



For Immediate Release: March 21, 2011
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Ethics Commission Sets Timetable to Select New Director

Members of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust today set a May 13th deadline to accept applications for a new executive director with hopes of having that person in place by July first. Robert Meyers, who has served in the position since the Ethics Commission was created in 1998, last month announced his resignation, effective April 30th. However, today he said he would be able to stay on to help his successor through what is expected to be a challenging budget process. The Commission approved the language of an advertisement that will be published in many print and electronic listings. To be considered, applicants must be members of the Florida Bar. Management or administration experience in public policy, knowledge of local government, and a background in education or outreach are considered highly desirable qualifications.

In other action today, the Commission selected member Charlton Copeland as Vice-Chair. The University of Miami Law School faculty member was appointed to the Ethics Commission in May 2010.

The Ethics Commission revisited a Request for Opinion (**RQO 10-24**) to a business associate of a City of Miami Beach advisory board member. In the opinion provided today, Russell Galbut was advised that he may lobby the city, except on behalf of entities in which he and Planning Board member Seth Frohlich have a business connection. Currently, Frohlich has a financial interest in the Mondrian Condominium Hotel, and Galbut is employed by an investment company that has a partial ownership of the Mondrian. The Ethics Commission stated that even though the men do have a business relationship, Galbut may appear before the City on matters unrelated to that relationship. Additionally, Frohlich must recuse himself on all matters that come before the Planning Board involving the Mondrian.

The Ethics Commission determined that a company which provides specifications that will be included in a County Request for Price Quotation may also bid on that Request. The question (**RQO 11-5**) comes from the Design and Construction Division of the General Services Administration, which is seeking to modernize lighting systems at two libraries to make them more energy efficient. Since the system has to be compatible with the existing infrastructure, GSA asked Delta Controls to provide technical information for the solicitation. Commissioners ruled that Delta may also submit a price quotation and proposal to install the new system, since the information the company provides to GSA will be available to all proposers for the job.

However, a company that provides consulting services to the Miami-Dade Solid Waste Department to oversee the clean-up of the former Munisport Landfill in North Miami may not simultaneously serve as Owner's Representative for the Winson Water Treatment Plant for the City. The Ethics Commission opined (**RQO 11-8**) that ADA Engineering would have an impermissible conflict under the two roles if the firm works for the City at the same time it is evaluating the City's remediation plans and payment requests.

Teenagers who were sworn in last week as members of the Miami-Dade County Youth Commission will not have to file annual financial disclosure forms, as is required by other advisory board members. The County Commission created the 26-member group of high school students to provide them an opportunity to learn about local government while advising elected officials on issues important to tenth through twelfth graders. The members serve one year terms and do not have any delegated authority nor will they perform oversight of any County function. For those reasons, and because it's unlikely the members own property or have clients to report, the Ethics Commission ruled in response to a question from the Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners (**RQO 11-7**) that the students don't have to file the annual financial statements.

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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