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EYE ON ETHICS

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



Issue 26 - Eye on Ethics Newsletter



Commission on Ethics & Public Trust by the Numbers:

This past fiscal year, the Ethics Commission initiated 102 investigations based on alleged ethics violations.

Director's Message



Dear Friends & Colleagues,

Over the last several weeks, the Ethics Commission has been busy with administrative matters that will improve the operation of the agency and its ability to better serve the community, in addition to ongoing training, problem solving, and policy collaborations with municipal and county officials.

The Ethics Commission will soon be welcoming two new employees to its team. Stephanie Vega-Saraf will be coming on board as an Investigator. Ms. Vega-Saraf has significant in-field experience as an Investigator with the New York City Department of Investigation. The NYC

Quick Links

24 Hour

Complaint
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Commissioners

Dr. Judith Bernier, Chair
Wifredo Gort, Vice Chair

DOI serves as New York City's inspector general and ethics agency and is one of the largest and oldest in the nation, tracing its origins to the "Boss Tweed Tammany Hall" corruption scandals of the 1870's.

We are also welcoming Charmaine Ruiz, who will be filling a newly created Records Specialist position. Ms. Ruiz, who worked in a similar capacity in the private sector, will be focused on responding to public records requests, including new requirements imposed by the Board of County Commissioners on the Ethics Commission and Inspector General relating to reports to selection committee members about past investigations involving bidders.

Also, the end of March marked the close of the County fiscal year's second quarter. The beginning of the budget process for FY 21-22 has begun. The Ethics Commission continues as a frugal steward of citizens' tax dollars that fund its budget. We expect to stay within our allotment and to continue to service the community and including our 34 municipalities with one of the smallest budgets in the County.

On the training front, in the last month, we partnered with the City of Hialeah's human resources staff to present ethics training at Hialeah City Hall to charter officers and government executives. Newly elected Mayor Steve Bovo has directed that every Hialeah employee will receive ethics training. We will be continuing to work with Hialeah to develop training programs for its employees, and we thank the Mayor for his initiative.

We provided courtesy ethics training to the Early Learning Coalition's Board of Directors and senior staff. We were hosted by the Lighthouse for the Blind and were able to tour the facility's specialized classrooms for children with visual impairments. Special thanks to their staff for hosting us.

The last month, members of the Ethics Commission's legal staff met with Jackson Health Systems ethics compliance executives and attorneys to discuss the unique challenges posed by the application of the County Ethics Ordinance to Jackson Health Systems staff and procedures. In addition to the County and its 34 cities, the Ethics Commission is charged with the application of the Ethics Code to JHS's thousands of employees, including its clinical staff.

In the month to come, look for us in Medley where we will be meeting with municipal clerks from across the County, board members and staff in Biscayne Park, and board members for the Children's Trust. We also continue to work on proposed revisions to the procurement Cone of Silence contained in the County Ethics Code and will be meeting with Board of County Commission staff involved in that process. There has been a proposal to significantly review the Cone of Silence. We thank the Commission staff for allowing us the opportunity to offer our unique insights. Thank you all for your continued support.

Best regards,
Jose

Nelson C. Bellido Esq.
Judge Lawrence A.
Schwartz
Charlton Copeland, Esq.

Executive Director
Jose J. Arrojo, Esq.

General Counsel
Martha Perez, Esq.

Advocate
Radia Turay, Esq.



FAQ



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COE Staff Attends FIU Law School Career Fair



Commission on Ethics Staff Attorneys Loressa Felix (an FIU Law Alumni) and Etta Akoni recently attended the Florida International University Law Public Interest & Government Career Fair at the law school's atrium. The event featured close to 50 government agencies and non-profit organizations that employ lawyers including the Miami Dade County Public Schools Attorney's Office, the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida Staff Attorney's Office, and the Miami Dade State Attorney's Office.

During the event, Loressa and Etta had the opportunity to meet with many students who were curious about the Commission's work. Not surprisingly, some of the students did not know that such an agency existed in our County but were nonetheless intrigued to

learn of the Commission's goal to maintain the public's confidence in local government and expressed an interest in volunteering with the Commission in the coming semester.

Delegation from Mexico Visits COE



A delegation of human rights and government transparency advocates, investigative journalists, and other government officials from Mexico visited the COE as part of a federally funded initiative that seeks to grow open and ethical government programs abroad and foster global understanding, goodwill and friendships.

