Commissioner Eileen Higgins violated the Exploitation of Official Position ordinance of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics ordinance.

#### **Complaint Filed Against Village of Biscayne Park Commissioner Dismissed**

**C 20-25-07:** A complaint filed against Village of Biscayne Park Commissioner MacDonald Kennedy was found to be Not Legally Sufficient and was dismissed. The complaint alleged that Mr. Kennedy violated the County Ethics Code or an ordinance within the jurisdiction of the Commission on Ethics and Public Trust.

#### **Commission on Ethics and Public Trust Fiscal Year Performance Report Presented**

Commission on Ethics Executive Director, Jose Arrojo, made a presentation regarding the performance of the COE during the recently concluded 2019-2020 Fiscal Year. Mr. Arrojo highlighted several accomplishments the COE achieved despite the significant and unexpected challenges that the COE staff faced as a result of the pandemic.

#### **Ethical Campaign Practices Hearing Determination Discussed**

Commission on Ethics Executive Director, Jose Arrojo, addressed a Complaint filed by Aventura Commissioner Gladys Mezrahi, against Candidate Rachel Saltzman Friedland, where Hearing Examiner Rosa Rodriguez (Circuit Judge Retired) found No Probable Cause that Ms. Saltzman Friedland violated the Mandatory and Voluntary Fair Campaign Practices provisions of Section 2-11.1.1 of the Miami-Dade County Ethical Campaign Practices Ordinance.

#### **Letter to Ethics Commission Regarding Miami 21 Task Force Presented**

Commission on Ethics Executive Director, Jose Arrojo, read into the record a letter from Attorney David J. Winker, asking the Ethics Commission to reconsider ethics guidance afforded the Miami City Attorney regarding the application of the County Ethics Code to the Miami 21 Task Force.

#### **Discussion Regarding Ethics Opinion Provided to County Commissioner Steve Bovo**

**INQ 20-89:** Commission on Ethics Executive Director, Jose Arrojo, addressed at the Chairman's request, an Ethics Opinion provided to County Commissioner and Mayoral Candidate Steve Bovo regarding the use of the Commissioner's name, title and image in publicly produced and widely distributed materials and messaging encouraging 2020 Census participation.

## Ethics Commission Staff Profile



Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) General Counsel, Martha Diaz Perez, did not know early on that her career path would lead her to the legal profession, but she did know that in large part, because of her parents' support, she would follow in their successes. "My father was a leader in the Cuban-American ophthalmologist community and my mother was an English college professor," says Mrs. Perez. "They motivated my sister and I to pursue our professional endeavors and this drive and support is something I hope to pass on to my children as well."

Martha Diaz Perez arrived in Miami in 1975 after being born in Havana, Cuba, and living her formative years in Puerto Rico. Mrs. Perez then completed her high school education at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy in Southwest Miami-Dade County and thereafter enrolled at the University of Miami. "I studied Political Science at UM and it is there where I developed an interest in Criminal Law so I decided to further my studies at UM and obtain my law degree."

With a law degree now in hand, Mrs. Perez landed her first professional job at the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office in 1988 under then State Attorney Janet Reno. "I gained so much experience working at the State Attorney's Office (SAO) given that I went from prosecuting Juvenile delinquency cases to the felony divisions and eventually prosecuting complex Life and First Degree felonies," says Mrs. Perez. "Without a doubt, my time at the State Attorney's Office has been the most fulfilling of my professional career thus far."

After leaving the SAO in 1994, Mrs. Perez took a position with the City of Miami Beach as a Senior Assistant City Attorney where she advised the Chief of Police, Administration, and staff on matters relative to official business. After spending ten years at the City of Miami Beach, Mrs. Perez modified the trajectory of her legal practice in order to devote more time to her family. During this time, Mrs. Perez served in various capacities as Traffic Magistrate and Hearing Officer in Broward County, as Adjunct Professor of Law at St. Thomas University and as an Assistant City Attorney for the City of Hollywood.

