

Miami-Dade County Commission  
on Ethics & Public Trust



# ANNUAL REPORT

*Building trust and confidence in  
local government*



**FY 2023-2024**



305-579-2594



[www.ethics.miamidade.gov](http://www.ethics.miamidade.gov)

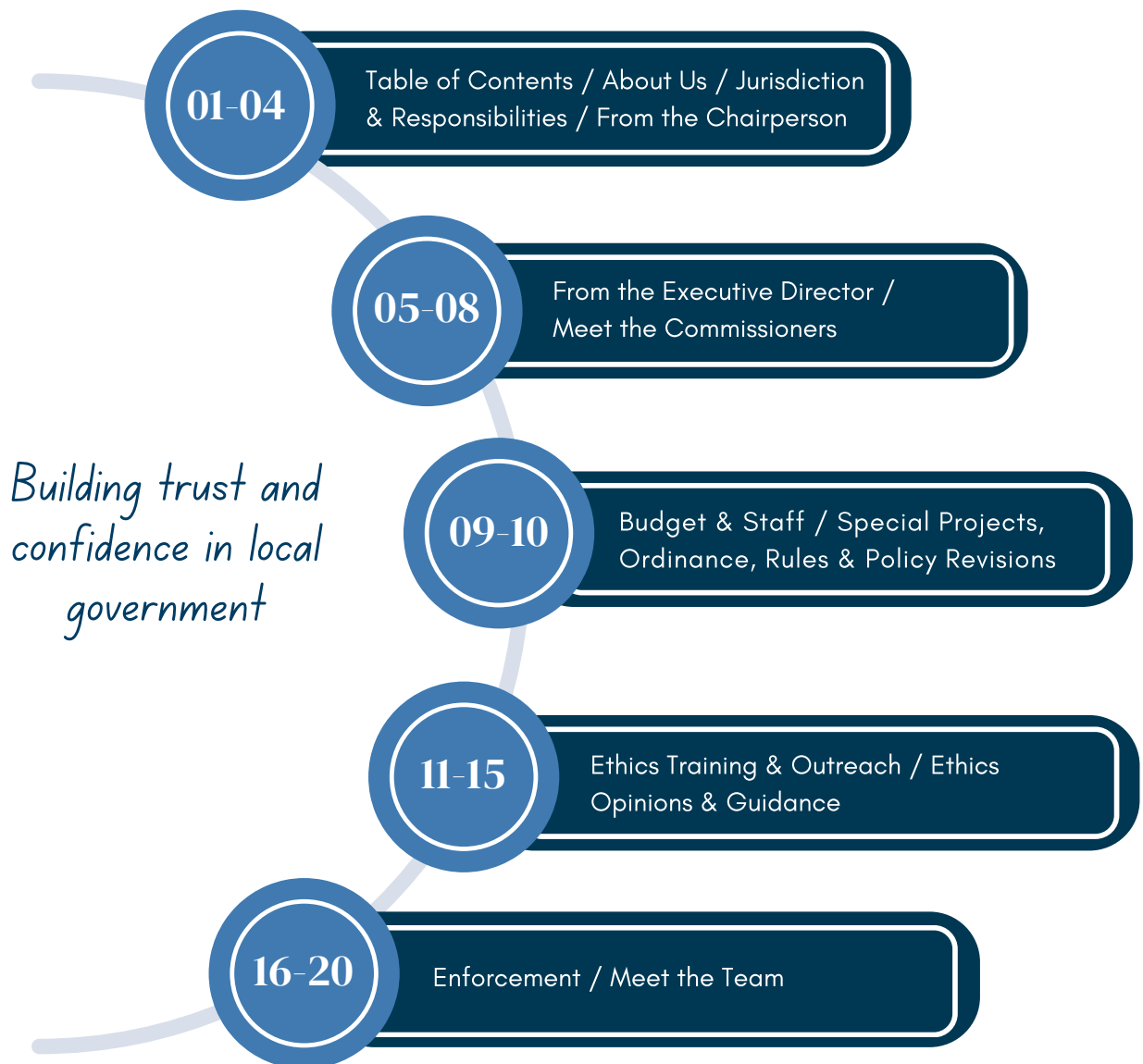


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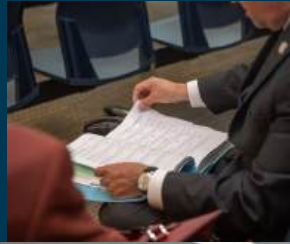


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Miami-Dade County  
Commission on  
Ethics & Public Trust



# About Us

## The Commission

The Ethics Commission was created in 1996, as a result of a citizens' vote to amend the County Home Rule Charter. It is an independent agency with advisory and quasi-judicial powers led by five appointed commissioners. It is staffed by lawyers, investigators, community outreach specialists, and support staff.

