

Agenda

January 7, 2015 – 1:30 pm Governmental Center, 301 North Olive Avenue, 6th Floor Commissioners Chambers

Meeting will begin at 1:30 pm Executive Session from 1:45 pm to 2:15 pm Regular Agenda will resume at 2:30 pm

Palm Beach County

Commission on Ethics

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Commissioners

Salesia V. Smith-Gordon, Chair

Michael S. Kridel, Vice Chair

Michael F. Loffredo

Carmine A. Priore

Clevis Headley

Executive Director

Steven P. Cullen

Intake Manager

Gina A. Levesque

Staff Counsel

Christie E. Kelley

Senior Investigator

Mark E. Bannon

Investigator

Anthony C. Bennett

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Introductory Remarks
- IV. Approval of Minutes from November 6, 2014
- V. Probable Cause Hearing (Executive Session)
 - a. C14-007
- VI. Processed Advisory Opinion (Consent Agenda)
 - a. RQO 14-039
- VII. Items Pulled from Consent Agenda

a.

VIII. Executive Director Comments

IX. Commission Comments

X. Public Comments

XI. Adjournment

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by this Commission with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or hearing, (s)he will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, (s)he may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES OF THE PALM BEACH COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

NOVEMBER 6, 2014

THURSDAY 1:30 P.M. COMMISSION CHAMBERS GOVERNMENTAL CENTER

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS:

Salesia V. Smith-Gordon, Chair Michael S. Kridel, Vice Chair Clevis Headley Michael F. Loffredo Carmine A. Priore – Absent

STAFF:

Mark E. Bannon, Commission on Ethics (COE) Senior Investigator Anthony C. Bennett, COE Investigator Steven P. Cullen, COE Executive Director Christie E. Kelley, COE Staff Counsel Gina A. Levesque, COE Intake Manager

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:

Tim Montiglio, Minutes Clerk, Clerk & Comptroller's Office

III. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Chair Salesia Smith-Gordon said that all mobile telephones should be silenced.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 2, 2014

MOTION to approve the October 2, 2014, minutes. Motion by Michael Kridel, seconded by Clevis Headley, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

COMMISSION ON ETHICS

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V. Page 6.

VI. PROCESSED ADVISORY OPINIONS (Consent Agenda)

VI.a. Request for Opinion (RQO) 14-029

MOTION to approve processed advisory opinion letter RQO 14-029. Motion by Clevis Headley, seconded by Michael Kridel, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

VII. ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA - None

VIII. PROPOSED ADVISORY OPINIONS

VIII.a. RQO 14-030

Staff Counsel Christie Kelley said that:

- The Village of Wellington's (Village) attorney asked if Councilwoman Anne Gerwig could participate in the development of "K-Park," when HSQ, a client of the councilwoman's outside business was a proposed K-Park subcontractor.
- Councilwoman Gerwig could not participate in the K-Park development process due to her connection with HSQ.
- Councilwoman Gerwig's relationship with HSQ constituted a violation of the ethics code and she should disclose the conflict before the Village council, abstain from voting on the matter, and file an 8-B voting conflict form.

MOTION to approve proposed advisory opinion letter RQO 14-030. Motion by Clevis Headley, seconded by Michael Loffredo, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

Remainder of page left blank intentionally.

VIII. - CONTINUED

VIII.b. RQO 14-031

Ms. Kelley said that:

- Ms. Diane Colonna, Executive Director of the Delray Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), asked if a conflict of interest would exist if her husband served on the Delray Center for the Arts board whose funding was approved and alloted by the CRA.
- Although her spouse would not receive a personal financial benefit from the allocation, a conflict of interest would exist for Ms. Colonna since she was responsible for approving the center's funding application.
- Ms. Colonna could not approve applications from unions, civic groups, social, charitable, or religious organizations, or other nonprofits in which her spouse served as an officer or director.

MOTION to approve proposed advisory opinion letter RQO 14-031. Motion by Clevis Headley, seconded by Michael Kridel, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

VIII.c. RQO 14-032

Executive Director Steven P. Cullen said that:

- Some Town of Highland Beach Adjustment and Appeals board members resided near a development that applied for a town variance.
- The 435 residences affected by the development would not prohibit the board members from voting on the variance application.
- A board member sharing a negative opinion about the project with affected residents would not require ethics code regulation.

MOTION to approve proposed advisory opinion letter RQO 14-032. Motion by Michael Loffredo, seconded by Clevis Headley, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

VIII. - CONTINUED

VIII.d. RQO 14-033

Mr. Cullen said that Chief Assistant County Attorney Leonard Berger requested clarification regarding Board of County Commissioners (BCC) accepting gifts from an inactive vendor listed on the County's vendor database. He said that staff determined that the vendor was inactive and accepting the gift was not prohibited.

