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North Miami Officer settles ethics complaint

A police officer in North Miami accused of violating the ethics code by profiting from security measures taken at City Hall has agreed to settle the complaint (**C 11-30**) filed by the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust. James Mesidor, who also owns a security company, subcontracted work to install cameras in the mayor's office with one firm and conduct security sweeps of the building with another company. After Mesidor submitted an invoice, he was told that, as an employee, he could not do business with the city. The investigation found that Mesidor had his nephew submit the invoice under a different company's name, paid the subcontractors and pocketed the difference. According to the settlement agreement, Officer Mesidor will pay a fine of \$500 along with restitution of his profit, which totaled \$1,688.84.

Requests for Opinion

An Administrative Officer of the Miami-Dade Housing Finance Authority (HFA) may serve on a selection committee seeking private developers for public housing sites, as determined by the response to **RQO 11-25**. According to the Request for Proposals, the winning firms will obtain public and private financing for the housing projects and may seek bond financing from the HFA. But the Ethics Commission opined that since Taquan Williams-Aranha will not benefit directly or indirectly from the selection process and the HFA won't be involved in bond financing until the conclusion of the award process, there is no conflict in her appointment.

The owner of a company that provides polygraph services for the Miami-Dade Police and Corrections Departments appealed an Ethics Commission response to an inquiry that found a conflict for Martha C. Journey because her stepson is a police detective. Journey & Associates, Inc., has provided polygraph services to the County since 1999, and the owner says Kent Journey, Jr., has no involvement with the business. But last year, the portion of the County Ethics Code that prohibits contracts between vendors and departments that employ "immediate family members" was amended to include stepchildren in that definition. The Ethics Commission today ruled in **RQO 11-29** that Journey may *not* enter into a contract administered by the Police Department. Journey may try to get a waiver of the opinion, but that would require a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Board of County Commissioners.

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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