

**OFFICIAL MEETING MINUTES
OF THE
PALM BEACH COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS (COE)
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA
MARCH 5, 2026**

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

**WEISMAN GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
COMMISSION CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS:

Rodney G. Romano, Chair
Alan I. Blass, Vice Chair
Peter L. Cruise
Michael H. Kugler
Kristin A. Vara-Garcia

COMMISSION ON ETHICS STAFF PRESENT

Rhonda Giger, COE General Counsel
Mark Higgs, COE Investigator II
Abigail Irizarry, COE Investigator II
Christie E. Kelley, COE Director III

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

Karla Perez, Deputy Clerk

I. Call to Order by Executive Director

Ms. Kelley called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

II. Introductory Remarks

No comments were made.

III. Swearing-in ceremony by Judge Danielle Sherriff

Judge Danielle Sherriff performed the swearing-in.

- 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

All members were present.

V. Nomination and election of new Chairperson (to begin presiding over meeting immediately upon election)

Ms. Kelley opened the floor for the nomination of chairperson.

Commissioner Vara-Garcia nominated Commissioner Romano as chair, and Commissioner Kugler seconded the nomination.

Commissioner Romano accepted the nomination of chairperson.

No other nominations were made.

Commissioner Romano was appointed as chair for the term of one year.

Ms. Kelley passed the gavel to Chair Romano.

VI. Nomination and election of new Vice Chairperson

Chair Romano opened the floor for nominations of vice chairperson.

Commissioner Kugler nominated Commissioner Blass as vice chair, and Commissioner Vara-Garcia seconded the nomination.

No other nominations were made.

Commissioner Blass was appointed as vice chair for a term of one year.

VII. Approval of Minutes from February 5, 2026.

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

VIII. Executive Session C25-014

RECESS

At 1:38 p.m., the chair declared the meeting recessed for the executive session.

RECONVENE

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

In re: Leondrae Camel

C25-014

Vice Chair Blass read the following final order into the record:

Complainant, Barbara King, filed the above referenced complaint alleging that Respondent, Leondrae Camel, City Manager of the City of South Bay, 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 March 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, Leondrae Camel, is hereby DISMISSED.

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

IX. Executive Director Comments

Ms. Kelley reported the following updates:

1.

Staff attended the Junior Achievement event at Dr. Joaquin Garcia High School.

2.

Staff participated in the Ethical Governance Day at Boynton Beach High School and hosted a Senior Social Event at the West Boca Branch Library.

3.

Staff had resumed attending municipality meetings and providing ethics training courses.

4.

The following took place on Tuesday, March 3, 2026:

- Commissioner Powell presented a proclamation declaring March as Ethics Awareness Month in Palm Beach County.
- The City of Lake Worth Beach issued a similar proclamation at its council meeting, and the City of Palm Beach Gardens would be issuing a proclamation tonight.
- Staff hosted a joint meet-and-greet event with the Office of Inspector General at the Governmental Center Courtyard.

5.

It was announced that the COE Review Committee met yesterday to discuss the following items:

- the proposed changes to the COE ordinance to ensure that the COE ordinance followed Florida Statutes;
- the elimination of local ethics agencies' ability to self-initiate complaints;
- a process to recover costs and fees for frivolous complaints; and
- the presentation to the BCC for review and approval.

Ms. Kelley thanked David Baker, Clevis Headley, Leondrae Camel, Michael Napleton, Keith Davis, and David Behar for volunteering their time to be a part of the COE Review Committee. She also welcomed Florida Atlantic University intern Kev Simpson, who was serving as the community engagement ambassador.

X. Commission Comments

Commissioner Cruise welcomed Vice Chair Blass to the committee.

Vice Chair Blass stated that he was honored to be a part of the committee, and he thanked his fellow commissioners for the opportunity.

XI. Public Comments

No comments were provided.

XII. Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn. Motion by Commissioner Vara-Garcia, seconded by Commissioner Kugler, and carried 5-0.

At 2:07 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:



Chair/Vice Chair