Mr. Berger said that registered vendors remained on the County's database regardless of contract activity. He said that under the County's Code of Ethics (Code), gifts could not be accepted from the County's 11,500 vendors and their respective employees and that the BCC should remain cautious about accepting them.

Mr. Cullen said that the BCC should exercise reasonable care and make a reasonable inquiry before accepting gifts. Chair Smith-Gordon said that there were penalties associated with gift-law violations.

RECESS

At 1:55 p.m., the chair declared the meeting recessed for an executive session.

RECONVENE

At 3:00 p.m., the meeting reconvened with Clevis Headly, Michael Kridel, Michael Loffredo, and Salesia Smith-Gordon present. Carmine Priore was absent.

VIII.d. - CONTINUED

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Alexandria Larson and Anne Kuhl.

MOTION to receive and file documents submitted by Ms. Kuhl. Motion by Clevis Headley, seconded by Michael Kridel, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

Commissioner Cleavis Hedley read the following sentence from section 2-442 of the Code: "Vendor means any person or entity who has a pending bid proposal."

VIII.d. - CONTINUED

Mr. Cullen said that:

- Any person or entity with a pending bid proposal, an offer or request to sell goods or services, or that leased personal property to the County was a vendor.
- The issue was whether that person or entity currently served the County.
- The gift in question was valued at \$300, and the County's last transaction with the vendor was four-and-a-half years ago.

Chair Smith-Gordon said that four and a half years was a remote period of time which should be considered.

Mr. Cullen said that staff supported the chair's remoteness-of-time consideration.

MOTION to approve proposed advisory opinion letter RQO 14-033. Motion by Michael Kridel, seconded by Clevis Headley, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

VIII.e. RQO 14-034

Ms. Kelley said that:

- Mr. Berger requested that COE staff determine if Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council (EMSAC) members, who were also hospital employees, could participate in the Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) selection process when their hospital employers had ongoing and prospective relationships with the COPCN applicants.
- State law required service providers to hold a COPCN license when providing emergency medical and ambulance transport services.
- Staff determined that EMSAC members could participate in the COPCN selection process since no special financial benefit would be given to their outside employer or to a customer or client of the outside employer.

VIII.e. - CONTINUED

MOTION to approve proposed advisory opinion letter RQO 14-034. Motion by Clevis Headley, seconded by Michael Kridel, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

(CLERK'S NOTE: Item V. was addressed at this time.)

V. PROBABLE CAUSE HEARING (EXECUTIVE SESSION)

V.a. C14-010

Vice Chair Michael Kridel read the following Public Report and Final Order of Dismissal:

Complainant, Steven P. Cullen, Executive Director, Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE), filed the above-referenced complaint on September 23, 2014, alleging that Respondent, Joshua Wilson, an employee of the City of Riviera Beach, violated §2-444(f) and §2-444(f)(2)(b) of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics by failing to report a gift of lodging accepted from a non prohibited source between April 2013 and October 2013 valued at greater than \$100, by November 1, 2013, as required by the Code.

Pursuant to §2-258(a)¹ of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Ordinance, the Commission on Ethics is empowered to enforce the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics. Respondent and Advocate entered into a negotiated settlement wherein Respondent admitted the violation of §2-444, *Gift law*, of the Code of Ethics for failure to timely report the acceptance of a non prohibited gift valued at greater than \$100. The Respondent agreed to accept a Letter of Instruction and will file a Palm Beach County Gift Form for the gift within ten (10) days of the date of acceptance of this agreement by the Commission on Ethics. The Commission on Ethics agreed that the case should be dismissed with the issuance of a Letter of Instruction, and a finding that the violation was inadvertent and unintentional.

V.a. - CONTINUED

On November 6, 2014, the negotiated settlement was presented to the Commission on Ethics for approval. After reviewing the negotiated settlement and all relevant documents associated with the case, the Commission on Ethics approved the negotiated settlement and dismissed the case with a Letter of Instruction finding that the violation was inadvertent and unintentional.

Therefore it is:

Ordered and adjudged the Complaint against Respondent, Joshua Wilson, is hereby dismissed and a Letter of Instruction is issued.

Done and ordered by the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics in public session on November 6, 2014. Signed by Salesia V. Smith-Gordon, Chair.

(CLERK'S NOTE: The language as printed in the Public Report and Final Order of Dismissal was added by the Clerk.)