COE staff entertained very insightful questions from the international delegation after being educated about the Ethics Commission's work, the public

charge, and the County Ethics Ordinance.

April - Commission Meeting Actions



Summary of the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust Meetings Held on April 13, 2022

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public held a Commission Meeting on April 13, 2022. The following actions took place:

Complaint Filed Against Mayor of Sunny Isles Beach Found Not Legally Sufficient

C 22-11-02: A complaint filed against Sunny Isles Beach Mayor Dana Goldman was found to be Not Legally Sufficient and was dismissed. The complaint alleged that then Mayoral Candidate Goldman violated the Mandatory Ethical Campaign Practices Ordinance when she allegedly published or caused to publish a flyer and email containing untrue statements.

The complaint, filed by a former candidate for Commission Seat, Greg Capra, also alleged that Ms. Goldman may have violated the Sunshine Law by standing alongside his opponent while campaigning. Furthermore, the complaint alleged that Ms. Goldman violated Florida Statute Section 104.31 by making false declarations to secure assistance in preparing a ballot.

Complaint Filed Against Mayor of Town of Bay Harbor Islands Dismissed

C 22-12-02: A complaint filed against Town of Bay Harbor Islands Mayor Joshua Fuller was found to be Not Legally Sufficient and was dismissed. The complaint alleged that Mayor Fuller "possibly ignored" the Right to be Heard section of the Citizens' Bill of Rights.

Complaint Filed Against North Miami Beach Commissioner Dismissed

C 22-13-03: A complaint filed against North Miami Beach Commissioner Paule Villard was found to be Not Legally Sufficient and was dismissed. The complaint alleged that Commissioner Villard violated the voting conflict section of the Miami-Dade Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Code when she allegedly voted on a "Living Wage" ordinance and on a modification of a tuition reimbursement policy which would benefit her daughter who is an intern with the City.

Complaint Filed Against North Miami Beach Commissioner Found Not Legally Sufficient

C 22-01-01: A finding of No Legal Sufficiency was entered on a complaint filed against North Miami Beach Commissioner Paule Villard. The complaint alleged that Commissioner Villard violated the Truth in Government section of the Citizens' Bill of Rights by using her former title of Vice Mayor during a city-sponsored event.

Policy Guidance 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, County staff, bidders, and lobbyists and would maintain only those restricted communications with procurement selection committee members. The Ethics Commission provided no policy direction at this point and instead requested to hear from someone from the County's procurement division and from the office of the Commissioner sponsoring the amendments.

Ethics Commission is Briefed Regarding Voting Conflicts for Elected Officials Arising from Traffic Mitigation

The Ethics Commission received a briefing and reviewed a legal memorandum prepared by the Executive Director regarding voting conflicts for elected officials arising from traffic mitigation measures. The Commissioners were advised that the memorandum was shared with members of the municipal bar through the Miami-Dade County League of Cities. Further, that formal guidance from the Ethics Commission would be sought if the application of the voting conflict analysis described in the memorandum to an actual vote resulted in a dispute between the Commission's legal staff recommendation and the elected official seeking guidance.

Educating the Community / Upcoming Events

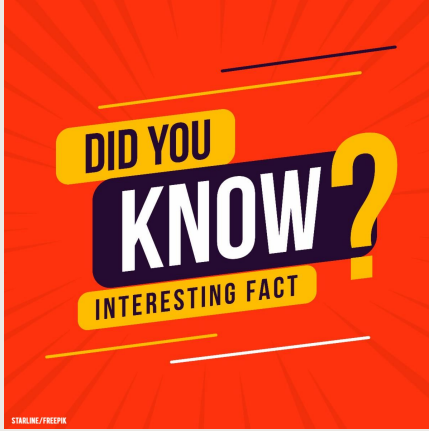


**LOBBYIST AND LOBBYIST REFRESHER TRAINING
COURSES ARE NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE AND CAN
BE TAKEN ANYTIME.**

**APRIL 30 – ETHICS TRAINING FOR VILLAGE OF
BISCAYNE PARK EMPLOYEES, 9AM**

**MAY 18 – VIRTUAL ADVISORY BOARD TRAINING,
8AM**

*County employees who participate in the
Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program
administered by the County Housing
Agency must first obtain an approval letter
from the Ethics Commission. The approval*



letter verifies that a County employee has no ethics conflicts that would prevent him or her from entering into a contract with the County Housing Agency.

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Ethics & Public Trust
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