



Honesty - Integrity - Character

**Palm Beach County
Commission on Ethics**
The Historic 1916 Courthouse
300 N. Dixie Hwy, Suite 450
West Palm Beach, FL 33401
561.355.1915
FAX: 561.355.1904
Hotline: 877.766.5920

E-mail:

ethics@palmbeachcountvethics.com

Commissioners

Michael S. Kridel, Chair
Clevis Headley, Vice Chair
Michael F. Loffredo
Judy M. Pierman
Sarah L. Shullman

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Gina A. Levesque

Chief Investigator

Anthony C. Bennett

Investigator

Abigail Irizarry

News Release

For Immediate Release

Contact:

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Mark E. Bannon, Executive Director
(561) 355-1937

Summary of Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Meeting Held on July 7, 2016

The Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE) took the following actions at its monthly public meeting held on July 7, 2016.

One complaint was heard in executive session. The complete file is published on the COE website at: <http://www.palmbeachcountvethics.com/complaints.htm>.

C15-026: Respondent and advocate entered into a negotiated settlement which stipulated that there was probable cause to believe that respondent violated the Code of Ethics when her outside business entered into a contract with her public employer but that the violation was unintentional and the public interest would not be served by proceeding further. The COE approved the negotiated settlement, issued a Letter of Instruction, and dismissed the case.

Three advisory opinions were discussed and approved. The full opinions are published and available at: <http://www.palmbeachcountvethics.com/opinions.htm>

RQO 16-016: A member of the Palm Beach County Fair Housing/Equal Employment Opportunity Board asked if he or a member of his law firm may represent a customer or client of his law firm when the client has a matter that may come before his board.

The COE opined as follows: The board member may not represent the client before his board or take part in any presentation or discussion with his fellow members of the board regarding this client's case. The board member must also abstain from any vote on the matter. However, the code does not prohibit him from representing the client prior to the matter coming before the board, but he must be acting in his professional capacity as an attorney as opposed to his official capacity as a board member. Additionally, other members of the law firm (his outside business) are not prohibited from representing the client's interest in this matter.

RQO 16-017: A Palm Beach County employee asked if the code prohibits county employees at the Gardens Branch of the Palm Beach County Library System from accepting complimentary chair massages from a local business as a general gesture of appreciation for their service.

The COE opined as follows: The county employees are not prohibited from accepting the complimentary chair massages because the gift is general in nature and not being provided because of the performance or non-performance of an official act or legal duty or as a quid pro quo given to the donor in exchange for the gift, and the donor is not a vendor, lobbyist, or principal or employer of a lobbyist of the county. If the value of the chair massage exceeds \$100, the gift must be reported as required by the code.

RQO 16-018: A Palm Beach County employee asked if his outside business which offers planning, zoning, and real estate services creates a prohibited conflict of interest where he may represent clients at municipal or county commission, council, or advisory board meetings.

The COE opined as follows: There is no per se prohibited conflict of interest as long as he does not represent a company or individual receiving financing from any funding program offered by Palm Beach County which his department administers or oversees. However, he must register as a lobbyist prior to representing a client before an advisory board, council, or commission.

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

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