

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

AUGUST 1, 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:

Jillian Zalewska, Deputy Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioner Kugler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

All members were present.

IV. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

There were no introductory remarks.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JULY 11, 2024

MOTION to approve the July 11, 2024, minutes. Motion by Commissioner Kugler, seconded by Commissioner Cruise, and carried 5-0.

VI. Executive Session for C23-007

RECESS

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

RECONVENE

At 1:53 p.m., the meeting reconvened with all members present.

Vice Chair Kridel read the public report and final order into the record:

In re Todd Bucci, Case C24-001:

Christie Kelley, Executive Director of the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE), filed the above-referenced complaint alleging Respondent, Todd Bucci, an employee of Palm Beach County, violated Sec. 2-444(e), *Gift law*, of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics by accepting a cash tip after performing a specific service contemplated by his employment duties.

Pursuant to Sec. 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. In lieu of a probable cause hearing, Respondent stipulated to Probable Cause, and a negotiated settlement agreement, including a Letter of Reprimand, was submitted to the Commission for approval. Respondent stipulated to the facts and circumstances as contained in the Letter of Reprimand. According to the negotiated settlement and based on the facts as set forth in the Letter of Reprimand, Respondent admitted to violating Sec. 2-444(e) of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics and agreed to accept a Letter of Reprimand and to a finding that the violation was intentional. The Commission accepted the conditions of the negotiated settlement.

Pursuant to Commission on Ethics Ordinance Sec. 2-260.1, *Public hearing procedures*, the Commission found that there was clear and convincing evidence contained within the record to support a finding that the violation was intentional and that Respondent has acknowledged that his actions violated the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

Therefore it is:

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED that this matter is concluded upon the issuance of a LETTER OF REPRIMAND.

DONE AND ORDERED by the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics in executive session on this 1st day of August, 2024.

VII. PROCESSED ADVISORY OPINIONS (CONSENT AGENDA)

a. RQO-24-011

b. RQO-24-012

MOTION to approve the consent agenda. Motion by Commissioner Romano, seconded by Commissioner Cruise, and carried 5-0.

VIII. ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

IX. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Ms. Kelley stated the following:

1.

During the month of July, staff provided in-person ethics trainings for employees of the City of Boynton Beach and the Town of Juno Beach and for the City of Boynton Beach commissioners.

2.

Staff attended municipal meetings in Boynton Beach and Ocean Ridge and would be attending that evening's municipal meeting in Palm Beach Gardens.

3.

COE staff was in the process of updating the office's publications and promotional materials.

X. COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Romano discussed a new statute that granted immunity to wrongdoers unless a complaint was filed by a member of the public. He inquired if, in the event that additional instances of wrongdoing were uncovered during the investigation, but the original complaint was determined to be unfounded, the complaint would be considered self-initiated or would still be categorized as a citizen complaint.

Ms. Giger stated that staff had not yet established a procedure in response to the statute but had determined that no self-initiated complaints would be filed.

Ms. Kelley explained that the author of the bill had said that the COE would be authorized to file complaints if additional violations were identified during an investigation of a sworn complaint. She also stated that a procedure had not been established.

XI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

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

APPROVED:


Chair/Vice Chair