

# EYE ON ETHICS

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



## Issue 17 - Eye on Ethics Newsletter



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

*While the COE was hampered by the interruptions caused by the pandemic in the second half of the most recent fiscal year, the COE engaged in approximately 70 events.*

## Director's Message



Dear Friends & Colleagues,

On the regulatory front, this past month saw the Ethics Commission fully engaged. The Ethics Commission has been tasked by County ordinance with a variety of audit and monitoring functions that are not widely known outside of local government. One such function involves monitoring the financial disclosures that hundreds of persons

who serve on County advisory and quasi-judicial boards are required to file. These boards are created to provide elected leaders with advice on budgeting, legislation, and policy, and they often have significant influence on governance and the community. As such, the public is entitled to know something about board members' finances.

### Quick Links

**24 Hour**

**Complaint  
Hotline**

786-314-9560



Visit Us

**Commissioners**

Nelson C. Bellido Esq.,  
Chair

Each year, the Miami-Dade County Ethics Commission notifies board members if they have failed to file the required financial disclosure for the previous calendar year and requests compliance and the submission of proof to the Ethics Commission that the financial disclosure has been filed with the Elections Department. Failure to comply results in the removal from the board. Last month, dozens of members were removed from their boards for non-compliance after notice from the Ethics Commission.

As regards training, many may not be aware that the Ethics Code applies not only to elected officials, board members and civilian employees; it also covers sworn police officers both at the County and municipal level.

We are engaged in developing a specialized training curriculum for County and city police officers with the support of the Miami-Dade Police Department, the City of Miami Police Department, and the Miami Beach Police Department. We hope to be able to fully inform police executives, supervisors, and rank and file officers on how the Ethics Codes applies to their unique employment practices as first responders. Special thanks to the leadership in those departments.

Before we close, and for the next several months, we will be reminding local government officials of the requirement to file their financial disclosure forms. Deadlines are coming up in the next few months. Our lawyers are available to provide support and guidance regarding the disclosure process.

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**



**Florida Commission  
on Ethics**

**Let's Help Stop the Spread of Coronavirus**



# Why Get Vaccinated?

## To Protect Yourself, Your Coworkers, Your Patients, Your Family, and Your Community

- Building defenses against COVID-19 in this facility and in your community is a team effort. And **you** are a key part of that defense.
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine adds **one more layer of protection** for you, your coworkers, patients, and family.



Here are ways you can **build people's confidence** in the new COVID-19 vaccines in your facility, your community, and at home:

- ✓ **Get vaccinated** and enroll in the **v-safe** text messaging program to help CDC monitor vaccine safety.
- ✓ **Tell others why** you are getting vaccinated and encourage them to get vaccinated.
- ✓ **Learn how to have conversations** about COVID-19 vaccine with coworkers, family, and friends.



12/09/20

[www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/vaccines)

## COE Meets with Tallahassee Ethics Board



Commission on Ethics and Public Trust staff hosted a video conference with the newly appointed Executive Director of the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board (TIEB) Dwight Floyd and other staff and board members to discuss the current Miami-Dade COE complaint receipt and processing procedure as well as other existing processes in Miami-Dade

that may be applicable in Tallahassee.



Like the COE in Miami-Dade, the TIEB, as specified in their charter, has the obligation to investigate complaints, manage mandatory ethics training of local officials, and increase awareness among City employees and City officials through written advisory opinions on the application of the ethics code.

Best of luck to Executive Director Floyd, who spent many years with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement before his recent appointment.

## Register for Upcoming Ethics Webinar



WEBINAR

### Best Legal and Ethical Practices: Local Government Procurement and Purchasing

Thursday, April 8, 2021  
Noon - 2:00 p.m. via Zoom

CLE Credit Pending in Florida

» Register Here



Join us for an informative discussion with a panel of legal professionals and local government procurement experts as they examine the critical legal standards and ethical principles that should govern decisions and actions taken by county and municipal government procurement personnel.

#### Speakers:



**Jose Arrojo,**  
Executive Director, Miami-  
Dade Commission on  
Ethics and Public Trust



**Dr. Clifford McCue,**  
Professor of Public  
Administration, Florida  
Atlantic University



**Robert Meyers,**  
Partner, Weiss Serota  
Helfman Cole + Bierman



**Namita Uppal,**  
Procurement Director,  
Miami-Dade County

Free Webinar  
Co-Sponsored By:





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

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

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

C 20-43-11: The Ethics Commission found No Probable Cause in a complaint that Miami-Dade County Commissioner Keon Hardemon violated the Mandatory Fair Campaign Practices ordinance. The complaint, filed by then Commission candidate Gepsie Metellus, alleged that Commissioner Hardemon, who was a candidate for the same Commission seat, used campaign mailers and a television video to promote untrue and malicious statements about Ms. Metellus.

