

**Frigo, Victoria (COE)**

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**From:** Frigo, Victoria (COE)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 12, 2008 4:50 PM  
**To:** 'opalockanorthdadedpcouncil@gmail.com'  
**Cc:** Thompson, Robert A. (COE)  
**Subject:** Opa-Locka Front Porch Council and CDC

INQ 08-34

Ms. Jones,

Karl Ross from our office said that you were inquiring about possible voting conflicts of certain officers of the Opa-Locka/North Dade Front Porch Council who are also officers of the Opa-Locka Community Development Corporation. It is my understanding that the officers of both organizations serve without salary and do not personally benefit from their association with either group.

Since both of these entities are nonprofit Florida corporations, the County Ethics Commission does not have jurisdiction over these members, unless other circumstances are also present, e.g., if the officers are also local government officials. (I believe this is not the case for the officers you were inquiring about.)

Since the Front Porch Council is a creation of the State, you may also want to contact the State Ethics Commission at 850.488.7864 for any potential conflicts under State law.

I am also forwarding this message to Robert Thompson, who conducts ethics training from our office. I'm sure he would be happy to schedule ethics training for you and your members at a mutually agreeable time. You may contact him at the email address above or at his direct number at 305.350.0630.

Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Sincerely,

Victoria Frigo, Staff Attorney  
Miami-Dade Co. Commission on Ethics  
Direct Phone: 305.350.0601  
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**Frigo, Victoria (COE)**

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**From:** Murawski, Michael P. (COE)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 07, 2008 4:04 PM  
**To:** Frigo, Victoria (COE)  
**Subject:** FW: Opa-locka request for advisory opinion

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Ross, Karl A. (COE)  
**Sent:** Friday, March 07, 2008 1:41 PM  
**To:** Meyers, Robert (COE)  
**Cc:** Murawski, Michael P. (COE)  
**Subject:** Opa-locka request for advisory opinion

Hi Robert,

This morning I met with Lisa Jones, interim director of the Opa-locka/ North Dade Front Porch Council, with regard to her Feb. 22, 2008, memo to you seeking advice as to possible conflicts with that organization's funding. Also present were her administrative assistant, Camille Bramford, along with the council's chairwoman, Mary Alice Brown, and its treasurer, Bill Cowins.

Specifically, Ms. Jones and the others wanted to know if there would be a conflict of interest arising from the council's possible involvement with the Opa-locka Community Development Corporation in an affordable housing venture. The reason being that Chairwoman Brown and Treasure Cowins of the Front Porch Council, are also affiliated with the Opa-locka Community Development Corp. Ms. Brown is the secretary of that organization, and Mr. Cowins is the head of the finance committee and a member of the CDC's executive board.

The Front Porch Council was created by former Gov. Jeb Bush to address blight in six target communities. It is overseen by the Office of Urban Opportunities, which is part of the Department of Community Affairs. It receives an annual operating budget of \$25,000 from the state. It does not operate programs, but serves as a conduit for grants and other funding for community programs. Part of its mission consists of identifying needs within the community and then lining up funding to meet those needs. The council has 12 elected members and seven appointed members.

Ms. Jones advised that the Front Porch Council is in the process of applying for state housing funds from the HOP program, and that it needs to partner with another organization with experience in developing affordable housing, hence its proposed partnership with the Opa-locka CDC. You may know that former Opa-locka Mayor and former state Rep. Willie Logan serves as executive director of the CDC.

Ms. Jones explained that she is new at her post and wanted to ensure that the organization didn't incur in any conflicted behavior. She wants to know whether it is okay for the council to seek funding on behalf of the Opa-locka CDC, and whether Ms. Brown and Mr. Cowins would need to recuse themselves from any votes on the issue or whether they would need to otherwise disassociate themselves from the CDC.

All the board positions are unpaid, both at the Front Porch Council and at the Opa-locka CDC.

They ask that you let them know how to proceed. They are presently working on a funding application for the HOP program, but do not want to file the application until COE dispenses its advice. I will forward a copy of this e-mail to Ms. Jones, unless you would rather I not do so.

If you need to contact Ms. Jones, her cell phone is (305) 467-1657. She also mentioned that she would be interested in receiving ethics training. Perhaps Robert Thompson can schedule something for both the Front Porch Council and the Opa-locka CDC.

3/12/2008

Let me know if you need additional information. Karl

Karl Ross, investigator  
Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust  
Phone: (305) 350-0650  
Fax: (305) 579-1093