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North Miami Beach Councilman found guilty of Ethics Violation

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust (COE) today ruled that North Miami Beach Councilman Frantz Pierre intentionally exploited his public position by threatening a code compliance officer and threatening to fire city officials when he was cited for property violations.

According to the investigation of the complaint (**C 16-34**), Councilman Pierre had been issued two code violations in February 2015. COE Advocate Michael Murawski presented evidence that a code enforcement officer went to Pierre's home two months later to post a notice that a hearing had been scheduled on the cases, when Pierre allegedly told the officer "... if you want to keep your job, don't even look at this house." The evidence also indicated that Pierre said he would fire the city manager and code compliance director, and that he tore down the posted notice and threw it in the direction of the officer's car.

The charge brought against Pierre was for "exploitation of official position," under the County's Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance. After a hearing that lasted more than five hours and included several witnesses, Ethics Commissioners voted to find that Pierre did intentionally violate the Ethics Code and was guilty of exploitation. They fined him \$1,000, charged \$500 in investigative costs and will also issue a formal Letter of Reprimand.

"This is not a trivial matter," said Ethics Commission Executive Director Joseph Centorino. "Anytime an elected official uses his office to attack public servants in an attempt to avoid being held accountable for any legal violation, the public trust is seriously undermined. This type of case is what the Ethics Commission is here for," he added.

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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