### **Probable Cause Found in Case Involving Miami-Beach Commissioner**

C 21-03-01: City of Miami Beach Commissioner Michael Gongora stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause for violating the Gifts and Disclosure section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance. A COE investigation revealed that Commissioner Gongora failed to fully disclose free tickets/entry for his friends to accompany him as guests to the January 15, 2020 New Order concert at the Fillmore Theater in Miami Beach. The complaint was dismissed with the agreement that Commissioner Gongora will accept a Letter of Instruction and amend his disclosure.

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

C 21-02-01: The Ethics Commission voted unanimously to ratify a Letter of Instruction for Attorney Bruce Jacobs who previously 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.

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

C 21-01-01: The Ethics Commission voted unanimously to ratify a Letter of Instruction for City of Miami Beach employee, Justin Karr, who works as a real estate asset specialist, and previously 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.

### **Ethics Commission Support Florida House Bill 853**

The Ethics Commission voted unanimously to authorize, support, and offer the COE's services in support of Florida House Bill 853 that seeks to expand state-mandated ethics training to local officials.

## Commission on Ethics Staff Profile

The most recent addition to the Commission on Ethics and Public Trust team, Executive Assistant, Onaivys Diaz, admits knowing very little of the COE's work before being hired. "Being that I worked in government for several years, I had heard of the Commission," says Onaivys with a smile. "However, like most of us nowadays, I turned to



Google to get the answers I needed."

"Oni" as she is known around the office, comes to the Commission after working for three years with former County Court Judge Joe Mansfield as his Judicial Assistant in both the Criminal and Civil divisions. Before Judge Mansfield was elected to the bench, he and Oni worked for several years at the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office, where she initially began as a Legal Secretary and ultimately as a Trial Coordinator. "It was exciting work," recalls Oni. "I was

involved in coordinating many high-profile homicide cases so it surely was a more eventful job having come from the medical field before that."

Oni obtained her Associate of Arts in Health Science in 2010 and worked in the field at a surgical doctor's office specializing in podiatry. "I left the medical field because I felt the public sector would provide better opportunities for me in the future," says Oni. "I'm just one to never be complacent and I think I got that from my parents who were both in the education system in Cuba, where I was born. My father was a PE teacher and my mother was a librarian and despite their stable careers they were always looking to better themselves so a move to the States presented itself as great opportunity for our family."

With 6 months of experience at the Ethics Commission, Oni now has a thorough understanding of the important role that the COE plays in our community. "Public confidence is earned through the ethical commitments of those working in or with government and our commission assures us that these commitments are met."

## Job Opening - Investigator



The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust is looking for an Investigator. The Investigator is primarily charged with conducting investigations into alleged violations of the County and municipal ethics codes by County and municipal elected officials, charter officers, employees, board members, and persons that transact with local government. The Investigator conducts fact-finding interviews, gathers and reviews records and other

relevant evidence, and writes investigative reports. The Investigator may be assigned to investigations in support of agency compliance reports. The Investigator may be assigned to attend and report on County or municipal commission meetings. The Investigator may be assigned to support criminal investigations when requested by law enforcement or prosecutors if there is a nexus to a potential ethics violation.

**Minimum Qualifications:** Bachelor's Degree Six (6) or more years of investigative experience.

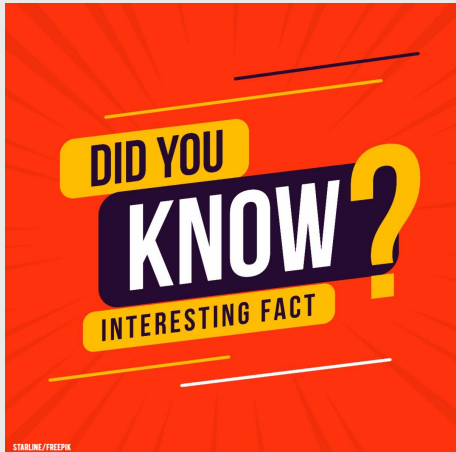
**Preferred Qualifications:** Significant experience in proactive and reactive administrative misconduct or criminal investigations as lead investigator. Significant experience in presenting written investigative findings to agency counsel, prosecutors, judicial or quasi-judicial boards. Significant investigative report writing experience. A proven ability to work collaboratively with staff in a resource limited environment under public scrutiny. Familiarity with the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, similar ethics codes, or internal prohibited misconduct codes. Familiarity with Florida's public records and public meeting laws. Experience in local county or municipal government.



The salary range for the position is: \$68,256.26 to \$111,395.18. It is anticipated that the position shall be filled near the minimum of the salary range.

To apply for this position click [here](#) and type "ethics" in the keywords basic job search field.

## Educating the Community / Upcoming Events



*Depending upon the ordinance being enforced, the Ethics Commission may impose fines, admonish or reprimand violators or draft letters of instruction. Any final order or advisory opinion issued by the Ethics Commission is subject to review with the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure.*

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Ethics & Public Trust  
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