Chair Smith-Gordon said that the Final Report and the Letter of Instruction would become part of the public record. She requested a brief recess to review the documents.

RECESS

At 3:22 p.m., the chair declared a recess.

RECONVENE

At 3:24 p.m., the meeting reconvened with Commissioners Headley and Loffredo, Vice-Chair Kridel, and Chair Smith-Gordon in attendance.

MOTION to approve and execute the Letter of Instruction. Motion by Michael Loffredo, seconded by Clevis Headley, and carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

V.a. - CONTINUED

Vice Chair Kridel read the following excerpt from the Letter of Instruction, page two:

Respondent did accept a gift of free lodging from April 2013 through October 2013 with an aggregate value of approximately \$4,900 from a private, non-prohibited source. Additionally, the source was not an exception to reporting requirements under §2-444(g)(1) of the Gift law. Respondent failed to file a Palm Beach County Gift Form by November 1, 2013, as required. The COE is mindful of the fact Respondent may not have recognized the lodging as a reportable gift under §2-444, Gift law, of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

In light of the facts and circumstances known to the COE, the matter is disposed of by way of dismissal with this Letter of Instruction. The COE believes that the violation was inadvertent and has determined that the public interest would not be served by proceeding further. However, Respondent is advised that the filing of Ethics Complaint C14-010, along with this Letter of Instruction, is to serve as notice that the acceptance of gifts valued at greater than \$100 from any non-prohibited source that does not meet an exception to the gift reporting requirements must be reported timely to the COE staff pursuant to the Gift law. Respondent is therefore instructed to be more careful in the future to ensure that he follows the requirements of §2-444(f) and §2-444(f)(2)(b) to avoid any future enforcement action.

This Letter of Instruction is issued by the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics in public session on November 6, 2014. Signed by Salesia V. Smith-Gordon, Chair.

(CLERK'S NOTE: The language as printed in the Letter of Instruction was added by the Clerk.)

Remainder of page left blank intentionally.

(CLERK'S NOTE: Agenda order was restored.)

IX. ORDINANCE CHANGE RECOMMENDATION

Mr. Cullen said that:

- The COE would recommend how and who conducted COE public hearings pursuant to the County's Code of Ordinances, Division 8.
- Staff recommended changing section 2.260.1(a) and presenting the draft proposal to the BCC.
 - A respondent charged with a violation could elect to have a public hearing conducted by the COE, a three-person panel designated by the COE chair, or a hearing officer.
 - A hearing officer would be designated under the County's existing Unified Land Development Code (ULDC).

Mr. Berger said that:

- The ULDC language establishing a hearing officer indicated that the officer would adhere to any code specified by the ordinance.
- Code Enforcement Special Masters already served ex-officio as hearing officers.
- A pool of hearing officers who understood the ethics code from a lawyer's perspective could help ensure impartiality.
- Hearing officers were certified attorneys with experience in administrative, trial, and local government law.

MOTION to approve staff's recommendation to amend the County Code of Ordinances, section 2.260.1(a), as discussed, and to present the proposed changes to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Motion by Michael Loffredo and seconded by Michael Kridel.

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Richard Radcliffe, Executive Director of the League of Cities (LOC), said that the LOC supported the special masters' concept, but was concerned about rushing the vetting process. He said that the COE would be abdicating power to the special master.

IX. - CONTINUED

Chair Smith-Gordon said that a respondent would have more hearing options and that the COE did not support publically funding the hearing officers.

Mr. Radcliffe recommended that all COE members be present to vote on the proposal due to its special significance.

Vice Chair Kridel said that a vetting process for the proposal language existed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Anne Kuhl.

Mr. Cullen said that while performing previous research, staff found that the State used the Department of Administrative Hearings for ethics hearings.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS: Alexandria Larson and Shreya Kuntawala.

Mr. Berger said that the pool of special masters was available for review and met specific guidelines and minimum qualifications. He said that once the process was accepted by the BCC, the hearing officers would be selected by availability and not by request of the BCC or the respondents.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION to postpone presenting the proposed County Code of Ordinances changes, as discussed, to the Board of County Commissioners until the new board was seated. Motion by Michael Loffredo.

Mr. Berger said that the new BCC could address the proposal when seated on November 18, 2014.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION WITHDRAWN by Michael Loffredo.