Government employees and officials have a special duty to serve the public in a fair and just manner. The Ethics Commission is dedicated to bolstering public trust in the administration of government by informing the public and private sectors about the laws and seeking strict compliance with them. It is empowered to subpoena, audit and investigate all facts and persons materially related to a complaint at issue.

## Our Mission

The mission of the Ethics Commission is to ensure the integrity of local governance and electoral processes, restore public confidence in government, and serve as the guardian of the public trust.

# Jurisdiction & Responsibilities

The Commission's jurisdiction includes elected officials, employees and advisory board members in Miami-Dade County and its 34 municipalities. Some rules and ordinances also extend to lobbyists and contract vendors. The Ethics Commission has jurisdiction over the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, the Miami-Dade County Honor Code, the Ethical Campaign Practices Ordinance, all municipal ethics codes, and the County Charters' Citizen's Bill of Rights.



**1**

## **Training & Outreach**

In its training, outreach, and public information function, the Commission provides ethics training to County and municipal elected officials and candidates, board members, employees, and lobbyists. Staff also provides ethics training to non-profit agencies, professional associations, educational institutions, and community groups, through workshops, conferences, and public meetings.

**2**

## **Guidance**

In its guidance function, the Commission provides ethics advice and written opinions to persons within its jurisdiction as to the proper interpretation or applicability of the County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, Municipal Ethics Ordinances, and other local laws.

**3**

## **Investigation & Compliance**

In its ethics investigation, prosecution, and compliance functions, Commission staff conduct investigations of violations of the County Conflict of Interest and Ethics Ordinance, Municipal Ethics Ordinances, and other County ordinances within its jurisdiction, and issues investigative reports. Where probable cause exists, violations are prosecuted as ethics complaints before the Commission.





## FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

DR. JUDITH BERNIER

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics & Public Trust (COE) celebrated its 28th anniversary in 2024. Since 2022, I have been honored and privileged to serve as its chairperson. It remains a rewarding experience to be part of an organization that has upheld the public's trust through practice, service, and training for nearly thirty years.

We are grateful for the service of all the Commissioners who served in 2024. I am pleased to warmly welcome our newest commissioner, Sandy Boisrond, Esq., who has recently joined our esteemed organization in 2024. We warmly welcome Ignacio Vazquez, Executive Director, and look forward to his stewardship and leadership, upholding Miami-Dade County's ethics and public trust with a thoughtful commitment to public service and advocacy. We are excited to have you both on board and look forward to the valuable contributions you will undoubtedly make to the commission and our community.



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As we transition into the new year, let us challenge the citizens of Miami-Dade County and beyond to reach new heights in ethical excellence.

Looking ahead, the COE is committed to several key goals:

1. **Enhancing Public Awareness:** We aim to increase public awareness about ethical practices and the importance of integrity in public service through comprehensive outreach and education programs.
2. **Strengthening Training Programs:** We will continue to develop and expand our training programs for public officials, employees, and the community to ensure a deep understanding of ethical standards and practices.
3. **Promoting Transparency:** We are dedicated to promoting transparency in government operations and decision-making processes, ensuring the public can access information and hold officials accountable.
4. **Fostering Community Engagement:** We will continue to encourage active participation in ethical discussions and initiatives, creating more inclusive and informed communities.
5. **Innovating Ethical Practices:** We will continue to explore and implement innovative approaches to ethics and public trust, leveraging technology and best practices to increase awareness and transparency of our agency practices and procedures.

