

EYE ON ETHICS

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



Issue 19 - Eye on Ethics Newsletter



Commission on Ethics & Public Trust by the Numbers:

COE lawyers provided approximately 160 ethics opinions during the past fiscal year to County and municipal elected officials, board members, employees, and persons that transact with local government including lobbyists and vendors.

Director's Message



Dear Friends & Colleagues,

Over the past month, the Ethics Commission has begun the return to in-person training, while continuing to provide training via videoconference, when requested. Commission staff have also worked with our partners in the County and several cities who are updating their ethics ordinances. Meanwhile, three current or former elected officials were sanctioned in May for ethical lapses.

Inside our shop, as a result of the separation of long-term Ethics Commission staff members, we are engaged in interviews and hiring of

Quick Links



Commissioners
Nelson C. Bellido Esq.,
Chair

new employees that should be able to make contributions to our work product from day one.

The Ethics Commission provided Ethics Code and Florida's Sunshine Board and Public Records training to elected officials and their staff in Hialeah Gardens last month, and via videoconference to newly elected officials, the latter in partnership with the Miami-Dade County League of Cities. Municipal charter officers, department heads, and board members were trained at Bay Harbor Islands and County Hall. Finally, courtesy training was provided to the Southern Florida Association of Code Enforcement Officers in Homestead.

The Board of County Commissioners is considering changes to the Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Ordinance, prohibiting competitive selection committee members or their families from soliciting or accepting any gifts from proposers, revising the lobbying section of the ordinance, and changing the composition of the Domestic Violence Oversight Board. These changes are due in part to input from the Ethics Commission and we believe that they will result in more transparent, ethical, and efficient local governance.

In our cities, the City of Hialeah considered changes to its ethics code as regards outside employment by senior staff and the Mayor. The Ethics Commission presented to the Hialeah Council on that agenda item. In the upcoming weeks, the City of Coral Gables will be considering changes to its lobbying ordinance and likewise the Ethics Commission will be available to the City Commission to present on that item.

In enforcement matters, the Ethics Commission imposed sanctions after contested hearing, and as a result of admissions by charged parties, in cases involving current and former municipal elected officials from Opa Locka, Medley, and Coral Gables.

We recently welcomed Rodney Vega, who served over two decades with the New York City Police Department as a Detective and Sergeant before holding positions in South Florida, including as an ethics investigator for the Florida Bar. We welcome Investigator Vega on-board.

That is my report for now. Thank you for your continued support of the Ethics Commission.

Best regards,
Jose Arrojo

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

Executive Director
Jose J. Arrojo, Esq.

General Counsel
Martha Perez, Esq.



FAQ



**Florida Commission
on Ethics**

Let's Help Stop the Spread of Coronavirus

GET VACCINATED

WE CAN
Adapt.
WE WILL
Thrive.

#WeCanWeWill



Interns Complete COE Internship



Josh Heath



Leyana Quintero

Law students Josh Heath of St. Thomas University, and Leyana Quintero of the University of Miami, recently completed their internship with the Commission on Ethics. This internship program provides students with a wonderful opportunity to learn of the functions of the ethics commission and to become engaged in ethical issues in local government.

Josh, who became aware of the Ethics Commission at a St. Thomas Pro Bono & Public Service Fair that promoted awareness of the many private, public and government sector career opportunities, reflected on his experience at the COE. "During my internship, I got a hands-on experience with compliance work and most of my duties included researching the background of individuals and their entities requesting opinions. I was allowed to sit in on countless phone calls and meetings between staff attorneys and many county directors and county board members."

Supervising Attorney Gilma Diaz-Greco commented on her time mentoring Josh. "It is always a pleasure to work with the COE interns. Josh was no exception, professional and hardworking. Josh, like other interns, expressed that the COE internship provides an opportunity to become familiar with County and Municipal law, and to have the opportunity in a real-world setting, to work on legal skills such as research, writing, and establishing and documenting predicates for legal work."

Josh, who always knew he wanted to practice law ever since his Kindergarten teacher told him "you love to argue," looks forward to continuing his legal career in the public sector upon graduation.

Leyana Quintero started her internship with the COE in February after hearing about the possibility by way of the University of Miami's job portal. Leyana acknowledges not knowing that the COE existed but after doing some research she quickly became interested in the opportunity to intern. "I looked up the Commission and found the work interesting and important. I'm really glad that I did become familiar with it because it's a sliver of the legal profession that I did not know much about but that I've certainly enjoyed learning about."