SECOND SUBSTITUTE MOTION to approve staff's recommendation as proposed in the October 24, 2014, Commission on Ethics workshop, to amend the County Code of Ordinances, Division 8, section 2.260.1(a) to read, "Right to a public hearing. After a finding of probable cause, a respondent is entitled to a public hearing on the complaint. The respondent may elect to have the hearing conducted by the full commission, a panel of three commissioners designated by the commission chair, or by a hearing officer, as established in section 2.G.3.G., Palm Beach County Unified Land Development Code, who is not a member of the commission," to renumber the subsequent paragraphs, and to present the proposed changes to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. Motion by Michael Kridel.

IX. - CONTINUED

Mr. Cullen stated that Vice-Chair Kridel's motion was a clarification.

MOTION SECONDED by Michael Loffredo.

Mr. Berger said that the hearing-officer option should be established by a new ordinance; however, the COE could utilize the existing ULDC hearing-officer pool.

UPON CALL FOR A VOTE, the motion carried 4-0. Carmine Priore absent.

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMENTS

X.1.

DISCUSSED: Quarterly Newsletter.

Mr. Cullen said that COE staff would be distributing a quarterly newsletter to all contacts prescribed by the Code of Ethics (Code). Topics of interest and current information about the COE and the Code would be covered.

X.2.

DISCUSSED: Annual Commission On Ethics Report.

Mr. Cullen said that the annual report would be available at the end of the calendar year.

X.3.

DISCUSSED: County Ethics Code Gift Law.

Mr. Cullen said that staff would be distributing gift-law information and offering training to increase knowledge about the gift law. He said that information related to raffling tickets and raffle gifts would be included.

X. - CONTINUED

X.4.

DISCUSSED: Solicitation Logs.

Mr. Cullen said that nonprofit organizations meeting specific criteria should be sending solicitation logs to the COE to avoid conflict with the Code. Staff would be distributing a letter outlining responsibilities and requirements.

X.5.

DISCUSSED: Rules and Bylaws.

Staff would bring back additional information addressing the concerns raised in the October 24, 2014, workshop, which were related to the COE's rules and bylaws.

XI. COMMISSION COMMENTS – None

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

XII.1.

DISCUSSED: Ordinance Changes By Reaction.

Alexandria Larson said that the COE should not make reactive decisions. She said that the County Attorney supported the County, not the public, and that the COE should not change ordinance language based on State legislator comments.

XII.2.

DISCUSSED: County And Developer Transparency.

Anne Kuhl said that the BCC's recent decision to proceed with the Minto West development should be investigated by the COE. She said that the exchange of information among the BCC, County staff, and developers was not transparent to the public.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

At 4:22 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.

Chair/Vice Chair



Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics

Commissioners

Salesia V. Smith-Gordon, Chair Michael S. Kridel, Vice Chair Michael F. Loffredo Carmine A. Priore Clevis Headley

> **Executive Director** Steven P. Cullen

December 22, 2014

Ms. Deidra Gibson, Customer Service Consultant Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Inc. 4400 North Congress Avenue West Palm Beach, FL 33407

Re: RQO 14-039

Advisory Board Waiver/Disclosure

Dear Ms. Gibson,

Your request for an expedited advisory opinion pursuant to Commission on Ethics (COE) Rule of Procedure 2.6 has been received and reviewed. The opinion rendered is as follows:

QUESTION:

Would a prohibited conflict of interest exist if an employee of the Area Agency on Aging of Palm Beach/Treasure Coast Inc. (Agency), which has a contract with Palm Beach County (County) for paratransit services, becomes a member of the Palm Train Service Board (PTSB), which makes recommendations to the County about the paratransit services provided by Palm Tran Connection?

ANSWER:

In general, employees of the Agency would not be entitled to an advisory opinion because they are not currently under the jurisdiction of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics (Code). COE Rule of Procedure 2.2 states, in relevant part, that only persons who are under the jurisdiction of the Code of Ethics may request an advisory opinion regarding the interpretation or application of the Code of Ethics. However, since their appointment to an advisory board would bring them under the Code of Ethics, and the Agency is seeking an opinion proactively to avoid any potential issues, the COE will make an exception and provide an opinion.

Depending on the type of advisory board it is and whether the board has any contract oversight, there are three possible requirements for the Agency employee: a disclosure, a waiver, or decline the appointment. Under the Code, the employee should first determine whether the PTSB will have any oversight of the contract between the County and the Agency. An advisory board is considered to exercise contract oversight when the board will play any role in the oversight, regulation, management, or policy-setting recommendations regarding the contract. If the advisory board does not have any contract oversight, then only a disclosure is required.² A disclosure requires that the existence of the contract be made public. This disclosure should occur at the time of the employee's appointment.

