



Via First Class Mail
and
email at mramos@paradigmtax.com

July 8, 2011

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ARDYTH WALKER
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Manuel A. Ramos
Paradigm Tax Group, LLC
100 W. Cypress Creek Rd., Suite 945
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309

Re: INQ 11-111 Gustavo Z. Alfonso

Dear Mr. Ramos:

You asked for clarification regarding limitations imposed by the Miami-Dade County Ethics Ordinance on Gustavo Z. Alfonso, a property consultant with your firm. Prior to June 2011, Mr. Alfonso was a Miami-Dade County employee with the Property Appraiser's Office, working as an Income Property Specialist.

The Ethics Code does not prevent Mr. Alfonso from appearing before the Miami-Dade County Value Adjustment Board or before Special Magistrates at subsequent appeal hearings. However, Mr. Alfonso may not lobby the County for two years following his separation from County service.¹ Lobbying has been interpreted very broadly by the Ethics Commission to apply to any activities intended to influence an official County decision.

The Ethics Code specifically excludes from the definition of lobbyist anyone "retained or employed solely for the purpose of representing individuals, corporations or other entities during publicly noticed quasi-judicial proceedings where the law prohibits ex-parte communications."² According to the Florida Attorney General, "The Miami-Dade County Value Adjustment Board is a quasi-judicial governmental body created pursuant to section 194.015, Florida Statutes."³

Consequently, Mr. Alfonso is not lobbying when he prepares and defends valuations for clients before the Value Adjustment Board or at subsequent appeal hearings before Special Magistrates. In these circumstances, the County's two-year rule is not applicable. Mr. Alfonso is advised, however, that attempting to persuade County elected officials, appointees, and/or employees to take a particular action on behalf of his clients *outside of the quasi-judicial setting* is prohibited for two years following his employment with the County.

Sincerely,


VICTORIA FRIGO
Staff Attorney

cc: Robert Alfaro, Manager, Value Adjustment Board, at Ralf@miamidade.gov

¹ Miami-Dade County Code at Sec. 2-11.1 (q).

² Miami-Dade County Code at Sec. 2-11.1 (s)(1)(b).

³ AGO 2002-58.