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MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST

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MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLA.
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In Re: Matthew Pigatt

C19-15-04

PUBLIC REPORT AND FINAL ORDER

Complainant, Kierra Ward, (Ward) is the Human Resources Director for the City of Opa-locka. She filed this complaint against Matthew Pigatt (Pigatt), Mayor of the City of Opa-Locka. Ward alleged, in general, that Pigatt exploits his official position by pressuring her and others to make personnel decisions that he is not authorized to do. Specifically, Complainant alleges that Pigatt exploited his public position by pressuring staff to give a raise to City employee Manuel Perez (Perez) and then demanding that the City advertise for a new Human Resources Director when the current Director (Ward) refused to process the raise.

Investigation determined that Ward gave a sworn statement and alleged that Darvin Williams (Williams), who was at the time, the Assistant City Manager, told her that Pigatt wanted to replace each of the department heads, including her. Williams, categorically denied that he told Ward that Mayor Pigatt wanted to replace all the department heads, including her. He also said that former City Manager Harrell had discussed terminating Ward with him because of problems with Ward's productivity. Williams said he supported Harrell's plan to work out a severance agreement with Ward.

City Manager Newell Daughtrey eventually approved Perez' raise because Perez' direct supervisor, Abia Austin (Austin), said he (Perez) deserved it.

Former City Manager Yvette Harrell said that Mayor Pigatt had not pressured her to give Manny Perez a raise and never suggested that she hire or fire any one for any position. She said she was the one who decided to seek new department heads for all of the departments because she didn't think any of them were competent. Harrell further said she worked out a separation agreement with Ward before she told Ward to advertise for a new human resources director.

A December 5, 2018 e-mail string between Austin, Ward, Harrell and Williams that was included as an exhibit to the complaint shows that Ward expressed her discomfort in putting through a raise for Manuel Perez because she was told the raise was to compensate Perez for helping elected officials win their offices. Harrell responded saying that, as the Manager, she is the only person responsible for changes "such as these." Harrell went on to write "There was no pressure (direct or otherwise) exerted upon me to effectuate any changes, specifically as it relates to Mr. Perez."

On July 17, 2019 the Ethics Commission agreed with the Advocate's recommendation that there was No Probable Cause to support the allegations and dismissed the complaint.

Wherefore it is:

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that COMPLAINT C19-15-04 is dismissed.

DONE AND ORDERED by the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust in public session on this 17th day of July, 2019.

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY COMMISSION ON
ETHICS & PUBLIC TRUST

By:

H Jeffrey Cutler

H. Jeffrey Cutler

Chairman 07/18/2019

Signed on : _____