As a call to action, I encourage every community member to participate actively in our mission. Attend our public meetings, engage in our training programs, and stay informed about the ethical standards that guide our public officials. Your involvement is crucial in fostering a culture of integrity and accountability. We can ensure that Miami-Dade County remains a beacon of ethical excellence. Let's work together to build a brighter, more ethical future for all.

On behalf of my fellow Commissioners and the Ethics Commission, I would like to express our appreciation for the privilege of serving the residents of Miami-Dade County. I wish you all a year filled with growth, wisdom, and peace, knowing that we contribute to a more ethical society.

Sincerely,

*Judith D. Bernier*



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IGNACIO J. VAZQUEZ, JR.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On September 3rd, 2024, just before the onset of the Miami-Dade County Fiscal Year 2023-2024, I began service as the fourth Executive Director for the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust.

During these initial stages as Executive Director, I witnessed our agency's devotion to meeting the mission of Miami-Dade County's Guardian of the Public Trust. The Commission is an inspiring place to serve, and I am honored to lead it into 2024-2025 and beyond.

My time in the private sector as a civil attorney and as a prosecutor in the state and federal courts gave me a great appreciation for the Commission's efforts to ensure

government and electoral integrity. Seeing our Commission and its staff work up close with true devotion to the agency's ideals has brought me great inspiration for the work ahead. Whether through our efforts to provide ethics training, advisory opinions, or enforcement actions to defend the public trust, the Ethics Commission is committed to providing dedicated service. We are enthused to honor our traditions of service while endeavoring to build upon our partnerships with Miami-Dade County's enforcement and support officials and, most importantly, the citizens we serve.

During the final days of the fiscal year 2023-2024 and entering the new fiscal year, I have been committed to putting in place, amongst many, expanded efforts, to meet the Commission's charge as Miami-Dade County's guardian of the public trust. In our short time together, our team has assumed the role of the County's financial and outside employment disclosure repository, developed partnerships to preserve public integrity, expanded our public engagement through new digital platforms, addressed changes to the Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, facilitated the process of filing complaints electronically, and furthered our training efforts to include mandated state ethics training for elected officials. All of these expansions have been made possible by the Commission's dedicated staff, who have taken on these added tasks while continuing to deliver excellence in the delivery of ethics opinions and code enforcement.

As we look to this new fiscal year, we remain committed to developing additional initiatives to promote accessibility, transparency, and education that advance public integrity in Miami-Dade County. As always, we are eager to continue working with our most critical partners, each of you, to elevate public integrity and ethics within Miami-Dade County.

Sincerely,

*Ignacio J. Vazquez, Jr.*

# Meet the COMMISSIONERS



**DR. JUDITH BERNIER**  
Chairperson



**WIFREDO GORT**  
Vice Chair

## Chairperson Bernier

Dr. Judith Bernier was appointed to the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust in May 2014 by Florida International University, Center for Labor Research and Studies. She is the Director of the Center for Labor Research and Studies and is a Teaching Professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Florida International University.

In her academic role, Dr. Bernier teaches courses in conflict management, mediation, education, diversity and inclusion, and employment and labor relations. Her publications and research interests encompass career development and mobility, diversity and inclusion, social equity, and leadership. She brings invaluable expertise in employment and labor relations, dispute resolution, and human resource management and development to the Commission on Ethics.

Beyond her service to Miami-Dade County, Dr. Bernier is a dedicated peer reviewer for academic journals in her field and a mentor to doctoral students and junior faculty. She has played significant roles in developing and implementing organizational and institutional initiatives, demonstrating her commitment to advancing her field.

Dr. Bernier's academic credentials include a Doctorate in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, an M.S. in Human Resource Development, a B.S. in Communication, and a Graduate Certificate in Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building from Florida International University. Additionally, she is a Supreme Court Certified County, Circuit, and Family Mediation Mediator.

Dr. Bernier's notable achievements include receiving the Excellence in Graduate Students Mentorship Award from Florida International University and being recognized for her contributions to diversity and inclusion initiatives. Her research has been published in academic journals, conference proceedings, an academic handbook, and she has presented her research at various national and international conferences.

Dr. Bernier's multifaceted expertise and dedication to public service make her an invaluable asset to the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust. Her contributions uphold the highest standards of integrity and public trust in the community.

