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Ethics Commission Charter proposal to appear on November ballot

A proposed amendment to the Miami-Dade County Charter would give members of the public the right under the County's Citizens' Bill of Rights to *copy* public records, in addition to the right to *inspect* them. Today, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) voted to put that proposal, which was initiated by the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust, before voters in November.

The Citizens' Bill of Rights, which specifically covers only the inspection of public records, was incorporated as part of the County Charter when it was adopted in 1957, long before the common use of duplication equipment and processes. In 2012, voters gave the Ethics Commission the power to enforce provisions of the Citizens' Bill of Rights. This charter amendment, if adopted, would extend its public records provision to the right to copy County and Municipal records consistent with Florida Public Records law, and empower the Ethics Commission to enforce the expanded provision.

Prior to today's BCC action, six public hearings on the charter question were held around the County to answer questions about the proposal.

"Once the simple amendment was explained, no one turned out to oppose it," said Executive Director Joseph Centorino. "I hope we can get the word out that passage of this proposal will benefit those who seek public records by enabling the Ethics Commission to provide an additional avenue for the enforcement of public record violations," Centorino added. "It aligns the rights in the Charter with those already enforced by state law."

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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