



**CASE
CLOSED**

Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust
Investigative Report

Date: 6-10-19

Investigator: Susannah Nesmith
Complainant: Anonymous

CaseNo.:K19-23
Subject/Case Name: Julianna Strout Charity

Date Opened: 4/10/19

Date Submitted: 6/7/19

Allegation(s):

North Bay Village Commissioner Julianna Strout has been soliciting donations to a non-existent charity, "Finding the Pulse to Recover."

Relevant Law:

Sec. 2-11.1. – Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance

(g) Exploitation of official position prohibited. No person included in the terms defined in subsection (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 herself 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.

Investigation:

On June 7, 2019, this investigator, accompanied by Assistant State Attorney Isis Perez interviewed Commissioner Strout about her efforts to raise money for a non-profit called "Finding the Pulse to Recover" (hereinafter "Pulse.") She explained that she had not yet set up Pulse but hoped to do so. She said she had been working with Village staff on the initiative, which will involve setting up a website to guide victims of sexual violence. She said she had only collected two checks, one from Laura Cattabriga and one from City Manager Ralph Rosado and that she had not cashed or deposited either check. After speaking with ASA Perez, she decided she would return both checks.

She said she now realized that she should not have included the fundraiser language on her panel discussion flyers.

"If we hadn't had that verbiage, we probably wouldn't be in the situation we are in right now," she said.

She said both she and the Village's grant manager had talked to a representative of the Miami Foundation about setting up a community fund under their umbrella, so that she can solicit donations for her effort.

She also said she would make sure a resolution was ready for Commission consideration at the next meeting to authorize Village staff to work on the initiative.

Documents/Exhibit Review:

Flyer for the March 8, 2019 Women’s Initiative Panel Discussion. The flyer says it’s a “fundraiser for Finding the Pulse to Recovery Non-Profit.” (see digital file)

Flyer for the April 11, 2019 Bingo Night sponsored by North Bay Village. The flyer says the event is a “Fundraiser for Finding the Pulse to Recover.” (see digital file)

Flyer for the April 24, 2019 Women’s Initiative Panel Discussion, which says it is a “fundraiser for Finding the Pulse to Recovery Non-Profit.” (see digital file)


Flyer for the May 16, 2019 Women’s Initiative Panel Discussion, which says it is a “fundraiser for Finding the Pulse to Recovery Non-Profit.” (see digital file)

A search of Sunbiz for any corporate registrations by Julianna Strout, or any registrations for Finding the Pulse to Recovery, Finding the Pulse or Pulse to Recovery. None were found.

The results of a similar search in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Maine also turned up no records. (see digital file)

Conclusion:

The Miami-Dade County State Attorney’s Office declined to file any criminal charges against Commissioner Strout. Similarly, there is no evidence to establish that Commissioner Strout exploited her official position. It appears as though she was acting in good faith to raise funds for a non-profit, she just did it prematurely. The funds she did raise were held in a secure place and were not cashed, deposited or spent; the two checks are being returned to the donors. Commissioner Strout has taken the appropriate steps to legitimize her fund-raising efforts with the Village Commission. Accordingly, this matter can be closed with no further action.




COE Investigator Susannah Nesmith

Approved by:



Michael Murawski, Advocate

 6/10/19

José Arrojo, Executive Director