## Vice Chair Gort

Wifredo "Willy" Gort is a longtime Miami-Dade County resident with almost two decades of municipal service, having been elected to the City of Miami Commission several times and acting as its mayor in 1996 after the passing of then City of Miami Mayor Stephen Clark. Mr. Gort has been an active member of his community for decades and has served on numerous boards and committees within the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County. He is a founding member and board member of the Latin Chamber of Commerce (CAMACOL), a former President of the Miami-Dade County League of Cities and has served on the boards of the Christian Community Service Agency, the East Little Havana Development Corp., the United Way, and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Gort is a graduate of both Miami-Dade Community College and Florida International University, holding a B.A. in Business Administration.



# Meet the COMMISSIONERS



**NELSON C. BELLIDO, ESQ.**

Commissioner



**DAVA J. TUNIS, ESQ.**

Commissioner

## Commissioner Bellido

Nelson C. Bellido was appointed to the Ethics Commission by then Chief Judge of the Eleventh Circuit, Joel Brown, in July 2010. Mr. Bellido is a managing partner in the Miami-based law firm ROIG Lawyers, a former adjunct professor of Business Law at Florida Memorial College, worked with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office from 1993 to 1997, was a Director of the Cuban American Bar Association, past president and director of the League of Prosecutors and has been serving on the Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition Inc.'s board of directors for the past eight years. Mr. Bellido received his Juris Doctor from the University of Florida College of Law and earned an undergraduate degree in Political Science and History with emphasis on Latin American History from Duke University.

## Commissioner Tunis

Commissioner Dava J. Tunis was appointed to serve on the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust by Chief Judge of the Eleventh Circuit, Nushin Sayfie, in 2023. Commissioner Tunis served as a judge in Miami-Dade County for over 20 years. She was appointed in 2000 to the County Court bench and elevated to the Circuit Court in 2005. She served the Miami-Dade County community in that judicial capacity through January 2021. Commissioner Tunis was an active and experienced trial judge, having tried over 150 jury trials and over 1,000 bench trials. She presided over numerous protracted and complex trials, including first-degree murder and death penalty cases. She has also handled cases involving domestic violence, civil family injunctions, juvenile matters and Florida Bar cases in which the conduct of lawyers and ethical rules are at issue.

Commissioner Tunis has served on the faculty teaching other judges in Florida's judicial educational programs for over 17 years. She was appointed and served for over 15 years as a Judicial Mentor to new judges. This appointment is made by Florida's highest court, The Supreme Court of Florida. Commissioner Tunis is a graduate of Colgate University and the University of Miami School of Law.

# Meet the COMMISSIONERS



**SANDY BOISROND, ESQ.**  
Commissioner

## Commissioner Boisrond

Commissioner Sandy Boisrond was appointed to the Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust by St. Thomas University Law School Dean, Tarlika Nuñez-Navarro, in 2024.

Sandy Boisrond is an Assistant Professor of Academic Success and Bar Preparation with eight years of experience as an estate planning attorney. Professor Boisrond initially joined St. Thomas University Benjamin L. Crump College of Law as an Adjunct Professor of Professional Responsibility. She has taught numerous courses as an Adjunct Instructor at the collegiate level including Criminal Justice, Ethics, Career Development, and Business Law. She also served as a Science Teacher at the secondary level with Broward County Public Schools.

Professor Boisrond is a licensed Florida attorney who has focused her areas of practice on wills, trusts, estate planning, guardianship, and probate. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biology from the University of Miami, earned a Master's Degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in Knowledge and Learning Management, from Walden University, and earned her Juris Doctorate degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School, with a concentration in General Practice, Solo and Small Firm Practice.

While in law school, Professor Boisrond was selected to serve as a Student Attorney for the Thomas M Cooley Law School Estate Planning Clinic, and she served as a judicial intern to the Honorable Michael Warren of the Oakland County Circuit Court. Following law school, she worked briefly for a Florida law firm providing estate and trusts services, and then she opened her own solo estate planning practice serving individuals and families in the areas of wills, trusts, advance directives, guardianship, and probate.