In 2015, Mrs. Perez joined the Commission on Ethics (COE) team as Staff Attorney and early this year was selected as the COE's new General Counsel, a position she holds today. "My job is so rewarding in that as an Ethics Commission, we are tasked with ensuring that our government leaders adhere to the fundamental standards of ethics in public administration, those being: professionalism, integrity, transparency, and accountability," says Mrs. Perez. "Ethical challenges are ever present in our government and as we successfully intervene to resolve these problems, we improve our political environment and reinforce the community's faith in its government."

When not serving our community as General Counsel, Mrs. Perez enjoys spending time with her husband and children. They enjoy traveling and family dinners.

## Ethics Commission in the News

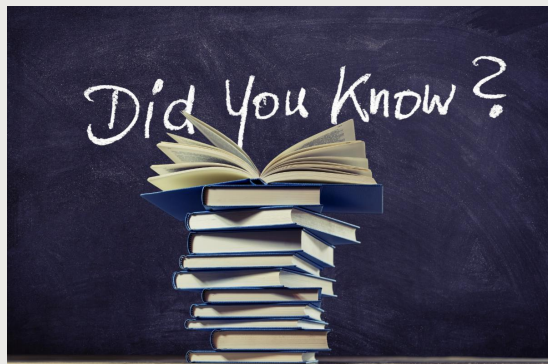
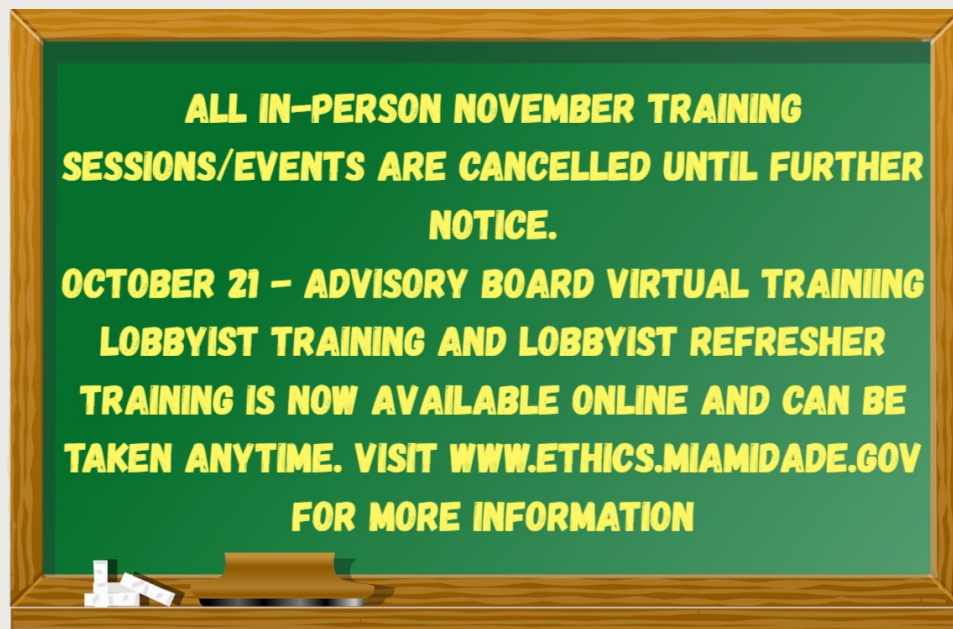


To read the article click on the link below:

Miami Cop, in Full Uniform, Wears Trump Mask at Polling Place

*New Times, October 20, 2020*

## Educating the Community / Upcoming Events



*Gifts that are not intended to influence an official action and that are not travel expenses paid for by a government vendor may be accepted. If the total value of a gift from one person or entity exceeds \$100 during a calendar quarter, the gift must be disclosed in the quarter after it is received.*

Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust  
Phone: 305-579-2594  
Email: [ethics@miamidade.gov](mailto:ethics@miamidade.gov)

Start Spreading the News



Share



Tweet

