



**CASE
CLOSED**

Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust

1-23-20

Investigative Report

Investigator: Sylvia Batista
Complainant: Anonymous
Date Opened: 11/20/19
Date Submitted: 12/16/19

Case No. PI19-45
Subject/
Case Name: City of Miami Beach
Commissioner Steven Meiner

Allegation(s):

The COE received information from an anonymous source regarding newly elected City of Miami Beach Commissioner Steven Meiner (Meiner). Source alleged that Meiner received a \$1,000 campaign contribution from an LLC controlled by family members of Russell Galbut, developer of the 500 Alton Road project. The subject contribution was made by Abraham Galbut ("Galbut") on behalf of Hudson Consulting & Management, LLC (HCM).

The COE initiated a review of the allegations.

Relevant Laws:

City of Miami Beach Code Section 2-489. Prohibited campaign contribution by real estate developers.

A. General

(1)(a) No real estate developer shall give a campaign contribution directly or indirectly to a candidate, or to the campaign committee of a candidate, for the offices of mayor or commissioner. . .

(1)(b) No candidate, or campaign committee of a candidate for the offices of mayor or commissioner, shall deposit into such candidate's campaign account any campaign contribution directly or indirectly from a real estate developer. . .

3(a) A person or entity other than a real estate developer who directly or indirectly makes a contribution to a candidate who is elected to the office of mayor or commissioner shall be disqualified for a period of 12 months following the swearing in of the subject elected official from becoming a real estate developer.

3(c) A real estate developer shall not make a contribution within 12 months after termination of its status as a real estate developer.

(4)(a) 1. A "real estate developer" is a person and/or entity who has a pending application for a development agreement with the City or who is currently negotiating with the City for a development agreement, or, who has a present or pending application with the City for a change of zoning map designation or a change to the City's future land use map.

Review:

- A review of Meiner's campaign treasurer reports reflect that Meiner received a one thousand-dollar (\$1,000) campaign contribution on 10/18/19 from Hudson Consulting & Management, LLC, a Florida LLC (HCM).
- HCM officers are Abraham A. Galbut, President, Eric B. Galbut, Vice-President & Secretary, and Daniel Galbut, Vice-President & Treasurer.
- The HCM officers are family members of Russell Galbut, who appears as a lobbyist on real estate development issues on the list of prohibited campaign contributors.
- A review of HCM's webpage reflects that HCM has completed the following projects in the City of Miami Beach:
 - The Casablanca Villas – South Beach
 - The Shelborne – South Beach
 - Mondrian South Beach Hotel Residences
 - Murano – South Beach
 - Murano Grande – South Beach
 - Portofino Tower – South Beach
- 12/11/19 - e-mail from City Attorney Raul Aguila confirms that neither HCM nor its officers are currently real estate developers in the City, nor have they been real estate developers in the City during the twelve-month period preceding the subject campaign contribution.

12/16/19 – Commissioner Steven Meiner –

Meiner was asked to describe how he came to receive the campaign contribution from Galbut, President of HCM. Meiner explained that Galbut is a long-time friend. Meiner said that he ran into him at the synagogue and Galbut told him he wanted to give him a contribution for the campaign. Galbut may have messaged or called him and asked him to come to his office where they chatted for a bit. Galbut then asked his secretary to bring a check over and he handed it to him. Meiner did not look at the check while at Galbut's office, but he later saw that it came from the entity and not from him personally.


Meiner said he asked his treasurer and his friend, who helped him with the campaign, to check on the prohibited contributors list, and they each found that HCM, nor any of its officers were on the prohibited contribution list.

Meiner was advised that the contributors, who are former real estate developers in the City, had not been developers for over 12 months, therefore, their contribution was not prohibited.

Meiner was advised that under A3(a) of Sec. 2-489 *Prohibited campaign contributions by real estate developers*, a person or entity other than a real estate developer who directly or indirectly makes a contribution to a candidate who is elected as mayor or commissioner shall be disqualified for a period of twelve (12) months following the swearing in of the subject elected official from becoming a real estate developer.

Conclusion:

This report was submitted to the Commission Advocate, Mr. Murawski, who concurs in the recommendation that Commissioner Steven Meiner did not violate the City of Miami Beach Code which prohibits accepting campaign contribution from real estate developers. Accordingly, this matter is closed with no further action.



Sylvia Batista, COE Investigator

Date: 1/24/20

Approved by:



Michael Murawski, Advocate

Date: 1/27/20



Jose Arrojo, Executive Director

Date: 1/23/20