



*Honesty - Integrity - Character*

**Palm Beach County  
Commission on Ethics**

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## News Release

For immediate release:  
Contact:

January 13, 2023  
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### Summary of Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Meeting Held on January 12, 2023

The Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics (COE) took the following action at its monthly public meeting held on January 12, 2023.

The Executive Director presented the 2022 COE Annual Report to the commissioners.

Four advisory opinions were approved. The full opinions are available at <http://www.palmbeachcountyethics.com/opinions.htm>.

**RQO 22-027:** A town manager asked if it was a violation of the Code of Ethics for the town to allow its employees complimentary use of town facilities, considering that the town charges non-employees a fee. The town has contemplated implementing a formal policy on this matter, but has not yet taken the step to formalize the benefit.

**The COE opined as follows:** The Code does not prohibit the town from allowing employees complimentary use of its facilities. However, because there is no town policy codifying this benefit, the complimentary use of facilities likely qualifies as a gift from the town to any employee who takes advantage of this opportunity. Based on the facts provided, the public is charged over \$100 for facilities use. Because of the value of the facility rental exceeds \$100, any employee who receives complimentary facility use must report the gift in accordance with the reporting requirements of the Code.

**RQO 22-028:** A potential Palm Beach County advisory board member asked if the Code prohibits her from serving as a member of the Palm Beach County Water Utilities Department (PBCWUD) Advisory Board when her outside business occasionally accepts students who are benefitting from scholarships that are funded by Palm Beach County Youth Services.

**The COE opined as follows:** She is not prohibited from serving as a member of the PBCWUD Advisory Board because the advisory board is purely advisory and does not have any role in the oversight of the contracts between her outside business and the county. However, the existence of the contractual relationship with the county must be disclosed at a public meeting of the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners at the time of the appointment.

**RQO 22-029:** A town manager asked if the Code of Ethics prohibits an individual who employs a lobbyist who lobbies the town in question, from hosting a private party for the town's outgoing mayor.

**The COE opined as follows:** The Code of Ethics does not prohibit the individual from hosting a party for the outgoing mayor. Further, town officials or employees would not be prohibited from attending the event as long as the following conditions are met: (1) the cost per person does not exceed \$100, (2) those attending the event have not accepted additional gifts from the individual or his business totaling more than \$100, in the aggregate for the calendar year, and (3) there is no "quid pro quo" or special treatment given to the individual or his business in exchange for hosting the event.

**RQO 22-030:** A newly elected city council member asked if it would violate the Code of Ethics if she continued her volunteer work with a variety of non-profit organizations, including one where her spouse is on the board of directors.

**The COE opined as follows:** The Code of Ethics does not prohibit volunteer and philanthropic work for non-profit or charitable organizations. In the one instance where the council member's spouse is on the board of directors, the Code prohibits the council member from using her official position to give a special financial benefit to any non-profit organization of which her spouse serves as an officer or director. Thus, as long as her city council position is not used in any way to give the organization a special financial benefit, her spouse is free to continue his board membership and volunteer work with this charity.

A detailed explanation of all agenda items is available at <http://www.palmbeachcountyethics.com/meetings.htm>.

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