

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

JANUARY 11, 2024

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

**COMMISSION CHAMBERS
WEISMAN GOVERNMENTAL CENTER**

MEMBERS:

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

COUNTY STAFF PRESENT:

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

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

Danielle Freeman, Deputy Clerk
Jillian Zalewska, Deputy Clerk

I. Call to Order

The chair called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Kugler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Roll Call

Present: Chair Michael H. Kugler, Vice Chair Vara-Garcia, and Commissioner Michael S. Kridel

Absent: Commissioner Peter L. Cruise and Commissioner Rodney G. Romano

IV. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

No remarks were made.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 14, 2023

MOTION to approve the December 14, 2023, meeting minutes. Motion by Vice Chair Vara-Garcia, seconded by Commissioner Kridel, and carried 3-0.

VI. PROCESSED ADVISORY OPINIONS (CONSENT AGENDA)

a. RQO 23-030

b. RQO 24-001

MOTION to approve the consent agenda. Motion by Vice Chair Vara-Garcia, seconded by Commissioner Kridel, and carried 3-0.

VII. ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

VIII. 2023 ANNUAL REPORT PRESENTATION

Ms. Kelley gave a brief overview of the 2023 Annual Report, that included a review of the COE mission, customer satisfaction surveys, plans to update the COE website, and upcoming projects for 2024.

A discussion ensued between Commissioner Kridel and Ms. Kelley regarding details of the annual report.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION RE: C23-032

RECESS

At 1:46 p.m., the chair declared the meeting recessed for an executive session.

RECONVENE

At 2:20 p.m., the meeting reconvened with Chair Kugler, Vice Chair Vara-Garcia, and Commissioner Kridel present.

Vice Chair Vara-Garcia read the final order for the record.

RE: C23-032

Christie Kelley, Executive Director of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE), filed the above-referenced complaint against Respondent, Carolyn Cassidy, a Commissioner for the Town of Ocean Ridge, alleging that Respondent used or attempted to use her position in a manner that may have resulted in a special financial benefit to herself or her outside business in violation of Section 2-443(a) of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

Pursuant to Sec. 2-258(a)1 of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Ordinance, the COE is empowered to enforce the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

In lieu of a probable cause hearing, the COE advocate recommended the issuance of a letter of instruction and a dismissal of the complaint. This recommendation is based on the Respondent's self-reporting of the incident and the facts elicited in the investigation.

Pursuant to Commission on Ethics Ordinance Sec. 2-260.3(b), Dismissal of complaints, the complaint may be dismissed and a letter of instruction issued at this stage of the proceedings if the Commission finds that the violation was inadvertent, unintentional, or insubstantial.

Therefore it is:

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that the complaint against Respondent, Carolyn Cassidy, is hereby **DISMISSED** and a Letter of Instruction is issued.

DONE AND ORDERED by the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics public session on this 11th day of January, 2024.

X. Executive Director Comments

Ms. Kelley made the following comments:

1.

On Tuesday, January 23, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. there would be a "meet and greet" with the committee to answer any questions and the event was open to the public.

2.

Ms. Kelley reminded everyone to save the date for the Regional High School Ethics Bowl on Saturday, January 27, 2024.

XI. Commission Comments

Chair Kugler requested information from Ms. Kelley regarding the permissibility of using one's official title in advertisements, to which Ms. Kelley responded it varied from case to case.

XII. Public Comment

No comments were made.

XIII. Adjournment

At 2:24 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:


Chair/Vice Chair