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Finalists Named for Ethics Commission Director

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) today selected three finalists in the effort to find a replacement for Executive Director Joseph Centorino, who will leave his position at the end of August. The decision was made after telephone interviews with several candidates at a public meeting. The finalists are (in alphabetical order): Chief Assistant Miami-Dade State Attorney Jose Arrojo, former Ft. Lauderdale City Attorney Cynthia Everett and Ethics Commission Advocate Michael Murawski. The three will be interviewed in person at a special meeting of the Ethics Commission next Wednesday, June 27, beginning at 10 a.m., when a finalist is expected to be chosen.

In other action today, the Chief of the Marine Services Bureau of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department agreed to settle an Ethics Complaint (**C 18-22-10**) that he exploited his official position by using a Fire Rescue boat to transport him, his wife and others to and from the Miami Boat Show at the Miami Marine Stadium on Key Biscayne. Chief Andy Alvarez chose not to contest the allegation, but claimed that he and other department officials were attending the show to discuss the impending purchase of a new fire boat with the vendor. He admitted to taking a non-County employee (his wife) on a government vessel without a legitimate purpose and without having her sign a waiver. Chief Alvarez has paid a fine of \$500 and investigative costs of \$345.30 and will accept a Letter of Instruction.

The Ethics Commission approved a Letter of Reprimand for North Miami Beach Vice Mayor Frantz Pierre, who was found last month to have intentionally exploited his public position by threatening a code compliance officer when he was cited for property violations. According to the complaint (**C 16-34**), Pierre had been issued two code violations in February 2015. When a code enforcement officer went to the official's home two months later to post a notice that a hearing had been scheduled on the case, Pierre allegedly told the officer "... if you want to keep your job, don't even look at this house," and Pierre threatened to fire the city manager and code compliance director. The Letter states that "his conduct towards the Code Compliance Officer on April 30, 2015, was appalling and an affront to the people of North Miami Beach." It adds, "Mr. Pierre not only exploited his position of public trust in an attempt to benefit himself, but also showed, in his arrogance, that he believes his official position places him above the law that applies to everyone else. By way of this reprimand, we inform Mr. Pierre that he is sadly mistaken in that regard." Pierre, a former City Commissioner who was promoted to Vice Mayor by the City Commission after last month's Ethics hearing, was also fined \$1,000 and charged \$500 in investigative costs.

The COE determined there was No Probable Cause to a complaint (**C 18-18-04**) against North Bay Village Commissioner Eddie Lim filed by the Village Attorney, accusing Lim of having a conflict when he voted on a liquor license variance for a local business owner. Lim attended a Zoning meeting with Erika Kushi who was seeking to sell beer and wine at her recently-opened Japanese restaurant. Lim, who works as a real estate agent, represented the owner of the building where the restaurant rents space. Later he voted to approve the variance at a Village Commission meeting. Commissioner Lim received no compensation from the restaurant owner and did not have a "prohibited relationship" with Kushi according to the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, and so the complaint was dismissed.

A complaint (**C 18-19-05**) filed by former North Bay Village Commissioner Richard Chervony against current Vice Mayor Andreana Jackson and Village Attorney Norman Powell was found Not Legally Sufficient because his charges of Official

Misconduct and False Reports are criminal matters and defamation is a civil claim, none of which are under the jurisdiction of the Ethics Commission.

Also dismissed as Not Legally Sufficient was a complaint (**C 18-20-05**) filed by two members of the East Edgewater Cul-de-Sac Community against Coral Gables Vice Mayor Patricia Keon and other Coral Gables officials regarding the establishment of a special parking district for the East Edgewater neighborhood. Vice Mayor Keon's placing the parking item on the City Commission agenda for discussion and speaking about it was not a conflict of interest, but an appropriate exercise of her duty as an elected official. An allegation of bias on the part of City Attorney Miriam Ramos was determined to be unfounded. Another charge that the City failed to comply with a public records request was also found to be without merit.

Ethics Commissioners today welcomed the newest member to the panel. **Jan Jacobowitz** was sworn into the position on June 7th by the Chief Judge of the 11th Judicial Circuit Court, Bertila Soto (see attached photo, along with head shot). Ms. Jacobowitz serves as Director of the University of Miami Law School's Professional Responsibility and Ethics Program and as Director of UM's Government and Ethics Project. She is the co-author of the book, *Legal Ethics and Social Media, A Practitioner's Handbook* and also co-authored, *Mindfulness & Professional Responsibility—Incorporating Mindfulness into the Law School Curriculum*. The law lecturer began her career as a Legal Aid attorney in the District of Columbia; prosecuted Nazi war criminals at the Office of Special Investigations of the U.S. Department of Justice; and was in private practice with law firms in Washington and Miami. She also served as a teacher in Coral Reef Senior High School's Legal Academy for five years. Ms. Jacobowitz earned a Juris Doctorate from George Washington University and a B.S. in Speech from Northwestern University. She will serve a four-year term as an Ethics Commissioner.

Her fellow Ethics Commissioner, Judith Bernier, was sworn in to a second four-year term prior to the start of today's meeting by Miami-Dade County Judge William Altfield (see attached photo). Dr. Bernier is the Director of the Center for Labor Research and Studies at Florida International University and teaches courses in labor relations and employment, global diversity and cultural competence, conflict resolution and mediation techniques, and vocational education.

The Ethics Commission was created in 1996 as an independent agency with advisory and quasi-judicial powers. It is composed of five members, serving staggered terms of four years each. Through a program of education, outreach and enforcement, the Commission seeks to empower the community and bolster public trust.

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New COE Commissioner Jan Jacobowitz with Chief Judge Bertila Soto.



Miami-Dade Ethics Commissioner Jan Jacobowitz.



COE Commissioner Judith Bernier is sworn in to her second term by Miami-Dade Judge William Altfield.