Supervising General Counsel Martha Perez expressed her pleasure working with Leyana. "Leyana was exposed to research and analysis of ethics-related issues and inquiries and attended several ethics and County/municipal commission meetings. She was hard-working, inquisitive, and her work product was excellent. Her commitment to the practice of law was evident in her co-drafting of a memorandum of a formal opinion to be issued by the Ethics Commission."

Leyana, who expressed her happiness to work for an organization that gives people a platform to voice concerns, will look to pursue her legal career practicing criminal defense.

Law students interested in serving as interns should send a resume and writing sample to ethics@miamidade.gov.

Outgoing Commission Advocate is Recognized

The Ethics Commission recognized and presented a plaque to outgoing Commission on Ethics Advocate Michael Murawski for his 21 years of service to the community. "Mike," who has been with the Ethics Commission since June of 2000 has essentially served as the COE's prosecutor, presenting cases before the Ethics Commission against County and municipal elected officials, board members, employees and lobbyists and any



other persons under the COE's jurisdiction.

"It's bittersweet," Commission Chairman Nelson Bellido said before presenting Mike with his plaque. "Mike Murawski has been a pillar of the Ethics Commission, he's been a pillar of this community, he has done so much. The benefit that the City of Naples and Collier County gets is significant. We suffer the loss here but we are thankful and will know that he will continue to check on us on from afar."

Mike Murawski will now serve as the Executive Director of the Naples Ethics Commission effective June 1st. Congratulations Mike!

Finalists to replace Mike include candidates holding leadership positions with the State Attorney's Office, City of Miami Attorney's Office, Broward County, a private law firm, and two current Ethics Commission staff attorneys with prosecution and civil litigation experience.

COE Partners with Miami-Dade League of Cities

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust recently partnered with the Miami-Dade League of Cities to provide joint, local, and state required ethics training for county elected officials. This four hour course, , covered the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, Sunshine Law, Public Records, the State Code of Ethics Statute, and Article II, Section 8 of the Florida Constitution.

County Code requires that all County and Municipal elected officials shall, within ninety (90) days after being sworn into office, submit to the Clerk of the Board a certificate indicating they completed this course. The ethics commission requests that each affected governmental unit contact the office at least thirty (30) days prior to any election to schedule the course for that unit. Depending on circumstances, some courses may include more than one municipality. For questions about the requirements or to schedule a course, please call 305-579-2594 or send an email to ethics@miamidade.gov.



State & Local Ethics Training



Pursuant to Florida Statute Section 112.3142 that went into effect on January 1, 2015 all elected municipal officers must complete 4 hours of ethics training annually that addresses a minimum of:

- Article II, Section 8 of the Florida Constitution
- Part III, Chapter 112 Florida Statutes (code of Ethics)
 - Public Records
 - Public Meeting (Sunshine Law)

Code Enforcement Officials Attend Ethics Training



COE Executive Director Jose Arrojo recently provided a hybrid in-person/virtual Ethics Training session to members of the Southern Florida Association of Code Enforcement (SFACE). The training, conducted at the City of Homestead Community Center, covered topics such as the application of the County Ethics Code, with appropriate references to the State Ethics Code and other State Statutes.

SFACE was formed in 2021 to promote and advance the practice of code enforcement through education and certification and to further the interests of the profession through advocacy, networking, fellowship, and understanding among its members. The South Florida chapter covers both Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties.

May Ethics - Commission Meeting Actions



Summary of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust Meeting Held on May 21, 2021

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public held a Commission Meeting on May 21, 2021. The following actions took place:

Finalists Selected for Position of Commission Advocate

The Ethics Commission selected six finalists to be interviewed for the position of Commission Advocate and agreed to conduct interviews of the candidates on June 11. The six finalists to be considered are Maribel Diaz, Averill Dorsett, Loressa Felix, Radia Turay, Tim VanderGiesen, and George Wysong.

Letter of Instruction Ratified in Case Involving Former City of Coral Gables Commissioner

C 21-04-03: The COE ratified a Letter of Instruction issued to former City of Coral Gables Commissioner and mayoral candidate Pat Keon. Ms. Keon previously stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause and agreed to accept this Letter of Instruction for violating the Exploitation of Official Position section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance. A COE investigation revealed that Ms. Keon, who at the time was a mayoral candidate for the City of Coral Gables, used her city email account to inquire from a constituent whether Ms. Keon's campaign could place a campaign sign in the constituent's yard.

