

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

**MAY 2, 2024**

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

**COMMISSION CHAMBERS  
WEISMAN GOVERNMENTAL CENTER**

**MEMBERS:**

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

**COMMISSION ON ETHICS STAFF PRESENT:**

Rhonda Giger, General Counsel  
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:**

Chayanne Munet, Deputy Clerk

**I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Vice Chair Kridel led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. Roll Call**

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

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

**IV. Introductory Remarks**

No remarks were made.

**V. Approval of Minutes from April 4, 2024**

**MOTION to approve the April 4, 2024, minutes. Motion Commissioner Kridel, seconded by Commissioner Kugler, and carried 3-0.**

**VI. Executive Session for C24-006**

**RECESS**

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

**RECONVENE**

**At 1:52 p.m., the meeting reconvened with Chair Vara-Garcia, Vice Chair Kridel, and Commissioner Kugler present.**

Vice Chair Kridel read the final order for the record:

***RE: C24-006***

Christie Kelley, Executive Director of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE), filed the above-captioned complaint against Sara Baxter, (Respondent) alleging that Respondent, a Commissioner for Palm Beach County accepted a gift valued over \$100 and failed to properly report the gift to the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE) in violation of Section 2-444-(f)1 of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

Pursuant to Sec. 2-258(a) 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 filing of a gift form to the State Commission on Ethics and the facts elicited on 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 any stage of the proceedings if the Commission finds that the violation was inadvertent, unintentional, or insubstantial.

Therefore it is:

**ORDER AND ADJUDGED** that the complaint against Respondent, Sara Baxter, 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 this 2nd day of May, 2024.

**VII. Processed Advisory Opinions (Consent Agenda)**

**a. RQO 24-005**

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

**VIII. Items Pulled from Consent Agenda**

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

**IX. Executive Director Comments**

1. Ms. Kelley provided an update on the ethics trainings that had been conducted at various municipalities.
2. Ms. Kelley discussed the work that was being done with the City of Westlake regarding the renewal of the interlocal agreement.

**X. Commission Comments**

Chair Vara-Garcia commended S. Lizabeth Martin and staff for the training they had recently provided.

**XI. Public Comments**

Risa McCarragher expressed concerns regarding complaints that had been submitted to the BCC and potential conflicts of interest.

**XII. Adjournment**

**At 1:58 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.**

APPROVED:



Chair/Vice Chair