



MIAMI-DADE COMMISSION ON ETHICS AND PUBLIC TRUST

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Jorge Vital, Selection Committee Coordinator
Internal Services Department

Sade Chaney, Research Manager
Office of the Commission Auditor (OCA)

FROM: Loressa Felix, Staff Attorney
Commission on Ethics (COE)

SUBJECT: INQ 2022-39, Voting Conflict of Interest § 2-11.1(v); Appearances of
Impropriety

DATE: March 11, 2022

CC: All COE Legal Staff

Thank you for contacting the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust and requesting our guidance regarding the following proposed transaction.

Facts:

We have reviewed your memorandum dated March 1, 2022, which was prepared in connection with the Appointment of Selection Committee for Miami-Dade County Aviation Department Request to Advertise for Pavement Management Program – Project No. E21-MDAD-01. The memorandum was prepared in connection with Resolution No. R-449-14, directing the Office of the Commission Auditor (OCA) to conduct background checks on members serving on evaluation/selection committees.

The memorandum noted that a member of the selection committee made a disclosure on his Neutrality/Disclosure Form that merited submission to the Commission on Ethics for an opinion. Specifically, the memorandum notes that “Sergio Mejia, Miami-Dade Aviation Department, indicated on his neutrality affidavit and resume that he was employed by T.Y. Lin International from February 2008 until April 2018. T.Y. Lin International is identified as a subconsultant for AECOM Technical Services, Inc., a respondent to this solicitation.”

We conferred with Mr. Mejia. He is an Engineer 4 for the Miami-Dade Aviation Department, Civil Engineering and Environmental Division. He confirmed that he previously worked for T.Y. Lin International (hereinafter “T.Y. Lin”) as an Aviation Group Leader. Mr. Mejia stopped working for T.Y. Lin on or about April 2018. Mr. Mejia indicated that the termination of his employment with T.Y. Lin was amicable. Mr. Mejia has no current ownership interest or other financial interest in the company. He also does not have any business, close social, or other relationship with any current employee at the company. Mr. Mejia believes he can be fair and impartial when evaluating the respondents to this project.

Discussion:

This agency conducts reviews of these issues under the County Ethics Code, which governs conflicts by members of County advisory and quasi-judicial boards. We also consider whether there is an appearance of impropriety created and make recommendations based on R-449-14 and Ethics Commission Rule of Procedure 2.1(b).

Specifically, Section 2-11.1(v) of the County Ethics Code states that no quasi-judicial personnel or advisory personnel shall vote on any matter presented to an advisory board or quasi-judicial board on which the person sits if the board member will be directly affected by the action of the board on which the member serves and the board member has any of the following relationships with any of the persons or entities appearing before the board: (i) officer, director, partner, of counsel, consultant, employee, fiduciary or beneficiary’ or (ii) stock holder, bondholder, debtor or creditor.

It does not appear that Mr. Mejia has a voting conflict of interest under Section (v) of the County Ethics Code because he will not be directly affected by the vote, and he does not currently have any of the enumerated relationships with any entity affected by the vote.

Additionally, Section 2-11.1(x) of the County Ethics Code, commonly referred to as the Reverse Two-Year Rule, which bars County employees from participating in contract-related duties on behalf of the County with a former employer for a period of two years following termination of the employment relations, would not apply to Mr. Mejia since he stopped working for T.Y. Lin over 3 years ago. *See* INQ 17-174, INQ 17-183, INQ 18-229, and INQ 20-136.

Further, as noted above, due to the sensitivity of the procurement process and the need to sustain public confidence in it, this agency also opines concerning whether there may be an appearance of impropriety in a given situation that would justify the removal of a member of an appointed selection committee. *See* Section 2-1067, Miami-Dade County Code, and 2.1(b) of the COE Rules of Procedure.

As noted above, Mr. Mejia disclosed that he was previously employed by T.Y. Lin, a subconsultant to AECOM Technical Services, Inc., a respondent to this solicitation. As Mr. Mejia’s employment at T.Y. Lin ended over three years ago, on an amicable basis, and he does not have any business, or close social relationship with current employees at the entity, it is our opinion that Mr. Mejia’s prior employment at T.Y. Lin would not create an appearance of impropriety or in any way detract

from the County's conducting a fair and objective evaluation for this project. *See* INQ 20-73, INQ 18-202, INQ 17- 69 and INQ 20-136.

Opinion:

Consequently, consistent with the COE's holding in prior ethics opinions, Mr. Mejia does not have a conflict of interest under the Ethics Code that would prevent him from serving on this selection committee because he will not be directly affected by the vote, nor does he currently have any of the enumerated relationships with any entity affected by the vote. *See* INQ 14-246, INQ 16-242, INQ 19-99, INQ 20-40, and INQ 21-81.

This opinion is limited to the facts as you presented them to the Commission on Ethics and is limited to an interpretation of the County Ethics Code only and is not intended to interpret state laws. Questions regarding state ethics laws should be addressed to the Florida Commission on Ethics.

We appreciate your consulting with the Commission in order to avoid possible prohibited conflicts of interest. If the facts associated with your inquiry change, please contact us for additional guidance.

INQs are informal ethics opinions provided by the legal staff after being reviewed and approved by the Executive Director. INQs deal with opinions previously addressed in public session by the Ethics Commission or within the plain meaning of the County Ethics Code. RQOs are opinions provided by the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust when the subject matter is of great public importance or where there is insufficient precedent. While these are informal opinions, covered parties that act contrary to the opinion may be referred to the Advocate for preliminary review or investigation and may be subject to a formal Complaint filed with the Commission on Ethics and Public Trust.