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Ethics complaint against Miami commissioner dismissed

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust today issued a finding of No Probable Cause and dismissed a complaint (**C 11-33**) filed against Miami City Commissioner Marc Sarnoff by an opponent in his recent campaign for reelection. Michelle Niemeyer alleged that the District Two Commissioner exploited his official position as Chair of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) because it used public funds for a "Downtown Votes" registration and absentee ballot drive. The investigation found that a voter registration and participation project was consistent with the mission of a public agency such as the DDA. The Board also found that Sarnoff had no input into the initiation of the project, though as a member of the board of directors, he was aware of it. It also concluded that Commissioner Sarnoff did not have exclusive access to any voter information and did not specifically benefit from the voter registration/absentee ballot drive.

Ethics Commissioners ruled that a database manager for the Miami-Dade Park & Recreation Department may continue outside employment assisting developers of affordable housing with financial and environmental analyses under certain conditions. In **RQO 11-30**, Zafar Ahmed stated that he may be asked to assist the Parks Dept. in a joint initiative with the Miami-Dade Housing Agency, but that he will not provide technical support for developers who have been selected for the public housing agency projects. The Ethics Commission opined that as long as he has his supervisor's approval, Ahmed may continue his consulting work, but he cannot work with any firm that is seeking grant or other technical assistance from the Parks Dept., must submit a list of his clients to his supervisors annually and may not meet with county staff about any client.

Also today, the Ethics Commission presented a plaque to Staff General Counsel Ardyth Walker in recognition of her 13 years of service to the agency. Following her resignation from the post, effective tomorrow (12/15), her responsibilities will be assumed by other staff members.

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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