Professor Boisrond is currently an At Large Member of the Real Property, Probate and Trust Law (RPPTL) Section of the Florida Bar. She is an active member of the RPPTL Section, currently serving as Co-Vice Chair of the Law School Outreach Committee, and Member of the Legislative Update Committee. She serves on the Board of Directors as Secretary of Monarch Health Services out of Palm Beach County. She is also an Autism Advocate and is heavily involved in community education and outreach efforts to support autism families.

Professor Boisrond is the co-author of "Civility Wins: Find Your Peace While Taming the Beasts," a book that provides guidance surrounding issues related to civility, professionalism, and ethics in the legal profession. She is heavily engaged in promoting resources and professional development to support attorneys, judges, legal support staff, law students, and other business professionals and entrepreneurs.

2023-2024

# BUDGET/ STAFF

The FY 2023-24 Adopted Budget includes a transfer of \$130,000, as required under Ordinance 10-56, from the Office of the Clerk Lobbyist Trust Fund to support ethics training and conference expenditures including, but not limited to, educational materials and personnel expenditures.

## \$3.098

*million operating  
budget*

## 17

*total positions*



## 34 MUNICIPALITY JURISDICTION IN ADDITION TO COUNTY

The COE is funded for a staff of 17 full time positions including 6 attorneys, 5 investigators, and 6 community outreach and administrative and support staff team members.

Pursuant to County ordinance, the County is required to provide the Ethics Commission with financial support as part of the official County budget. It is noteworthy that while the agency has jurisdiction in the County, Jackson Health Systems, and all 34 municipalities, its annual budget is one of the smallest in all of County Service.

This fiscal year, the Board of County Commissioners approved an increase in the Commission on Ethics budget from \$2.956 million to \$3.098 million.



# SPECIAL PROJECTS, ORDINANCE, RULE AND POLICY REVISIONS



## Lobbyist Registration

Commission on Ethics (COE) staff worked with the Clerk of the Board to design, test and roll out a new lobbyist registration platform.



## New Repository Function

Commission on Ethics (COE) attorneys held many meetings with county departments (HR, Mayor's Office, Elections, OMB) to lobby for the outside employment/financial disclosure repository function and its continued transition to COE.



## Policy Revision

COE staff worked with various County departments to assist the departments with the development of mitigation plans to comply with changes in Section 2-11.1(c) regarding County employees receiving benefits for social services.



## Financial Disclosures

COE staff were extensively engaged in the review of potential non-compliant filers to assure compliance with dual state and county filing obligations. Staff also held many sessions with county board members and employees to explain their filing obligation, the issue of their non-compliance, and their removal from board positions as a result of their lack of compliance.



## Outside Employment Compliance

Throughout the fiscal year, staff conducted a review of all 104 County Employees with approved outside employment to ensure Outside Employment Statements were being filed. If enforcement was required, COE staff made all efforts to ensure these employees filed the required statement and got into compliance. After the passage of SB 7014/HB 1597/F.S. 112.324, the trajectory of the compliance review changed from possible future enforcement cases to compliance push only.





# Ethics Training & OUTREACH

Ethics Commission staff continued on-site and in-the-field training for elected officials, candidates, County and municipal advisory and quasi-judicial board members, and expanded their partnerships with municipal associations to provide additional and expanded training opportunities. Each training contact with a government, not-for-profit, or private educational entity, also serves the Commission's outreach charge by including not only ethics training but Commission on Ethics messaging.



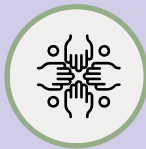
## October

City of Miami Quarterly Training Ethics Briefing  
MDCLC Best Practices Conference  
League of Cities 11th Annual Best Practices Conference



## October (cont'd)

SPD Selection Committee Training  
COE Ethics Film & Entertainment Advisory Board Briefing  
COE Ethics Advisory Board Briefing



## October - November

Ethical Governance Day  
Selection Committee Workshop training  
COE Advisory Board  
DVOB Executive Board & Committee Meeting



## November

Small Biz Enterprise Advisory Committee Training  
Village of Miami Shores Advisory Board Training  
Re-recording of Lobbyist Training Video  
Selection Committee Workshop Training



## November - December

Miami-Dade Living Wage Commission training  
Clean Campaign Class – Town of Surfside  
Procurement Academy  
Miami Carnival Board

