

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

APRIL 16, 2026

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

**COMMISSION CHAMBERS
WEISMAN GOVERNMENTAL CENTER**

MEMBERS:

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

COMMISSION ON ETHICS STAFF PRESENT:

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

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

Danielle Freeman, Deputy Clerk
Samantha Giarratana, Board Meetings Specialist

ALSO PRESENT:

Michael S. Kridel

I. Call to Order

The vice chair called the meeting to order at 1:38 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The commissioners recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Roll Call

Present: Vice Chair Blass, Commissioner Cruise, and Commissioner Kugler

Absent: Chair Romano and Commissioner Vara-Garcia

IV. Introductory Remarks

No introductory remarks were made.

V. Approval of Minutes from March 5, 2026

MOTION to approve the minutes. Motion by Commissioner Kugler, seconded by Commissioner Cruise, and carried 3-0.

VI. Presentation to Former Commissioner Michael S. Kridel

Ms. Kelley presented Former Commissioner Michael S. Kridel with a gift and expressed appreciation for his service on the COE.

Former Commissioner Kridel shared his experiences while serving on the COE committee.

Vice Chair Blass, Commissioner Kugler, Commissioner Cruise, and Inspector General John Carey expressed appreciation for Commissioner Kridel's years of service.

VII. Processed Advisory Opinions (Consent Agenda)

- a. RQO 26-005
- b. RQO 26-006
- c. RQO 26-007
- d. RQO 26-008

MOTION to approve the consent agenda. Motion by Commissioner Cruise, seconded by Commissioner Kugler, and carried 3-0.

VII. Items pulled from Consent Agenda

- a.

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

VIII. Executive Session – C25-013

RECESS

At 1:53 p.m., the chair declared the meeting recessed for executive session.

RECONVENE

At 2:28 p.m., the meeting reconvened with Vice Chair Blass and Commissioner Kugler present.

Commissioner Kugler read the final order into the record:

In re: Barbara King

C25-013

Complainant, Napoleon Collins, filed the above-referenced complaint, alleging Respondent, Barbara King, and elected official for the City of South Bay, violated Section 2-443(a), Misuse of office or position, of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics, by attempting to use her position as commissioner to intervene on a matter unrelated to her official duties.

Pursuant to Section 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 further stipulated to probable cause and entered into a negotiated settlement agreement with the Advocate. This agreement, which included a Letter of Reprimand, was submitted to the Commission for approval. Respondent further stipulated to the facts and circumstances set forth in the Letter of Reprimand. Based on those facts, Respondent admitted to violating Section 2-443(a) of the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics and agreed to accept a Letter of Reprimand and a finding that the violation was intentional. The determination as to whether a fine should be imposed was left to the Commission. The Commission accepted the terms of the negotiated settlement, issued a letter of Reprimand, and ordered a fine the amount of \$250.

Pursuant to Commission on Ethics Ordinance Section 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 the Respondent has acknowledged that her actions violated the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics.

Therefore it is:

ORDERED AND ADJUDGED this matter is concluded upon the issuance of a Letter of Reprimand and a fine \$250.

DONE AND ORDERED by the Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics in executive session on this 16th day of April 2026.

VII. Executive Director Comments

Ms. Kelley reported the following updates:

1.

Staff attended a Junior Achievement event at Cholee Lake Elementary School and Jupiter High School.

2.

Staff presented a COE overview to the League of Women Voters, and they participated in an outreach event at the City of Palm Beach Gardens Vendor Open House and Workshop.

3.

Staff conducted ethics trainings for the Palm Beach County Behavioral Health Substance Use Co-Occurring Advisory Committee and for various municipalities in the county.

4.

On Tuesday, April 14th, the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) approved moving forward with the advertised changes to the COE's ordinance, and the subsequent public hearing would take place on May 5th at 9:30 a.m.

XI. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

VIII. Commissioner Comments

No comments were made.

XII. Adjournment

At 2:32 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:



Chair/Vice Chair