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MB Commissioner cleared of Ethics Accusation

The Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust today found No Probable Cause that Miami Beach City Commissioner Kristen Rosen-Gonzalez exploited her official position when she got involved in the investigation of a political supporter, but will issue a Letter of Instruction admonishing her for exercising “bad judgement.” The complaint (**C 17-38**) targeted emails Commissioner Rosen-Gonzalez sent to Miami Beach Police Chief Dan Oates, vouching for the character of Erik Agazim, the owner of Lock and Load gun range in Wynwood. Agazim asked for her help after he said he was photographed by a neighbor with whom he had prior conflicts, and who Agazim claimed was attempting to have him arrested for wearing military gear and carrying heavy firearms. Agazim told Rosen-Gonzalez that he was only protecting his business in the wake of Hurricane Irma. The investigation determined that Commissioner Rosen-Gonzalez was unaware of a criminal investigation against Agazim at the time of her email and she withdrew her involvement when Police Chief Oates told her it was inappropriate. For those reasons, the COE staff recommended the complaint be dismissed with an admonition for the Commissioner to avoid any future appearance of impropriety in the performance of her public duty.

The Ethics Commission approved a Letter of Reprimand after settling a complaint (**C 17-34**) in January with a former procurement official in the Miami-Dade Aviation Department who solicited a job with an outside company while helping the firm during a bid process and then lying about it on a disclosure affidavit. The Letter states that Debra Shore “violated the public trust and the integrity of the County’s competitive bid process” when she exploited her official position to place her own needs above those of the County, which employed her, and adding that “her actions have damaged the reputation and credibility of the procurement process at MDAD.” Shore, who resigned from her Aviation position to take a job with AvAirPros in April of 2015, has also paid a \$1,000 fine.

A battle between an Opa-Locka City Commissioner and the City Manager that was brought to the Ethics Commission was found Not Legally Sufficient. Eddie Brown, Opa-Locka’s City Manager, filed a complaint (**C 18-09**) against Commissioner Matthew Pigatt, accusing him of several actions, including cursing, asking the city attorney to draft legislation to terminate Brown, and expressing displeasure with Brown’s contract. Because none of the allegations identify any violations within the jurisdiction of the Ethics Code, the complaint was dismissed.

A complaint (**C 18-12**) filed against a Sweetwater City Commissioner was also dismissed after being found Not Legally Sufficient. Commissioner David Borrero was accused of having a conflict of interest when he proposed an ordinance at the February 5th city commission meeting regarding unsolicited proposals for public-private partnerships. No partnerships had been proposed by Borrero’s company or any other firm, and the Commissioner had not engaged in any activity that would constitute a conflict, and so the complaint was deemed pre-emptive.

Also today, Ethics Commission **Executive Director Joseph Centorino** announced his intention to leave his position at the end of August, noting that a competitive process is required to find his replacement. Ethics Commissioners agreed on the wording of an advertisement that will be posted in several ethics and legal recruitment publications, as well as on the Ethics Commission website (ethics.miamidade.gov), with a May 4, 2018, deadline to receive applications. Mr. Centorino assumed the position of COE Executive Director on September 1, 2011, following a 25-year career at the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office – most of that time serving as the Chief of the Public Corruption Unit.

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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