# Ethics Training & OUTREACH



## December - January

SPD Selection Committee Training  
COE Advisory Board  
Financial Disclosure & Outside Employment Training  
Doral City Council Meeting Changes in Ethics Code



## February

Ethics Briefing for the MDPD Compliance Bureau  
Presentation for Delegation of African Gov't Officials  
Miami-Dade County League of Cities BOD Meeting  
St. Thomas College of Law's Career & Info Fair



## January

Ethics Briefing for Children's Trust Board Members  
Ethics Briefing for City of Hialeah Elected Officials  
Ethics Briefing for City of Miami Elected Officials  
Ethics Briefing for Miami Beach Elected Officials



## February

FIU Public Interest Fair  
Nova Southeastern University Public Interest Law Day  
SPD Selection Committee Training  
COE Advisory Board



## January

Procurement Academy  
Bi-Annual Community Council Briefing  
Miami-Dade County 5th Annual Procurement Expo  
Annual Procurement Expo



## March

North Miami Beach Clean Campaign Class  
FIU Panel: Ethical Considerations in Practice of Law  
Model City Educational Committee  
COGEL Webinar on Ethics in Gov't & Journalism



## January

We the People Mock Trial Competition  
COE Advisory Board  
Vendor Academy Training  
SPD Selection Committee Training



## March

COE Advisory Board  
Selection Committee Training  
Training for the Greater Miami Chapter of the  
National Institute of Governmental Purchasing



## January

St. Thomas Law's Clinical Information Session  
Training Session-Miami- Dade Sheriff Candidacy  
SBE Architecture & Engineering Board Training  
Ethics Briefing for Sheriff Candidates



## April - May

North Miami - Clean Campaign Class  
Surfside Ethics Training for Municipal Elected Officials  
City of North Miami Beach Government Executives  
J.L. CAHSD Community Action Agency Committee





Miami-Dade County Commission  
on Ethics & Public Trust

# Ethics Training & OUTREACH



## May

CAHSD NORTH Community Action Agency  
COE Advisory Board Training  
Youth Ethics Advisory Board Committee Training  
Selection Committee Workshop Training



## July - August

Miami GESE Retirement Trust Educational Event  
Ethics Training Miami Lakes  
Mandatory Public Records Training  
Employees of Department of Solid Waste



## May - June

West Miami Elected Officials Ethics Training  
Early Learning Coalition Training  
City of Miami Quarterly Training  
Procurement Academy



## August

Board Member Training with Commissioner Boisrond  
Public Records Training for Enforcement Staff  
COE Advisory Board Briefing  
SE Overtown Park West Redevelopment Training



## June

Financial Disclosure Training for Advisory Boards  
District 11- New Hires Ethics Training  
Homestead Gov't Executive Training (Two sessions)  
COE Monthly Advisory Board Training



## August (cont'd)

Mandatory Public Records Training (support staff)  
Selection Committee Workshop Training



## June - July

Bias in & out of the Courtroom at St. Thomas Law  
Selection Committee Workshop Training  
City of Miami Quarterly Ethics Briefing  
Vendor Academy Training



## September

Procurement Academy  
Bi-Annual Community Council Briefing  
Miami-Dade County 5th Annual Procurement Expo



## July

COE Monthly Advisory Board Training  
Clean Campaign Class  
Competitive Selection Committee Workshop July  
Clean Campaign Class NMB



## September (cont'd)

Selection Committee Workshop training  
COE Advisory Board Briefing  
Film & Entertainment Advisory Board Sunshine Law  
Committee Workshop Training



## ETHICS OPINIONS & GUIDANCE

The Ethics Commission's lawyers provided approximately 256 ethics opinions, including one formal opinion, during this past fiscal year to County and municipal elected officials, board members, employees, and persons that transact with local government including lobbyists and vendors.



# Highlighted Opinions

### INQ 24-86 **NEW ORDINANCE CHANGES ALLOWING MORE EMPLOYEES TO SEEK SOCIAL ASSISTANCE WITH APPROPRIATE MITIGATION**

A social worker working for a County department whose duties include administering a program for the department may apply for and contract, or otherwise do business, with the department to participate in the program so long as he and the department adhere to the department's conflict mitigation plan that screens him from participating in the processing or administration of his own application.

