



Honesty - Integrity - Character

Palm Beach County

Commission on Ethics

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Commissioners

Peter L. Cruise
Michael H. Kugler
Rodney G. Romano
Kristin A. Vara-Garcia
Vacant

Executive Director

Christie Kelley

General Counsel

Rhonda Giger

Intake & Compliance Manager

Gina A. Levesque

Education & Communications Manager

S. Lizabeth Martin

Investigator

Mark A. Higgs

Investigator

Abigail Irizarry

Agenda

March 5, 2026 – 1:30 p.m.

Governmental Center,
301 North Olive Avenue, 6th Floor
Commissioners Chambers

Meeting will begin at 1:30pm
Executive Session will begin at 1:40pm
Regular Agenda will resume immediately
following the Executive Session

- I. Call to Order by Executive Director
- II. Introductory Remarks
- III. Swearing-in ceremony by Judge Danielle Sherriff
 - a. Rodney G. Romano-Appointed by the Palm Beach County League of Cities
 - b. Peter L. Cruise-Appointed by the president of FAU
 - c. Alan I. Blass-Appointed by Palm Beach Chapter of Association of Certified Fraud Examiners
- IV. Roll Call
- V. Nomination and election of new Chairperson (to begin presiding over meeting immediately upon election)
- VI. Nomination and election of new Vice Chairperson
- VII. Approval of Minutes from February 5, 2026.
- VIII. Executive Session C25-014
- IX. Executive Director Comments
- X. Commission Comments
- XI. Public Comments
- XII. 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 (COE)
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA**

FEBRUARY 5, 2026

**THURSDAY
1:30 P.M.**

**COMMISSION CHAMBERS
WEISMAN GOVERNMENTAL CENTER**

MEMBERS:

Michael S. Kridel, Chair
Peter L. Cruise, Vice Chair
Michael H. Kugler
Rodney G. Romano
Kristin A. Vara-Garcia

COMMISSION ON ETHICS STAFF PRESENT:

Rhonda Giger, COE General Counsel
Abigail Irizarry, COE Investigator II
Mark Higgs, COE Investigator II,
Christie E. Kelley, COE Director III
S. Lizabeth Martin, COE Communication and Education Manager

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT & COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE STAFF PRESENT:

Danielle Freeman, Deputy Clerk

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The commissioners recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Roll Call

All members were present.

IV. Introductory Remarks

No comments were made.

V. Approval of Minutes from January 8, 2026

MOTION to approve the minutes. Motion by Vice Chair Cruise, seconded by Commissioner Kugler, and carried 5-0.

VI. Processed Advisory Opinions (Consent Agenda)

- a. RQO 26-004
- b. RQO 26-005

MOTION to approve the consent agenda. Motion by Commissioner Kugler, seconded by Commissioner Vara-Garcia, and carried 5-0.

VII. Items pulled from Consent Agenda

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

VIII. Executive Session – C25-011

RECESS

At 1:32 p.m., the chair declared the meeting recessed for executive session.

RECONVENE

At 1:52 p.m., the meeting reconvened with all members present.

In re: Matthew Zeller

C25-011

Commissioner Kugler read the following final order into the record:

Complainant, Chief Joseph DeGiulio, filed the above referenced complaint alleging that Respondent, Matthew Zeller, Deputy Chief with the City of Boynton Beach Police Department, may have used his position for personal gain, in violation of Section 2-443(a), Misuse of public office or employment, of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

Pursuant to Section 2-258(a) of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Ordinance, the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics is empowered to enforce the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.¹ On February 5, 2026, the Commission conducted a probable cause hearing. After reviewing the Report of Investigation and the Probable Cause Recommendation and listening to a statement from the Advocate and Respondent, the Commission concluded that probable cause did not exist because there was no evidence that Respondent took any action that violated the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

Therefore it is:

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the complaint against Respondent, Matthew Zeller, is hereby DISMISSED.

DONE AND ORDERED by the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics in public session on February 5, 2026.

VII. Executive Director Comments

Ms. Kelley reported the following updates:

1.

Ms. Giger had attended the Government Ethics and Ethics in Government seminar and provided positive feedback.

2.

Staff conducted mini ethics training for the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) on gift law and how to research if someone was a vendor or lobbyist.

3.

Staff had attended an outreach event at Florida Atlantic University.

4.

Commissioner Powell will be presenting a proclamation declaring March as Ethics Awareness Month at the March 3rd BCC meeting.

5.

Various ethics outreach events will be held throughout the month of March in conjunction with the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

6.

It was announced that this would be Chair Kridel's last meeting. He served on the commission for 12 years. He will attend the April meeting where he will be presented with a farewell gift.

(CLERK'S NOTE: Item 11 was taken up at this time.)

XI. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

(CLERK'S NOTE: The order of the agenda was restored at this time.)

VIII. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Romano expressed his gratitude for serving with Chair Kridel on the commission.

Vice Chair Cruise echoed Commissioner Romano's sentiments.

XII. Adjournment

Chair Kridel wished everyone happy holidays.

At 1:57 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:

Chair/Vice Chair