

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

SEPTEMBER 03, 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
Christie E. Kelley, COE Director III
Gina 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

I. Call to Order

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

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Cruise led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. Roll Call

Present: Chair Romano, Vice Chair Blass, Commissioner Cruise, and Commissioner Vara-Garcia

Absent: Commissioner Kugler

IV. Introductory Remarks

No introductory remarks were made.

V. Approval of Minutes from August 6, 2026

MOTION to approve the minutes. Motion by Commissioner Cruise, seconded by Commissioner Vara-Garcia, and carried 4-0.

VI. Processed Advisory Opinions (Consent Agenda)

a. RQO 26-017

MOTION to approve the consent agenda. Motion by Commissioner Cruise, seconded by Commissioner Vara-Garcia, and carried 4-0.

VII. Items pulled from Consent Agenda

No items were pulled from the consent agenda.

VIII. Executive Director Comments

Ms. Kelley reported the following updates:

1.

Staff participated in outreach events at various municipalities in August.

2.

Staff also participated in events at the Rotary Club of Palm Beach and at the Junior Achievement Fair, providing an opportunity for the COE to reach audiences outside of the usual government training sessions and to increase awareness of the ethics initiatives in Palm Beach County.

3.

The COE's *Top Ten Ethics Rules Pocket Guide* has been updated. It was designed to serve as a quick, convenient reference for elected officials, employees, and members of the public, providing easy access to key ethics rules in a portable format.

Janet Rodriguez from Public Affairs was thanked for her assistance with designing the *Pocket Guide*.

UNSCHEDULED ADMINISTRATIVE ITEM

Ms. Kelley reported that the respondent Peggy Wheeler in Case No. C26-001 filed a motion requesting attorneys' fees from the complainant. That morning, staff also received

an unopposed motion from the complainant requesting a 10-day extension to respond to the respondents' motion, which both parties had agreed upon.

Ms. Kelley explained that, because this was a procedural matter related to an ongoing quasi-judicial proceeding, staff recommended that the commission approve the requested extension. She then requested a motion from the commission to grant the unopposed extension and adopt the revised timeline for Ms. Halpern to submit her response.

Motion to grant the unopposed motion for an extension of time and to adopt the agreed-upon revised timeline for the complainant's response. Motion by Commissioner Vara-Garcia, seconded by Vice Chair Blass, and carried 4-0.

Ms. Kelley presented a proposed order and noted that a motion was required by the commission.

Motion to approve the Proposed Order. Motion by Commissioner Cruise, seconded by Commissioner Vara-Garcia, and carried 4-0.

IX. Commissioner Comments

Vice Chair Blass expressed that he enjoyed his family's visit from Israel.

X. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

XI. Adjournment

At 1:34 p.m., the chair declared the meeting adjourned.

APPROVED:



Chair/Vice Chair