

**OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES  
OF THE  
PALM BEACH COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS (COE)  
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**May 5, 2022**

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

**COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
WEISMAN GOVERNMENTAL CENTER**

**MEMBERS:**

Peter L. Cruise  
Carol E. A. DeGraffenreidt  
Michael H. Kugler, Vice Chair  
Rodney G. Romano, Chair

**STAFF:**

Christie E. Kelley, COE Director III  
Gina A. Levesque, COE Intake and Compliance Manager  
Mark A. Higgs, COE Investigator II  
Abigail Irizarry, COE Investigator II

**ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:**

Danielle Freeman, Deputy Clerk, Clerk of the Circuit Court & Comptroller's Office  
Jillian Zalewska, Senior Board Meetings Specialist, Clerk's Office

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**II. ROLL CALL**

**Present** Chair Rodney Romano, Vice Chair Michael Kugler, and  
Commissioner Peter Cruise

**Absent** Commissioner Carol DeGraffenreidt

**III. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

There were no introductory remarks.

**MOTION to recess for the executive session. Motion by Commissioner Cruise, seconded by Vice Chair Kugler, and carried 3-0.**

COE Director III Christie E. Kelley introduced Rhonda Giger, who was scheduled to begin serving as COE general counsel on Monday, May 9, 2022.

**RECESS**

**At 1:31 p.m., the chair declared the meeting recessed for an executive session.**

**RECONVENE**

**At 2:12 p.m., the meeting reconvened with Chair Romano, Vice Chair Kugler, and Commissioner Cruise present.**

**IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION C22-001**

Vice Chair Kugler read the following into the record regarding Palm Beach County COE, *In Re: Shirley Johnson*, Public Report and Final Order of Dismissal:

Complainant, Charles G. Halberg, filed the above referenced complaint on December 20, 2021, alleging Respondent, Shirley Johnson, violated §2-443(b), Corrupt misuse of official position, of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics by using her position on the City of Delray Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to attempt to have the approval of funding for Complainant's client contingent on Complainant ceasing all criticism of the CRA online.

Pursuant to §2-258(a)1 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. On May 5, 2022, the Commission conducted a hearing and reviewed the Report of Investigation, the Probable Cause Recommendation, and the Negotiated Settlement Agreement submitted by the COE Advocate and Respondent. After an oral statement by the Advocate, Respondent, and Respondent's counsel, the Commission issued a Letter of Instruction pursuant to Section 2-260.3 of the Commission on Ethics Ordinance after determining that the violation was unintentional, inadvertent, or insubstantial.

Therefore it is:

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the complaint against Respondent, Shirley Johnson, is hereby DISMISSED and a Letter of Instruction is issued.

DONE AND ORDERED by the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics in public session on May 5, 2022.

By: Rodney G. Romano, Chair

**V. PROCESSED ADVISORY OPINIONS (CONSENT AGENDA)**

- a. **RQO 22-005**
- b. **RQO 22-007**

**VI. ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA**

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

**MOTION to approve the consent agenda as published. Motion by Commissioner Cruise, seconded by Vice Chair Kugler, and carried 3-0.**

**VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMENTS**

The following items were discussed:

- A. Ms. Kelley had a meeting with County Administrator Verdenia Baker and the Office of Financial Management & Budget (OFMB) team to discuss the COE request for an education position to be included in the annual budget for fiscal year 2023. The COE's strategic plan was discussed and was found to be in alignment with the County's goals and strategic priorities. Ms. Kelley said that a decision on funding the position would be made once Ms. Baker had reviewed all budget requests and evaluated the needs of the County.
- B. On Wednesday, April 13, 2022, the Ordinance Review Committee had approved the COE's suggested changes to the language of the COE ordinance regarding the appointing entities. On Tuesday, May 3, 2022, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) had voted to approve the preliminary reading of the changes to the COE ordinance. Public hearing for the ordinance changes was scheduled for May 17, 2022, and the COE hoped to have the new ordinance go into effect on June 1, 2022.
- C. Investigator Abigail Irizarry had been conducting code of ethics compliance training reviews in the municipalities. Ms. Kelley congratulated the Village of Wellington and the Village of Royal Palm Beach for 100 percent compliance in the training of all employees and elected or appointed officials; the City of Atlantis for 100 percent compliance by all employees; and the City of Belle Glade and the City of Boca Raton for 100 percent compliance by all of their elected and appointed officials.
- D. Ms. Kelley thanked the COE Intake and Compliance Manager Gina Levesque for ensuring that the prior month's COE meeting had proceeded smoothly when Ms. Levesque had been the only staff member to attend.

**VIII. COMMISSION COMMENTS**

There were no commissioner comments.

**IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS**


There were no public comments.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION to adjourn. Motion by Vice Chair Kugler, seconded by Commissioner Cruise, and carried 3-0.**

**At 2:17 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.**

APPROVED:

  
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Chair/Vice Chair