

# EYE ON ETHICS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST



## Issue 16 - Eye on Ethics Newsletter



### Commission on Ethics & Public Trust by the Numbers:

*During Fiscal Year 2019-2020, 52 complaints were filed. Complaints are formal filed matters presented to the Ethics Commission directly filed by outside third parties or self-initiated by Commission staff.*

## Director's Message



Dear Friends & Colleagues,

The beginning of 2021 finds the Ethics Commission in a familiar posture after the end of the prior year's local government elections cycle. As newly elected local officials and their staffs begin to settle into their roles, the Ethics Commission's lawyers have been busy providing written ethics guidance on everything from charitable solicitations to outside employment. We are thankful that officials and staff members continue to consult us regarding the application of the ethics code to prospective actions.

Now is the time when the Ethics Commission commences its annual

### Quick Links

**24 Hour**  
Complaint  
Hotline  
786-314-9560



Visit Us

### Commissioners

Nelson C. Bellido Esq.,  
Chair

partnership with the County's Elections Department and local municipal clerks on the state and local financial disclosure requirements. Our annual financial disclosure chart has come to be a relied-upon-resource for local officials, candidates for local office, board members, and employees that are required to file financial disclosure statements by July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Our chart is available on the Ethics Commission website.

Our annual report on the Ethics Commission's prior fiscal year's work product by category-- ethics opinions, training, and enforcement--is now out and available on the Ethics Commission website. In the last fiscal year, the Ethics Commission provided approximately 160 written ethics opinions to elected officials, board members, employees, and persons that transact with local government. We logged a total of over 350 ethics complaints, preliminary inquiries, hotline calls, and referrals to other agencies. In a pandemic restricted environment, the Ethics Commission hosted approximately 70 training and educational events.

The beginning of the year has also seen a new partnership with Florida International University Law School's Global Legal Studies Initiative. The first series of virtual panel discussions involved ethical business practices in international transactions, focusing on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

On the training front, coming up soon will be a panel presentation focusing on the application of local ethics code provisions relating to public procurement, and in the pipeline after that, a presentation on the ethical considerations for local municipal attorneys advising elected officials. Please keep an eye out for presentation details on the Ethics Commission website. These are virtual presentations and free of charge to all.

As always, thank you for your continued interest in the Ethics Commission. We remain committed to our charge of building confidence in local governance.

Best regards,  
Jose Arrojo

Dr. Judith Bernier,  
Vice Chair  
Judge Lawrence A.  
Schwartz  
Charlton Copeland, Esq.  
Wifredo Gort

**Executive Director**  
Jose J. Arrojo, Esq.

**Advocate**  
Michael P. Murawski, Esq.

**General Counsel**  
Martha Perez, Esq.



**FAQ**



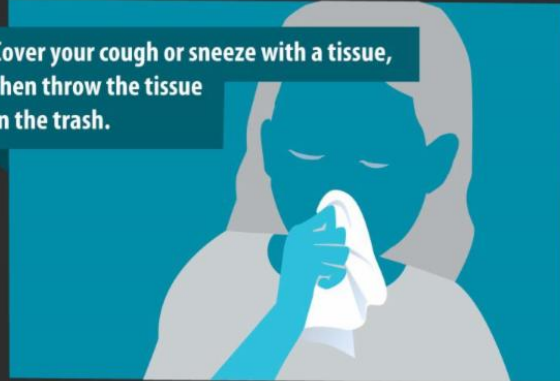
## Let's Help Stop the Spread of Coronavirus

**Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like Coronavirus (COVID-19).**

**Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**



**Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.**



**Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.**



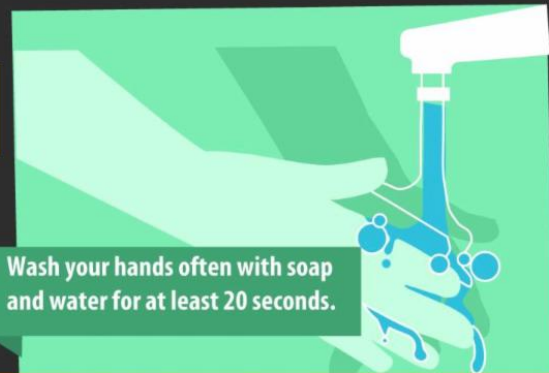
**Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.**



**Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.**



**Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.**



If you are concerned that you have been exposed to COVID-19, please call your healthcare provider and the Florida Department of Health in Broward County at 954-412-7300 before visiting any healthcare facility.  
[www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov), [www.cdc.gov/COVID-19-symptoms](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19-symptoms)

## IMPORTANT: Reminder to Board Members



Pursuant to Section 2-11.1 of the Miami-Dade County Code of Ordinances (County Ethics Code), members of municipal semi-autonomous boards, quasi-judicial boards, and advisory boards are required to file an annual financial disclosure statement.

Section 2-11.1 (i), Financial disclosure:

“(1) All persons and firms included within subsection (a) and (b)(2)

[semi-autonomous boards], (3) [quasi-judicial boards] and (4) [advisory boards] of this section shall file, no later than 12:00 noon of July 1st of each year including the last year that person is in office or held such employment ... (c) An itemized source of income statement, under oath and on a form approved by the County for such purpose.

Compliance with the financial disclosure provisions of Chapter 112 (Part III), Florida Statutes, as amended, or with the provisions of Article II, Section 8 of the Florida Constitution, as amended by the voters on November 2, 1976, and any general laws promulgated thereunder, shall constitute compliance with this section.

(2) .... References herein to specified County personnel and Boards shall be applicable to municipal personnel and Boards that serve in comparable capacities to the County personnel and Boards referred to.

(5) Reports; filing. All documents required to be filed hereunder by County persons or consultants shall be filed with the supervisor of elections. Documents required to be filed hereunder by municipal persons or consultants shall be filed with the municipal Clerk of that entity. "

For additional information on Financial Disclosure requirements, please see the attached **2021 Financial Disclosure Chart** which is prepared by the COE on a yearly basis. The Chart, as well as other financial disclosure related information, can also be accessed via the COE's website by clicking [\*here\*](#).

Municipal Clerks are requested to please distribute this reminder to all municipal officers, personnel, and board members as defined. Covered persons and board members who do not comply with the financial disclosure requirements of the County Ethics Code, after courtesy notice has been provided, may be subject to ethics enforcement actions.

## COE Attends 2021 ASPA Virtual Conference



As part of the Ethics Commission's continuing collaboration with ASPA (American Society of Public Administration), Martha Perez, the COE General Counsel recently attended the a virtual conference sponsored by the ASPA South Florida Best Practices. This year's theme was "Placing Humanity in Public Administration." The panelists discussed ways that human interaction has been impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly, in the field of human resources and public service management. A diverse group of panelists from Miami-Dade and Broward counties, shared the challenges they have faced in their respective roles as well as the overwhelming collaboration between public servants and the community at large to bring positive change in their respective communities. They discussed flexibility in human resources policies; the new age of teleworking; accessibility of online services; the importance of mentors and network resources to stay connected; and the heroes of the pandemic crisis. A recurring throughout the conference was the need to protect and promote social connection among public officials, public employees and residents so that basic services remain a priority during this time of crisis.

## COE Partners with Florida International University

The Commission on Ethics and FIU Global Legal Studies Initiative are cosponsoring a series of five webinars with expert panels on

various aspects of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. These hour-and-a-half webinars are open to FIU Law students and members of the public and have been attended by practitioners across the country, and even from some foreign countries. COE has applied for Continuing Legal Education certification from the Florida Bar for each one.

The Global Legal Studies Initiative (GLSI) aims to create a platform to strengthen FIU Law's domestic and international presence, to expand its outreach to the private and public sectors, and to play a critical role in helping the global legal community address issues of critical importance.

