

Frigo, Victoria (COE)

From: Centorino, Joseph (COE)
Sent: Thursday, October 17, 2013 2:49 PM
To: Frigo, Victoria (COE)
Cc: Diaz-Greco, Gilma M. (COE)
Subject: INQ - Joe Geller - City Attorney, Town of Miami Lakes

I received a call from Miami Lakes City Attorney Joe Geller. He inquired regarding the appropriateness under the Sunshine Law of one of his Council members writing a letter to the Mayor expressing his unhappiness in the manner in which the Mayor had notified various volunteer board members, who had been appointed by suspended former Mayor Michael Pizzi, that their terms had expired at the close of Pizzi's tenure. I informed that it was permissible if it was done as a public document, filed with the clerk, not delivered personally to the Mayor (who sits on the Council) or any individual council member. I suggested that he make it clear that it was not to be responded to by any fellow board member. The letter below complies with these conditions.

From: Joseph Geller [mailto:Joseph.Geller@gmlaw.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 17, 2013 11:47 AM
To: Centorino, Joseph (COE)
Subject: FW: An Open Letter

Per our earlier conversation, please see below.
I think this includes everything we discussed.
Please advise if that is not the case.
Thank you.
Joe Geller

From: Lama, Tony [mailto:LamaT@miamilakes-fl.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 17, 2013 11:23 AM
To: Tejada, Marjorie
Cc: jweaver@miamiherald.com; mherrera@miamiherald.com; dadenews@miamiherald.com; miamilaker1@aol.com; Rey, Alex; Joseph Geller
Subject: An Open Letter

To: Town Clerk, Marjorie Tejada
From: Councilman Tony Lama

Please distribute this open letter to the Mayor and Council, and maintain it as a public record. I am copying the Town Manager, the Town Attorney, The Miami Laker, and the Miami Herald.

Please advise all Councilmembers that there should be no private replies to this letter due to Sunshine Law concerns. Any comments or replies should also be done publicly, as is this open letter.

An Open Letter to Mayor Wayne Slaton:

Mr. Mayor,

During election season, our mailboxes are filled with mailers from politicians highlighting their many accomplishments. Some of those accomplishments are a direct result of the vision set forth by the individual elected official. However, it is my profound belief that those elected officials, especially in Miami Lakes, could not have succeeded had it not been for the countless hours and the sweat of our resident volunteers. So much of our success as a town has been as a result of the tireless commitment made by these great people to our elderly, our kids, education, our veterans, etc. I do NOT fail to recognize that while I may have been elected on a vision for a better Miami Lakes, the execution of my/our vision and our collective success as a town are a result of skillful execution by our staff and the dedication of the many resident volunteers of the Town of Miami Lakes.

Yesterday evening I received numerous calls from long-time residents and friends sharing how insulted and hurt they were by the letter your office sent to them. It has been brought to my attention that you have removed many resident volunteers from committees because they had been appointed by former Mayor Pizzi. You also sent such letters to 3 of your colleagues (myself included). While the legality of this action is unclear, I am more concerned with the fact that residents that have dedicated so much of their time to making Miami Lakes so wonderful did not, at a minimum, receive a phone call. Frankly, receiving a letter from your office advising them of their removal from committees has been viewed as impersonal, disrespectful, and not in the spirit of friendship and respect that we are striving for in Miami Lakes. Mr. Mayor, didn't these neighbors of ours deserve better?

Here is an example. Mary Collins has long been considered a pillar of this community. Don't ask me; ask the people she has served for many years. She is a former county commissioner. She is a former councilwoman. She is your former vice-mayor. She is a woman that has continued to remain engaged in this town working for our children and our veterans even after losing her re-election bid. While some rode off into the sunset and have never shown their faces again, Mary Collins stuck around and continued her service to Miami Lakes. Mary Collins was seen hugging Vice Mayor Cid in the days leading up to her election day. She taught us all a lesson on running a clean and friendly campaign...a lesson that frankly many in this town need to learn. Mary Collins did not get a phone call from you or your office. Mary Collins received a letter. Mr. Mayor, let us place politics aside. With all due respect, did she not deserve a phone call explaining the decision, out of respect for all that she has done for this town?

In two weeks, the Youth Activities Task Force is hosting a Halloween event. Lynn Matos has been chair of that committee for many years (I believe close to 10). She is loved by the kids in this town and their parents. She was originally appointed by former Vice Mayor Roberto Alonso and kept on by former Mayor Pizzi. She and her son have consistently given of their time to help the youth of Miami Lakes and all she got last night was a letter. Lynn Matos has been trying to call Town Hall for the last few days and NO ONE returned her calls. She was hoping to set up a meeting with you. Did she not, out of respect to her years of tireless devotion and service to our kids, deserve a phone call? What impact will this have on the Halloween event that so many of our children look forward to?

The Grand Marshal of our upcoming Veterans Affairs Committee Parade, Major Charles James, also received a letter of removal when he is being honored this year for his service and sacrifice to our nation. Is that how a decorated veteran deserves to be removed from a committee?

The list of volunteers and their sacrifices is too exhaustive to continue listing them all.

Wayne, I shook your hand and gave you my commitment to work with you and the entire Council to make Miami Lakes a BETTER place. It was not a commitment to go back to old ways. It was not a commitment to

support political agendas. It was not an empty promise. It was a commitment to move us forward and I intend to live up to that commitment with or without your support. Unfortunately, we have just dismissed some of the most dedicated volunteers in our community, and done it in a way that is perceived as hyper-political and insensitive. It is my duty, as their duly elected servant and voice, to tell you how they feel, and how I feel because I did not receive a call from your staff either.

As your colleague, I ask you to please give my words some thought, and consider reaching out to these individuals and explaining your position. I am deeply concerned by the fallout and impact on our committees. We are a town of friends. We are people first! We are, in large part, a community of faith and believers. I want to foster dialogue and understanding.

The past should remain in the past. Many things were said and done that I did not agree with. This was supposed to be a new day. I'm waiting for it to come!

I trust you will consider my message.

Respectfully,

Tony Lama

Councilman, Seat 3
Town of Miami Lakes
O: 305.364.6100 ext. 1136
M: 786.445.7920
www.MiamiLakes-Fl.gov

CC: Town Clerk, Mayor and Council via Town Clerk, Town Manager, Town Attorney, Miami Herald, The Miami Laker

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