Letter of Instruction Ratified in Case Involving Doctor at Medical Examiner's Office

C 21-07-04: The COE ratified a Letter of Instruction issued to Forensic Pathologist Mark Shuman, a doctor at the Miami-Dade Medical Examiner's Office. Mr. Shuman previously stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause and agreed to accept this Letter of Instruction and pay a \$500 fine for violating the Prohibition of Outside Employment section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance. An investigation by the Office of the Inspector General revealed that

during a five-year period, Dr. Shuman had been engaging in outside employment in several capacities and did not accurately disclose the amount of compensation he received from his outside employment for the years 2018 and 2019.

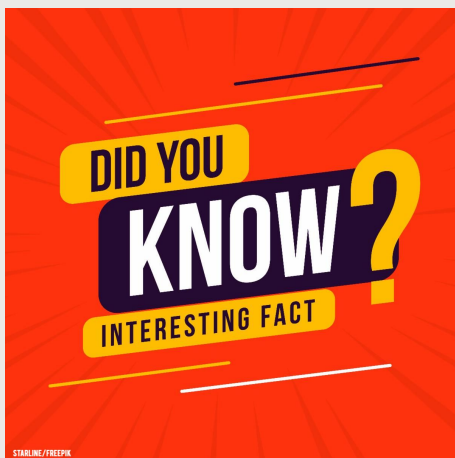
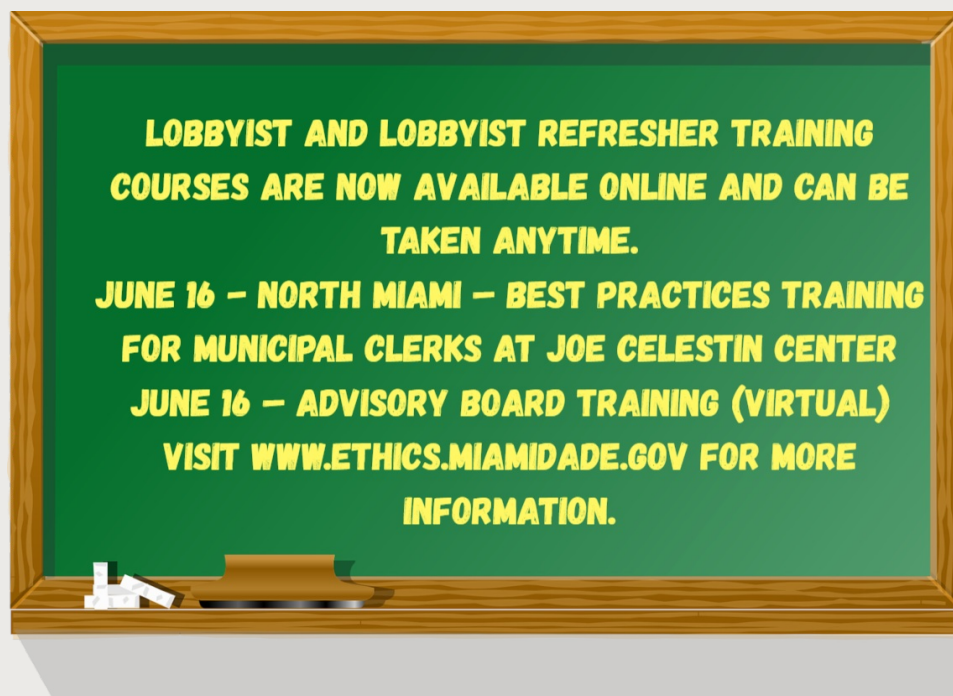
Former Opa Locka Mayor and Commissioner Found to be in Violation of Ethics Code

C 19-05-02: The Ethics Commission found former Opa-Locka Mayor and Commissioner John Riley to be in violation of the financial disclosure and conflicting employment sections of the Ethics Code. The COE will determine penalties at the next Commission Meeting on June 9th.

Continuance Issued in Case Involving Former Miami Beach City Commissioner

C 18-17-04: The COE granted a Defense Continuance in a matter involving former Miami Beach City Commissioner and current State Representative Michael Grieco. The COE previously found that that Mr. Grieco violated the Home Rule Charter's Citizens' Bill of Rights relating to Truth in Government.

Educating the Community / Upcoming Events



Once a request for opinion is received by the COE, it will be analyzed by the legal staff and presented to the Ethics Commission for an official determination. Once that occurs, the requester will receive a written opinion signed by the Executive Director stating the Commission's opinion and reason(s) for that opinion.