2 §2-443(d)

¹ COE Rule of Procedure 2.2

Next, the employee should determine whether the advisory board is purely advisory or not purely advisory. A purely advisory board means the board is authorized to only make recommendations. A board that is not purely advisory is authorized to make final decisions. If the advisory board is purely advisory and provides contract oversight, a waiver is required.³ A waiver requires the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), upon full disclosure of the contract at a public meeting, to waive the conflict.⁴ If the advisory board is not purely advisory and has contract oversight, an unwaivable conflict of interest would exist.⁵ As such, the employee would be prohibited from serving on that advisory board.

Based on the facts submitted, the PTSB is not purely advisory because the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) delegated its authority to approve Palm Tran fixed route transportation service adjustments to the PTSB. However, the PTSB does not have any oversight, regulation, management, or policy-setting recommendations regarding its contract. Thus, if selected to serve on the PTSB, the Agency employee will need to disclose the existence of the contract when the employee is appointed.

FACTS:

You are a Consumer Services Consultant for the Agency. Employees of the Agency would like to become advisory board members on the Palm Tran Service Board (PTSB). The PTSB is not a purely advisory board of Palm Tran and consists of 13 members. The BOCC delegated its authority to approve Palm Tran fixed route transportation service adjustments to the PTSB. Additionally, the PTSB serves in an advisory function regarding matters concerning or impacting public transportation. The PTSB does not have a role in the oversight, regulation, management, or policy-setting recommendations of the contract.

The Agency has a contract with the County for paratransit services, which is required by Florida Statute. The 2014 Florida Department of Elder Affairs Programs and Services Handbook requires that "all transportation provided with federal, state, and local government funds shall be purchased through a contractual arrangement with the community transportation coordinator or approved coordination provider within the coordinated system." Additionally, the amended Older Americans Act of 1965 requires that the Agency "will coordinate planning, identification, assessment of needs, and provision of services for older individuals with disabilities, with particular attention to individuals with severe disabilities, and individuals at risk for institutional placement with agencies that develop or provide services for individuals with disabilities..." The Older Americans Act also requires the Agency to assist "the area-wide development and implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated system for providing long-term care in home and community-based settings...[by] collaborating, coordinating activities, and consulting with other local public and private agencies and organizations responsible for administering programs, benefits, and services related to providing long-term care."

LEGAL BASIS:

The legal basis for this opinion is found in the §2-443(d) and §2-443(e) of the Code:

Sec. 2-443. Prohibited conduct.

(d) Contractual relationships. No official or employee shall enter into any contract or other transaction for goods or services with their respective county or municipality. This prohibition extends to all

5 ld.

³ §2-443(e)

⁴ Id.

contracts or transactions between the county or municipality as applicable or any person, agency or entity acting for the county or municipality as applicable, and the official or employee, directly or indirectly, or the official or employee's outside employer or business. Any such contract, agreement, or business arrangement entered into in violation of this subsection may be rescinded or declared void by the board of county commissioners pursuant to section 2-448(c) or by the local municipal governing body pursuant to local ordinance as applicable. This prohibition shall not apply to employees who enter into contracts with Palm Beach County or a municipality as part of their official duties with the county or that municipality. This prohibition also shall not apply to officials or employees who purchase goods from the county or municipality on the same terms available to all members of the public. This prohibition shall also not apply to advisory board members provided the subject contract or transaction is disclosed at a duly noticed public meeting of the governing body and the advisory board member's board provides no regulation, oversight, management, or policy-setting recommendations regarding the subject contract or transaction.

(e) Exceptions and waiver. The requirements of subsection (d) above may be waived as it pertains to advisory board members where the advisory board member's board is purely advisory and provides regulation, oversight, management, or policy-setting recommendations regarding the subject contract or transaction. No waiver shall be allowed where the advisory board member's board is not purely advisory and provides regulation, oversight, management, or policy-setting recommendations regarding the subject contract or transaction. Waiver may be effected by the board of county commissioners or by the local municipal governing body as applicable upon full disclosure of the contract or transaction prior to the waiver and an affirmative vote of a majority plus one (1) of the total membership of the board of county commissioners or the local municipal governing body as applicable. In instances in which appointment to the advisory board is made by an individual, waiver may be effected, after full disclosure of the contract or transaction at a public hearing, by the appointing person.

This opinion construes the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics Ordinance and is based upon the facts and circumstances that you have submitted. The COE does not investigate the facts and circumstances submitted, but assume they are true for purposes of this advisory opinion. It is not applicable to any conflict under state law. Inquiries regarding possible conflicts under state law should be directed to the State of Florida Commission on Ethics.

Please feel free to contact me at 561-355-1915 if I can be of any further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Steven P. Cullen Executive Director

CEK/gal