

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT ADVOCATE
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST
REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

K #: 07-092

Date Opened: July 25, 2007

Date Closed: September 18, 2007

Name of Investigator: Manuel W. Diaz
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Allegation:

On July 14, 2007, the Miami Herald reported that City of Miami Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones traveled to Detroit to inspect a Crosswinds housing development. The Commissioner failed to disclose the trip during an October 2006 Commission meeting where a similar development within the City of Miami was discussed and voted upon. The vote was 4-1 in opposition of the project. Commissioner Spence-Jones cast the affirmative vote.

An Investigation was initiated to determine if Commissioner Spence-Jones or any members of her staff received any travel expenses from the vendors in violation of Miami-Dade Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Ordinance to wit:

Sec 2-11.1 (w) *Prohibition on acceptance of travel expenses from County Vendors.* Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, no person included in subsections (b)(1)[Mayor and Commissioners], ...shall accept, directly or indirectly, any travel expenses including, but not limited to , transportation. Lodging, meals, registration fees and incidentals from any county contractor, vendor, service provider, bidder or proposer....

Investigation:

1. COE Investigators made a public records request for copies of all receipts, payments and/or requests for reimbursement for the trip taken by Commissioner Spence-Jones and members of her staff to Detroit.

2. In response the City of Miami provided the following documents.
 - a. Emails between the City of Miami City Manger's Office and Business Travel Advisors 1701 Ponce de Leon Blvd. Coral Gables, Florida indicating that the Commissioner Spence-Jones along with two staff members flew to Detroit on September 14, 2007 and returned on September 15, 2007. The flights were paid for by the City of Miami.
 - b. City of Miami Travel Request Reimbursement Request forms for Commissioner Spence-Jones and the two staff members.
 - c. Receipts for room charges for Commissioner Spence Jones and two staff members.
 - d. Miscellaneous receipts for other expenses incurred by Commissioner Spence-Jones and two staff members.

Findings :

The City's response to the public records request indicates that the City of Miami paid for the flight to Detroit taken by Commissioner Spence Jones and two members of her staff to inspect the Crosswinds housing development. The documents also indicate that the Commissioner and the two staff members submitted requests for reimbursement for funds that they individually expended for meals, room and miscellaneous travel.

Conclusion:

The case is closed with no further action.