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## Summary of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust Meeting Held on March 9, 2022

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public held a Commission Meeting on March 9, 2022. The following actions took place:

### **Probable Cause Found in Case Involving Opa-Locka Assistant City Manager**

**C 22-04-02:** City of Opa-Locka Assistant City Manager, George Ellis Jr., stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause and entered into a settlement agreement for violating the Exploitation of Official Position section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance. Mr. Ellis will be issued a Letter of Reprimand and required to pay a fine in the amount of \$500.

A COE investigation revealed that Mr. Ellis made direct telephone calls to a manager at the Opa-Locka Hialeah Flea Market during which he improperly solicited a monetary contribution for a City of Opa-Locka sponsored event.

### **Complaint Filed Against City of Miami-Dade County Commissioner Dismissed**

**C 22-05-02:** A complaint filed against Miami-Dade County Commissioner Danielle Cohen-Higgins was found to be Not Legally Sufficient and was dismissed.

The complaint alleged that Commissioner Cohen-Higgins violated the Voting Conflict section of the County Ethics Code when she voted on a resolution concerning the construction of a specific bridge because there were two other possible sites for the construction of bridges which were near her residence and would have negatively impacted her by bringing down her property value.

### **Complaint Filed Against Vice-Mayor of Miami Shores Dismissed**

**C 22-07-02:** A complaint filed against Vice-Mayor of the Village of Miami Shores, Daniel Marinberg, was found to be Not Legally Sufficient and was dismissed. The complaint alleged that Vice-Mayor Marinberg communicated agenda matters through “emails, social media, or other evasive devices,” in violation of the Sunshine Law.

### **Recommendation to Issue a Formal Opinion to Clerk of the Courts Board Division Director Approved**

The Ethics Commission approved the recommendation of the COE General Counsel and directed her to issue a formal opinion letter to the requestor, Basia Pruna, Director of Clerk of the Board Division of the Clerk of the Courts in **RQO 22-01**. Mr. Pruna previously sought direction from the COE as to whether a Contingency Fee declaration executed by the Lobbyist and the Principal satisfies the requirement under the Principal and Lobbyist Registration section of the County Ethics Code.

### **Policy Guidance is Sought from the Ethics Commission Regarding Amendments to the County Procurement Cone of Silence**

The COE Executive Director briefed the Ethics Commission regarding proposed revisions to the County Cone of Silence section of the County Ethics Code. The proposed revisions would remove current limitations on communications regarding procurement matters by elected officials, staff, bidders, and lobbyists and would maintain only those restricting communications

with procurement selection committee members. The Ethics Commission requested additional information and may at its next meeting direct staff to make formal policy recommendations regarding the proposed revisions to the ordinance.

*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 training, outreach and enforcement, the Commission seeks to empower the community and bolster public trust.*