Additionally, his brother's employment by the department as a Lead Site Supervisor ensuring compliance with the requirements of a program that provides early childhood education and support services to low-income families, does not give rise to a prohibited conflict of interest because his brother does not administer or oversee the program.

### INQ 24-139 **COUNTY DEPARTMENT CANNOT ACCEPT GIFT THAT REQUIRED THE DEPARTMENT TO MATCH DONATION**

A County department cannot accept a donation offered with the requirement that the department both match the donation with County funds and that the department hire a specific contractor to use the donation and the County funds in the way directed by the donor because of the Ethics Code's restrictions on accepting gifts and on recommending a specified contractor.





# Highlighted Opinions

INQ  
24-37

## **MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT SEEKS GUIDANCE REGARDING PUBLIC MEETING PROCEDURES**

A municipalities procedure at public meetings to provide citizens with up to three minutes during “public comment” to address items within the body’s jurisdiction and then to additionally provide citizens with the opportunity to comment again during the “consent” agenda portion of the meeting for at least two minutes would be compliant with the rights afforded to public speakers in the Miami-Dade Citizens’ Bill of Rights.

INQ  
24-161

## **NO CONFLICT FOR COMMISSIONER SERVING AS A TRUSTEE FOR A UNIVERSITY**

A Councilman who also serves on the Board of Trustees for a university must recuse himself from any matter before the City Council that will directly or indirectly affect the university because he has an enumerated relationship with the university officer and/or fiduciary.

INQ  
24-168

## **CONE OF SILENCE REMAINS IN EFFECT FOR PARTIAL AWARDS**

A solicitation to retain four consultants or consultant teams to provide a County department with engineering design and related services for water and wastewater infrastructure remains subject to the Cone of Silence regardless of whether there has been a partial award to one or more consultant or consultant teams so long as any portion of the solicitation remains open.

INQ  
24-64

## **INDIVIDUALS NEGOTIATING COUNTY DEPARTMENT BILLS ON BEHALF OF CUSTOMERS IS LOBBYING ACTIVITY**

Individuals who call a County department on behalf of customers to try to persuade that department personnel to lower the customers’ water and sewer bills are lobbying and required to register. Additionally, Miami-Dade County employees have a duty of diligence to ensure that lobbyists they come in contact with are registered.

# ENFORCEMENT

The Commission has been significantly engaged during the fiscal year with 70 investigations handled, 51 complaints, and responding to 447 hotline, mailbox, or general inquiry responses. Additionally, the unit’s investigators, Advocate, and assisting Staff Attorneys have partnered with the State Attorney’s Office and the Office of the Inspector General on matters that originated with Commission on Ethics preliminary and formal investigations.



# Highlighted Cases

Happenings this past fiscal year



## **C 24-15-05**

FORMER MANAGER OF CULTURAL CENTER  
STIPULATES TO PROBABLE CAUSE

A former manager of a city funded Cultural Center stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause and entered into a settlement agreement for violating the Exploitation of Official Position Prohibited and Gifts sections of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics ordinance. As alleged in the complaint, a COE investigation revealed that this individual used her official position as the manager of the cultural center to secure a special privilege for herself and/or her business by conducting sales of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages at the center; and she solicited and accepted monetary payments from a city vendor.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, the former manager agreed to pay a total fine of \$ 1,000 and accept a Letter of Reprimand.



## **C 24-05-02**

PROBABLE CAUSE FOUND IN COMPLAINT  
INVOLVING COUNCILWOMAN

The Ethics Commission found Probable Cause in a complaint filed against a municipal Councilwoman. The complaint alleged and a subsequent COE investigation showed that the Councilwoman exploited her official position by using her City's letterhead and resources to mail a greeting letter to business owners in the City encouraging them to sign up for a chamber of commerce entity for which she served as Chief Executive Officer, in violation of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics ordinance



## **C 23-10-02**

MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER STIPULATES  
TO PROBABLE CAUSE

A South Florida Commissioner stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause and entered into a settlement agreement for violating the Exploitation of Official Position section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance when he used his City issued purchase card and city funds to pay for expenses related to his attendance at a partisan event.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, the Commissioner agreed to pay a total fine of \$500, restitution to the municipality in the amount of \$1,345.47, and accept a Letter of Instruction.

