

## Articles

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# Donald Trump cleared in Miami-Dade ethics probe

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There was a time — about a month ago — when Donald Trump's political agenda included pursuit of a management contract at a Miami-Dade golf course. On Wednesday, the country's newest presidential candidate was cleared in a county ethics probe relating to that failed deal, which started with a round of golf with Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez.

Miami-Dade's ethics commission rejected a complaint by blogger Al Crespo that claimed Trump improperly lobbied Gimenez during their round at the Crandon Park golf course in late 2013. Trump reportedly criticized the condition of the county-owned course and offered to buy it. Gimenez said that wasn't possible, but eventually was in talks with Trump's organization about outsourcing management to the celebrity developer.

"Since there was no proposal for which action was being sought at the time of the initial discussion between Trump and Gimenez, the meeting is not considered lobbying," the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust wrote in a report released Wednesday.

Trump offered a \$10 million upgrade for Crandon, but course loyalists questioned why the well-regarded 18 holes needed a rescue from someone with a reputation for pricey golf resorts. Trump promised special discounts and access for county residents, but would have controlled the tee times and been free to rework the layout under the proposed 99-year deal. He wanted to slash mangroves blocking the course's water views, and turn a sleepy clubhouse into a thriving hospitality business.

For Trump, the county park offered a second, waterfront golfing destination for guests at his Trump National Doral resort. He was one of the first donors to Gimenez's 2016 reelection effort, giving a \$15,000 check on Jan. 26.

But facing opposition from county commissioners, Trump officially withdrew his proposal on May 2.

Once the Miami Herald reported on Trump's pursuit of Crandon on Feb. 10, Gimenez officially removed himself from the process. He cited lobbying work that one of his sons performs for Trump at the municipal level in connection with Trump's Doral golf resort.

The ethics decision comes just one day after Trump announced he would seek the Republican nomination for president in 2016.

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