



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Commission on Ethics Meeting Held on February 3, 2011

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The Commission on Ethics took the following actions at its monthly public meeting held on February 3, 2011.

- The COE held an executive session hearing in the matter of C10-006, In re: Burt Aaronson. The commission issued a Public Report dismissing the case pursuant to sec. 2-260.3 of the Commission on Ethics ordinance and issued a Letter of Instruction to the respondent. Full text of the order and letter are available at <http://www.pbcgov.com/ethics/complaints.htm>
- Two (2) Advisory Opinions were approved by the Commission. The full opinions are published and available at <http://www.pbcgov.com/ethics/opinions.htm>
 - RQO10-038-OE involved a Boynton Beach employee working as a subcontractor for a private vendor doing work for the City of Boynton Beach. The employee is a chief electrician and the sub-contract would involve electrical work. The COE opined that given the close relationship between the employee's public job and the private subcontracted work he would be doing, that a waiver by the Boynton Beach Commission is necessary, as well as appropriate merit rule approval, before he can work as a private subcontractor doing electrical work for his public employer.
 - RQO11-001 involved free training and support offered to County Information Systems Services (ISS) by Microsoft Corporation, a contracted vendor to Palm Beach County. The COE opined that so long as the free training and support services are offered to Palm Beach County and its staff as a governmental entity, and not for the benefit of any individual employees, and the services are used by the county and its staff in the performance of their official duties as county employees, they are not considered as gifts under section 2-444 of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.
- The Commission on Ethics held a legislative workshop and made the following recommended changes to the code of ethics. A detailed explanation of agenda items is available at <http://www.pbcgov.com/ethics/meetings.htm>
 - The COE recommended adding language to 2-444(a) and (b) of the gift law, requiring public officials and employees to use the exercise of reasonable care in determining whether or not the gift is from a lobbyist, principal or employer of a lobbyist. Additionally, the COE recommended that the code

be expanded to hold the gift donor as well as the recipient public servant accountable where the gift is prohibited. Lastly, the commission recommended that the county code of ethics conform to state law in prohibiting a state reporting individual from soliciting any gift whatsoever from a lobbyist, principal or employer of a lobbyist.

- The COE recommended the referendum drafting committee amend sec. 2-260(f) of the COE ordinance to reflect recent changes in state law providing the exclusion of the initial ethics complaint and investigation from public records disclosure and sunshine law requirements.
- The COE recommended the referendum drafting committee simplify the public hearing provisions of the COE ordinance by requiring a public hearing within one hundred twenty (120) days be set in all cases where the commission finds probable cause to believe that a violation of the ethics code has occurred.

A video record of the COE meeting is available under the multimedia tab on the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics website at, www.palmbeachcountyethics.com. More detailed information regarding agenda items may be found under the February 3, 2011 meeting schedule/minutes. Posted advisory opinions may be found under the opinion tab.

The Commission on Ethics hotline is (877) 766-5920.