News Release

For Immediate Release   June 5, 2014
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Summary of Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Meeting Held on June 5, 2014

The Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE) took the following actions at its monthly public meeting held on June 5, 2014.

Three (3) advisory opinions were approved. The full opinions are published and available at: http://www.palmbeachcountyethics.com/opinions.htm

RQO 14-010: The vice mayor of the city of Pahokee asked if the funds solicited by her for a non-profit organization's yearly luncheon needs to be reported pursuant to the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.
The COE opined as follows: As an elected official, the vice mayor is identified by state law as a state reporting individual for purposes of gift reporting. As a state reporting individual, she is required to comply with the gift reporting requirements as contained within state law. However, under the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics, any solicitation must be disclosed. The solicitation form must contain the name of the nonprofit organization, the event for which the funds were solicited, the name of any person or entity that was contacted, and the amount of funds solicited. The solicitation form must be filed with the COE within 30 days after the event or if it is not related to an event then within 30 days from the date of the solicitation.

RQO 14-011: An employee of Palm Beach County Fire Rescue asked if a prohibited conflict of interest is created if his outside business bids for and is awarded a contract with Palm Beach County, his public employer.
The COE opined as follows: There are two potential exceptions where the Fire Rescue employee could enter into a contract with the county without violating the code's contractual relationship prohibition. Section 2-443(e)(1) provides an exception for contracts entered into under a process of sealed, competitive bidding, where his outside business is the lowest bidder, provided that he has not participated in the bid specifications or determination of the lowest bidder, has not used his position in any way to influence the award, and has filed a statement with the Supervisor of Elections and the COE disclosing the nature of his interest in the business prior to submitting the bid. Section 2-443(e)(4) also provides an exception when the total amount of his outside business's contracts or transactions with the county does not exceed $500, in the aggregate, then he is not prohibited from contracting with the county. As long as his bid submission comports with one of these exceptions, he is not prohibited from applying and accepting bids awarded.

RQO 14-012: A commissioner for the city of South Bay asked if it would be a prohibited conflict of interest for him to vote on matters involving Okeelanta Corporation, since that corporation was his former employer and contributed toward a pension plan which currently pays him retirement benefits.
The COE opined as follows: The commissioner is not prohibited from voting on matters involving Okeelanta Corporation, which may come before the City Commission, as long as the matters do not involve issues that would affect his pension benefits and result in a special financial benefit to him. He would only be prohibited from voting on a matter involving Okeelanta Corporation if it would result in a special financial benefit to him.

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

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