



Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust
Investigative Report

Investigator: Nilda Olmo

Case: K18-31	Case Name: Vondolyn Joyce Maddox-Elections	Date Opened: 05/01/18	CASE CLOSED Date: <u>6/7/18</u>
Complainant(s): Christina White Supervisor-Elections	Subject(s): Vondolyn Joyce Maddox		

Allegation(s):

Christina White (White), Elections Department Supervisor, contacted COE Executive Director Joseph Centorino (Centorino) seeking an opinion regarding a possible violation of the Ethics Code. The Elections Department entered into a contract agreement to use the Coconut Grove Church of Christ (CGCC), located at 3345 Douglas Road, Miami, FL 33133, as a training facility. The Pastor of the church, William Maddox, is married to Vondolyn Joyce Maddox (Ms. Maddox), a MDC Elections Department employee, assigned to the Election Voter Application Division, who was responsible for coordinating and securing the location and contract with the CGCC.

Relevant Law:

Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance Sec.2-11.1 (c)*Prohibition on transacting business within the County.* No person included in the terms defined in Subsection (b)(1) through (6) and in Subsection (b)(9) shall enter into contract or transact any business, except as provided in Subsections (c)(2) through (c)(6), in which he or she or a member of his or her immediate family has a financial interest, direct or indirect, with Miami-Dade County or any person or agency acting for Miami-Dade County, and any such Contract, agreement or business engagement entered in violation of this Subsection shall render the transaction voidable...

**Investigation:
Interviews**

Jose Ponce

Deputy Supervisor of Elections, Finance and Administration
Miami-Dade County Elections Department
2700 NW 87th Avenue
Miami, FL 33172
305.499.8320

Jose Ponce (Ponce) was interviewed and questioned about the inquiry herein mentioned. He provided the following information, thereafter, referring this Investigator to Rodney J. Moore (Moore), Election Section Manager and Ms. Maddox's Supervisor. Ponce provided several documents that included emails and a copy of the Agreement, dated 04/06/18 (Exhibit #1).

Ponce stated that the department was looking into training location sites for the 05/22/18 County Commissioner District 5 Special Election Poll Worker training. Two locations, utilized in the past, were unavailable for the training dates scope.¹

Ultimately, the Department secured the CGCC for the 19-days training. The Agreement between Miami-Dade County and the CGCC was executed on 04/06/2018.

Rena Saiter (Saiter), Assistant Deputy Supervisor of Elections-Finance, formulated the Agreement and the contract was signed and executed on 04/06/18 by Dixon and Allison McComb (McComb), Miami-Dade Elections Department representative (Deputy of Poll Worker Recruitment & Training). The County agreed to pay \$250.00 per day for the 19-days (04/12/18 through 04/30/18) training for a total of \$4750.00.

Ponce indicated that after executing the contract, the Department learned that one of their employees, Ms. Maddox, a Technical Training Specialist 2, the person responsible for coordinating and securing the facility (CGCC), was married to a Pastor at the church. At that point, White contacted the COE requesting an opinion, but because opinions are limited to prospective actions and the agreement had already been entered into at the time White contacted the COE, an investigator was assigned to the case.

Rodney J. Moore

Election Section Manager, Poll Worker Recruitment and Training Division
Miami-Dade County Elections Department
2700 NW 87th Avenue
Miami, FL 33172
305.499.8386

¹ The Culmer Community Action Center, 1600 NW 3rd Ave, Miami, FL 33136.
Frankie Shannon Rolle, 3750 South Dixie Highway, Coconut Grove, FL 33133.

Moore corroborated Ponce's information and added that he was aware that the Pastor of the CGCC was Ms. Maddox's husband, but due to the time restraints and inability to secure a location, he inquired about the church's availability, which happens to be around the corner from Frankie Shannon Rolle, a location used by the Department for previous trainings. Moore stated that he directed Maddox to coordinate and secure a room at the CGCC. It was the first time the church was used as a training site.

He indicated that throughout the process and while securing the location, Ms. Maddox never dealt with her husband. The contract was signed by David L. Dixon (Dixon), Lead Pastor for the church.

Moore provided a copy of invoice # 1238, dated 04/08/18, submitted to Dixon, in the amount of \$4,750.00 for a period of 19 days from 04/12/18 to 04/30/18 (Exhibit #2).

Vondolyn Joyce Maddox

Technical Training Specialist 2
Miami-Dade County Elections Department
2700 NW 87th Avenue
Miami, FL 33172
305.499.8461

Ms. Maddox stated that she has been employed as a Technical Training Specialist 2 for approximately 2 years. As a Training Specialist part of her responsibilities is to locate, organize and secure sites for training. She indicated that as a directive from Moore (her Supervisor), she was instructed to inquire about space at the CGCC for the Poll Worker training for the County Commissioner District 5 Special Election.

Ms. Maddox stated that Moore was aware that the Pastor at the church, William Maddox, was her husband. Furthermore, that the church became an alternative only after several locations were unavailable and due to the close proximity to a location often used by Elections for training purposes.

Upon Moore's request, Ms. Maddox proceeded to contact Dixon to insure space availability and secure the location. Once she received confirmation, the contract (formulated by Saiter) was signed and executed by Dixon and Election's representative McComb. She did not negotiate the contract in any way.

Moore indicated that she attends services at the church but is not affiliated with the church and she does not receive any financial benefit from it. Her husband is a paid employee of the church.

A Sunbiz search shows the CGCC is a Florida Not for Profit Corporation (Exhibit #3). William Maddox is listed as an Officer of the church. Dixon indicated that Mr. Maddox is part of the Board and listed as a VP, but does not have any ownership of the property.

Documents Review:

- Emails provided by Ponce.
- Copy of the Agreement between Miami-Dade County and the CGCC.
- Copy of invoice # 1238 from Rena A. Saiter submitted to Pastor David L. Dixon Sr.
- Miami-Dade Property Search, 3345 Douglas Road, Miami, Florida 33133-CGCC.
- Sunbiz, Division of Corporations Search-CGCC, Inc.

Conclusion:

Generally, there is a prohibition on having a County employee or any member of their immediate family (spouse, parent, step parent, step child) entering into any contract or transacting any business through a firm, corporation, partnership or business entity with the County. There is also a prohibition on an employee or his or her immediate family member entering into a contract with the County if the employee works in the County department which will enforce, oversee or administer the subject contract.

Further, the activity of Ms. Maddox could be construed as an Exploitation of Official Position since she assisted in securing a contract that resulted in a financial benefit to the entity that employees her husband.

Ms. Maddox is spared from any enforcement repercussions due to the mitigating fact that her supervisor, Mr. Moore, instructed her to contact Dixon and inquire as to the availability of the church facility. While Mr. Moore was acting under a perceived emergency because of certain time restraints and the inability to secure another location, those exigencies do not constitute good cause to deviate from the Ethics Code. Had the department requested an opinion from the Ethics Commission prior to entering into the contract, we would have advised them not to do so. This matter is closed with no further action, however the department should be mindful of the proscriptions set forth in the Ethics Code against contracting with the spouses of County employees in the future.



Nilda Olmo, COE Investigator

Approved by:



Michael Murawski, Advocate



Joseph Centorino, Executive Director

Date: 4/7/18