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Non-binding opinion finds potential conflict in Convention Center food contract

Questions over a food and beverage contract at the Miami Beach Convention Center from the city attorney and a competing bidder were brought before the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics & Public Trust today. Ovations Food Services LP is seeking the concession. Its sister company, Global Spectrum LP, manages the Convention Center, including overseeing and evaluating the food and beverage contract. Based on relevant prior opinions, the Ethics Commission issued a non-binding opinion that a conflict of interest would exist if an existing managing contractor were to exercise oversight over an affiliated company. The opinion noted that, if municipalities include language in future contracts or proposals providing the Ethics Commission with authority to rule on potential conflicts for bidders, then such opinions would be binding. Municipal attorneys will be advised of this position.

A complaint (**C 13-06**) against a member of the Coral Gables Construction Regulation Board in 2010, who failed to file the required financial disclosure form by the deadline, was dismissed with prejudice after Jorge Otero completed the filing. He had been incorrectly advised by a clerk in the city that he didn't have to file the disclosure for 2010 if he completed the form for 2011, which he did on time. The erroneous information provided the basis for the dismissal.

The Ethics Commission found as Not Legally Sufficient a complaint (**C 13-04**) filed by the owner of an 85-year-old house in Coral Gables related to the planned demolition of his home. Mads Thomsen alleged he did not receive impartial treatment during two hearings before the Coral Gables Historic Preservation Board, accusing members of being unfairly influenced by Preservation officer Dona Spain and treating him disrespectfully. The Ethics Commission determined that, even if true, the actions alleged are not violations of the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance.

Also today, Executive Director Joseph Centorino reported to the Ethics Commission that the agency's new website (ethics.miamidade.gov) is now active, as is a new Facebook page (facebook.com/miamidadeethics), and encouraged those present to help spread their usage. He also announced that registration is now underway for the two-day Public Corruption Investigation Conference, May 9-10, at the Miami Police Training Center, where former FBI Director Louis Freeh will be keynote speaker. Details are available on the Ethics Commission website.

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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