



**Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust**  
**Report of Inquiry**

**Investigator:** Sylvia Batista

<b>Case:</b> PI17-036	<b>Case Name:</b> Maricela Fuentes,	<b><u>Date Opened:</u></b> <b>CASE</b>	<b><u>Closed</u></b>
<b>Complainant(s):</b> Anonymous,	<b>Subject(s):</b> Resilient Utility Coalition, Inc.	09/20/17 <b>CLOSED</b> Date: 10/24/17	

**Allegation(s):**

The COE received information regarding Maricela Fuentes's involvement with Resilient Utility Coalition, Inc. (RUC), a Florida not-for-profit corporation. Maricela Fuentes (Fuentes), Assistant Director of Miami-Dade Water and Sewer Department (WASD), is listed as a Director of RUC in RUC's filing of its 2017 Florida not-for-profit corporation annual report.

The COE initiated a preliminary inquiry to determine whether Fuentes committed a violation of the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance.

**Relevant Laws:**

The Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, Sec. 2-11.1(g) Exploitation of Official position prohibited.

No person included in the terms defined in Subsections (b)(1) through (6) and (b)(13) shall use or attempt to use his or her official position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or others except as may be specifically

permitted by other ordinances and resolutions previously ordained or adopted or hereafter to be ordained or adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

### **Interviews:**

#### **09/25/17 – Maricela Fuentes, Assistant Director Capital Program Management, WASD,**

Maricela Fuentes (Fuentes) was contacted and asked about her involvement with RUC.

Fuentes explained that RUC is a professional organization formed for utilities in South Florida to begin collaborative discussions regarding sea level rise, climate change, aging infrastructure and the many other challenges being faced by water utility professionals today. RUC held a Visioning Workshop in 2016 that brought together 20 different water utilities from Miami-Dade, Monroe, Broward and West Palm Beach counties, academia, and water consulting and construction companies with the objective of formulating a set of tactical goals and a vision for the future.

Additionally, RUC was established to promote the science and policies set forth by the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Compact (Compact) (<http://www.southeastfloridaclimatecompact.org/>). In 2009, West Palm Beach, Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe counties came together and formed the Compact to look at the science behind sea level rise and climate change. RUC's core mission is to operationalize resilience by finding ways to implement the policies and research being developed by the Compact. For instance, the Compact published "A Unified Sea Level Projection for South Florida" that shows how sea level will rise by 2060. RUC's goal is to bring utilities together to work on how to implement measures to deal with and adapt to such scenarios.

Fuentes said that she is very dedicated to the challenges of climate change. Fuentes also participates in many other not-for-profit organizations for water professionals and civil engineers (e.g. the American Waterworks Association and the Florida Water Environment Association).

Fuentes explained that recently with the event of Hurricane Irma, more than forty WASD's pump stations were flooded. Fuentes said that as they rebuild these stations, utilities should look into mitigation efforts so that this does not happen again. This is the core mission of RUC.

Fuentes said that there is no compensation involved; this is all volunteer work. Last September there was an event at the Port of Miami for which AECOM was one of 21 sponsors. Fuentes said that she was not involved in soliciting sponsors for that event; she did volunteer for it. At the time of the workshop she was an AECOM employee. Since joining the County, she knows that ethical restrictions exist for County employees soliciting paid sponsorships for any organization.

Fuentes explained that four RUC events have taken place in 2016 and 2017. They are as

follows: The Visioning Workshop held in August 2016; Tech Talk held on June 8, 2017; Tech Talk held on August 24, 2017; and Mocoa Fundraiser held on August 24, 2017.

Fuentes explained that the only one of these events for which there were sponsors was the Visioning Workshop. This RUC event was joined by Florida Engineering Society, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Florida American Waterworks Association Region VII. Sponsorship solicitation was done by the Florida Engineering Society.

Fuentes said that the Tech Talks did not have sponsors and the Mocoa fundraiser was a joined event with the Colombian American Association of Civil Engineers which accepted donations for the event.

Fuentes said that the only out-of-town event was the second Tech Talk, which was held in Broward County. All past events and most likely all future events will be held within the four-county area and will not require travel or travel expenses.

**Document Review:**

Electronic Articles of Incorporation of Resilient Utility Coalition, Inc. filed on 09/14/16. Initially RUC listed Andres Gomez and Ana Coelho Maran as its directors;

2017 Florida Not for Profit Corporation Annual Report filed on 04/08/17 adding Fuentes and Josenrique Cueto (Cueto) as RUC directors. Andres Gomez and Ana Coelho Maran continued as directors of RUC;

An Outlook search of Andres Gomez and Ana Coelho Maran reveals that Andres Gomez is a Hydraulic Modeling Project Engineer/AECOM Consultant for the WASD. Ana Coelho Maran is not associated with the County.

A review of RUC's webpage displays information about the objectives of the RUC and of past workshop events. Presently, RUC is gathering abstracts submitted by professionals as an opportunity to realize infrastructure and operational resiliency.

09/01/17 reply to public records request informed that neither Fuentes nor Cueto have requested authorization for outside employment.

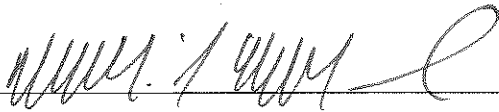
**Conclusion:**

There is no evidence to support a violation of the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance for Exploitation of Official Position. For that reason, this inquiry can be closed with no further action.

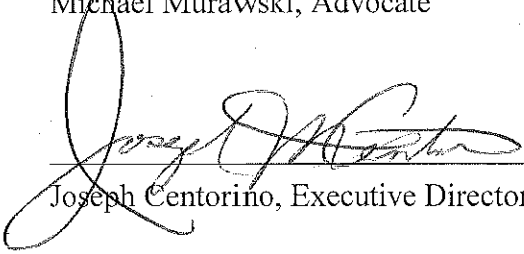
  
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Sykya Batista, COE Investigator

Date: 10/30/17

Approved by:

  
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Michael Murawski, Advocate

Date: 10/27/17

  
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Joseph Centorino, Executive Director

Date: 10/24/17