



**Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust**

**Investigative Report**

Investigator:

Case K15-054	Case Name: Miami Lakes	<u>Date Open: October</u> <u>6, 2015</u>	<u>Date Closed:</u>
Complainant(s): Jaren Ayes	Subject(s): Not specified	<b>CASE CLOSED</b>	

Date: 12/5/2016

**Allegation(s):**

Complainant Jaren Ayes (Ayes), a former employee of the City of Miami Lakes, alleged that work done under a city contract was never actually performed.

**Relevant Ordinances:**

Complainant alleges a violation of Sec. 2-11.1 (g) Exploitation of official position prohibited. *No person [covered by this section] shall use or attempt to use his or her official position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or herself or others except as may be specifically permitted by other ordinances resolutions. . . . ordained or adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.*

**Investigation:**

*Interviews*

**Michael Pizzi** (Pizzi), Mayor of Miami Springs, Nov. 3, 2015, by telephone.

Pizzi said Jaren Ayes was the right-hand assistant to the city manager for many years, and serves as executive assistant to Town Manager Alex Rey.

Pizzi said her maiden name is Jaren Gonzalez. He said she was terminated two to three weeks ago because of complaints she had raised, including complaints to the Florida Inspector General re: invoices for work that was not done. Pizzi said that before she left, Ayes downloaded thousands of documents to her personal e-mail account, and also secretly taped a meeting. [Both are reasons cited for her dismissal in her termination letter].

Pizzi said, "I want to make sure it's clear that I have referred it to the appropriate people." He said, "I'm not the complainant."

END PIZZI

**Jaren Ayes**, reached Nov. 3, 2015, by telephone.

Ayes expressed reservations about "how the Ethics Commission works," saying she has dealt with this office intermittently since 2007, naming investigators Sylvia Batista, Breno Penichet and Manny Diaz as people she has interacted with.

Ayes said she downloaded documents because in a similar situation in 2010, the city destroyed documents rather than make them available for public records searches. Ayes specifically stated that she did not believe Pizzi was involved, but directed her accusations at the town administration.

Ayes said that what led to her firing was certain contractors who have several companies that have done work for the town. She said some "have done work at certain times" with someone who is a police officer, though not for Miami Lakes. She gave his name as Juan Carlos Valiente. She was unsure, but believed the officer might live in or work for Key Biscayne.

Ayes said she believed the officer has a lot that is under his wife's name, and because of this he has somehow engineered mortgage fraud [we did not get into the details of the alleged fraud]. She said that the officer built a home on the lot, but "didn't pay for it" because the lot is under the wife's name.

Ayes also mentioned Hiram Siaba, who previously worked for Miami Lakes, but left to become building administrator for Miami Beach, only to return later to Miami Lakes. (Ayes made a reference to Siaba leaving Miami Lakes because he "didn't want to work with Mayor Pizzi") Ayes said Alex Rey brought Siaba back after Siaba was fired from Miami Beach, to

become Miami Lakes' public works director.

Ayes said that they had a hand in creating a project that isn't a real project, with a price tag of \$100,000. It was for drainage improvements along 79<sup>th</sup> Ave. She said the project was actually done, but explained further that Valiente gave an easement to the town, and that the town put in drainage on the easement. All of this was to relieve a flooding problem in this area. The following was not entirely clear, but Ayes seemed to imply that the contractor doing the work was also living in a house that benefited from the work order. She said the home needed new floors because of mold and other damage caused by the flooding, but somehow the house ended up with marble flooring, apparently paid for by this contract. But Ayes said there never was any flooding at the house, and that a corporation was created and payments made that were beneath the threshold that would require Town Council review and approval.

[A Juan Carlos Valiente does live on Northwest 79<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Miami Lakes according to Accurint.]

Ayes referred to an earlier case as the Sunshine Universal case investigated by the FBI, saying several times that "Alex knew about it."

June 21, 2016 – Sent certified letter to Ayes at NBT Transport. It was delivered on June 28 and again on June 29, but was refused both times and returned to COE.

July 1, 2016 – Attempted to call Ayes at NBT Transport, reached Julio, who provided Jaren Ayes' cell number. Called that number, left message on voice mail.

July 25, 2016 – Attempted to call Ayes at NBT Transport. Voice who answered the phone said she was not in but took a message.

*Document/Audio/Video Review:*

From the Town of Miami Lakes:

- Copy of the September 30, 2015, termination of employment letter to Jaren Ayes from Town Manager Alex Rey, listing three factors in the decision: (1) Complaints from co-workers that Ayes had arranged her belongings in such a way as to block the single entry way, and refusing to move the items when asked; (2) Secretly recording a private conversation between the Town Manager and the Town's Human Resources Specialist, without their consent; and (3) Engaging in actions other than her job duties, including downloading Town records and forwarding them to her personal e-mail, and "misusing the Town's resources to seek other employment." The three factors are described as

“not intended to be an exhaustive list of the reason for the termination of your employment.”

From the Miami Herald:

- Story published April 7, 2014, headline “Ex-public works director in Miami Lakes fined for ethics violation.”
- Story published July 27, 2014, headline “Convicted lobbyist becomes a star witness in Miami Lakes mayor’s bribery trial.”

From Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General:

- A copy of an online complaint form filed by Jaren Ayes accusing Eliezer Palacio, Building Official for the Town of Miami Lakes, of “partaken [sic] in the defrauding, extortion and co-conspirator [sic] (to name a few) of public monies,” and numerous related accusations.

From the COE Office:

- Certified letter sent by the investigator to Jaren Ayes at NBT Transport, 16505 NW 49<sup>th</sup> Ave., Miami Gardens, FL 33014, dated June 21, 2016, requesting update of complaint status. Letter was Refused on June 28 and June 29, 2016, and was returned to COE.

From United States Postal Service website:

- Printout of delivery tracking history for above-noted certified letter.

From Accurant:

- A listing for a Juan Carlos Valiente at 16242 NW 79<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Miami Lakes. The address does not appear in public Miami-Dade Property Appraiser records, suggesting Valiente may, in fact, be a police officer with exempted property listing status.

(Description of item reviewed  
Summary of findings)

(Description of item reviewed including date)  
Summary of findings

**Conclusion(s):**

Complainant failed to respond to subsequent attempts to reach her. Based on lack of cooperation from complainant and doubt as to whether these matters constitute ethics violations, this matter should be closed with no further action.

(Signature)

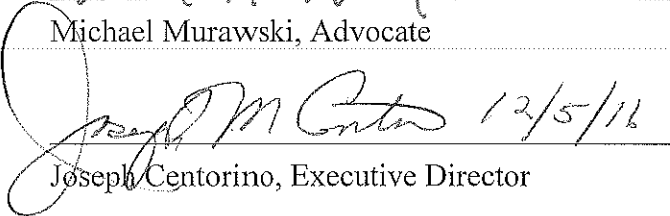


Robert Steinback, COE Investigator

Approved by:



Michael Murawski, Advocate



Joseph Centorino, Executive Director