



Honesty - Integrity - Character

**Palm Beach County
Commission on Ethics**

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News Release

For immediate release:

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October 5, 2023

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Summary of Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Meeting Held on October 5, 2023

The Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE) took the following action at its monthly public meeting held on October 5, 2023.

RQO 23-023: A county employee asked if the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics (Code) prohibits her from accepting a cash gift award for being recognized as the "Humana Healthy Horizons Best Direct Service Employee of the Year" when the award is funded by an organization who is a vendor of the County.

The COE opined as follows: Because the Code specifically excludes awards for professional or civic achievement from the definition of "gift," a county employee is not prohibited from accepting an award with a monetary component for professional achievement even when the award is given by a vendor of her public employer.

RQO 23-024: An employee of a local municipality asked if the Code would prohibit his spouse from providing goods or services to a local business when both owners of that business are members of different advisory boards for the municipality, and the employee routinely appears before both boards as a function of his employment.

The COE opined as follows: Based on the facts as they currently exist, the Code does not prohibit the employee's spouse from a transactional relationship with the business as long as he does not use his position with the municipality in any way to give a special financial benefit to his wife's outside business. He is also precluded from using his position in any way to corruptly secure a special benefit of any kind to his wife's outside business or to the business to which she will be providing goods or services.

RQO 23-026: A volunteer for a registered non-profit organization asked if the Palm Beach County Lobbyist Registration Ordinance (Ordinance) requires her to register as a lobbyist if she were to use funds donated to the non-profit to inform and educate the public on actions taken by local elected officials.

The COE opined as follows: A lobbyist is a person who is “employed and receives payment for the purpose of lobbying on behalf of a principal,” thus, an unpaid volunteer is not considered a lobbyist under the Ordinance. Therefore, she is not required to register as a lobbyist.

RQO 23-027: A county employee asked if the Code would prohibit her complimentary attendance at an event when her presence is related to official county business and her admission is gifted by the non-profit agency hosting the event.

The COE opined as follows: Based on the facts submitted, as a county employee, the Code does not prohibit the acceptance of complimentary admission to this specific event. This is because the non-profit organization does not employ a lobbyist who lobbies the county and the ticket is offered by a representative of the non-profit organization who is not a lobbyist or principal or employer of a lobbyist who lobbies the county. Although acceptance of the ticket may not be prohibited, because the published cost of attendance exceeds \$100, the gift must be reported on a county gift form and submitted to the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics.

A detailed explanation of all agenda items is available at
<http://www.palmbeachcountyethics.com/meetings.htm>.

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