## January Ethics - Commission Meeting Actions



### Summary of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust Meeting Held on February 10, 2021

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public held a Commission Meeting on February 10, 2021. The following actions took place:

#### **Attorney Bruce Jacobs Stipulates to Probable Cause**

C 21-02-01: Attorney Bruce Jacobs stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause for violating the Lobbying section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance. A COE investigation revealed that Mr. Jacobs did not register as a lobbyist as required by the County when he lobbied City of Miami Commissioner Ken Russell and possibly other City officials. In an agreed settlement, the complaint was dismissed with the agreement that Mr. Jacobs will accept a Letter of Instruction.

#### **No Probable Cause Found in Case Involving North Miami Beach Councilman**

C 20-34-09: The Ethics Commission found No Probable Cause that North Miami Beach Councilman Michael Joseph violated the Exploitation of official prohibited section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics. The complaint alleged that Mr. Joseph exploited his official position for personal gain by improperly attempting to coerce the City Attorney and outside law firms to issue a legal opinion stating that North Miami Beach Mayor Anthony DeFillipo could not run for re-election.

#### **No Probable Cause Found in Case Involving Former Miami-Dade County Commissioner**

C 20-38-09: The Ethics Commission found No Probable Cause that former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Esteban Bovo violated the Exploitation of official prohibited section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics. The complaint alleged that Mr. Bovo exploited his official position for personal gain by using his position as Census Taskforce Chairman and County resources to advance his Mayoral candidacy and promote himself in flyers distributed to residents during a food distribution event in Brickell.

#### **City of Miami Beach Employee Stipulates to Probable Cause**

C 21-01-01: City of Miami Beach employee, Justin Karr, who works as a real estate asset specialist, stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause for violating the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance entitled Prohibition on outside employment. Records provided by the

Miami Beach Office of the Inspector General suggested that Mr. Karr may have used his city computer and email account while providing legal representation to private individuals and businesses. Mr. Karr pled No Contest failure to disclose his outside employment with the agreement that Mr. Karr will accept a Letter of Instruction and pay a \$500.00 fine.

## Working Together to Assist our Municipalities

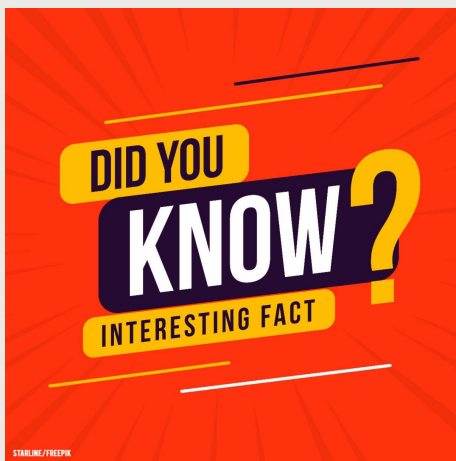


Commission on Ethics and Public Trust Director Jose Arrojo recently took part in a meeting with the Miami-Dade County League of Cities (MDCLC) City Attorneys Advisory Committee. The meeting focused on procedures for the selection of municipal attorneys and the application of the cone of silence as well as the issue of voting conflicts for elected officials in small cities on traffic calming items.

The COE is always very appreciative of the MDCLC for making such a valuable audience available and will continue to partner with the MDCLC and the municipal bar whenever possible.

Special thanks to Executive Director Richard Kuper and his staff.

## Educating the Community / Upcoming Events



Pursuant to the Miami-Dade Code at Section 2-11, Administrative Order 7-1, and Procedure 403 (effective 2-2016), all full-time and part-time Miami-Dade County employees who engage in any outside employment must request permission from their department before engaging in outside employment.

Miami-Dade County Commission on  
Ethics & Public Trust  
Phone: 305-579-2594  
Email: [ethics@miamidade.gov](mailto:ethics@miamidade.gov)  
Website: [www.ethics.miamidade.gov](http://www.ethics.miamidade.gov)

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