# Highlighted Cases

Happenings this past fiscal year



## **C 23-53-11**

PROBABLE CAUSE FOUND IN COMPLAINT  
INVOLVING FORMER MUNICIPAL MAYOR

The Ethics Commission found Probable Cause in a complaint filed against a former municipal mayor. The complaint alleged that the former mayor violated the Exploitation of Official Position Prohibited section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics ordinance.

A COE investigation revealed that during a Commission meeting, the former mayor exploited his official position while making a power point presentation where he engaged in political campaign speech and/or overt political advocacy.

After initially requesting a public hearing regarding the matter, the former mayor subsequently entered into a settlement agreement the terms of which included that he pay a \$500 fine and receive a Letter of Instruction.



## **C 24-20-06**

FORMER MIAMI PORT DIRECTOR  
STIPULATES TO PROBABLE CAUSE

A former Port Director and Chief Executive Officer at a sea port, stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause and entered into a settlement agreement for violating the Continuing Application After County Service section of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance, more commonly known as the Two-Year Rule. The former director, who was hired by a popular cruise line company as a Senior Vice President after separating from County employment, attended private virtual meetings between the port's staff members and staff members from his new employer that were convened, in part, to discuss and negotiate the Terminal Transfer Rider, an agreement that was ultimately adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. The former port director's presence at these meetings violated the Two-Year Rule, which limits a former County employee's ability to use his former public position and contacts to lobby.

Under the terms of the settlement agreement, the former port director agreed to pay a fine in the amount of \$500, and was issued a Letter of Instruction.



# Highlighted Cases

Happenings this past fiscal year



## C 24-02-01

FIRE RESCUE LIEUTENANT STIPULATES TO  
PROBABLE CAUSE FINDING

A Fire Rescue Lieutenant stipulated to a finding of Probable Cause and entered into a settlement agreement for violating the Exploitation of Official Position, Conflicting Employment, and the Prohibition of Outside Employment sections of the Miami-Dade County Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance.

Following a joint investigation by the Commission on Ethics and the Miami-Dade Office of the Inspector General, the Public Advocate filed a complaint against the lieutenant, alleging that he intentionally used his official position on four different occasions at the department to purchase thousands of dollars in equipment from a company where he served as president. Additionally, the complaint alleged that the lieutenant's outside employment as president of the company conflicted with his County employment and impaired his independence of judgement in the performance of his public duties when he repeatedly caused his fire department to purchase products from his company.

Furthermore, the complaint alleged that the lieutenant failed to file, under oath, an annual report indicating the source of his outside employment and any amounts or type of money or other consideration received as required by the Ethics Code. Under the terms of the settlement agreement, the lieutenant was ordered to pay a fine of \$13,000, investigative costs of \$3,500, and was issued a Letter of Reprimand.

## Vision and Mission

# MEET *the* TEAM



Ignacio Vazquez  
Executive Director



Loressa Felix  
General Counsel



Radia Turay  
Advocate



Nolen "Drew" Bunker  
Staff Attorney



Etta Akoni  
Staff Attorney



Leonardo Mendoza  
Public Information Officer



Robert Thompson  
Outreach Coordinator



Rodzandra Sanchez  
Administrative Officer



Rachelle Ross  
Commission Clerk



Rodney Vega  
Lead Investigator



Karl Ross  
Investigator / Forensic Accountant



Nilda Olmo  
Investigator



Stephanie Vega-Saraf  
Investigator



Sandrene Dukes  
Investigator



Onaivys Diaz  
Executive Assistant



Charmaine Ruiz  
Paralegal

**HAVE YOU SEEN UNETHICAL  
CONDUCT IN OUR GOVERNMENT?**

REPORT AN ETHICS  
**VIOLATION**

HOTLINE: 786-314-9560  
EMAIL: [ETHICS@MIAMIDADE.GOV](mailto:ETHICS@MIAMIDADE.GOV)  
WEB: [ETHICS.MIAMIDADE.GOV](http://ETHICS.MIAMIDADE.GOV)



2023-2024 Annual Report

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NEWS & UPDATES



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