

**COMMISSION ON
ETHICS AND PUBLIC
TRUST**

Agenda Item No 6(B)1
Supplement No. 1
July 8, 2010

Memo

To: Honorable Chairman Dennis C. Moss,
And Members, Board of County Commissioners

From: Kerry Rosenthal, Chairman 
Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

Robert Meyers, Executive Director 
Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

Date: June 11, 2010

Re: Pay Adjustments

After receiving a memo from County Mayor Alvarez dated June 8, 2010, we met the following day and discussed whether we should provide an explanation in order to clarify the efforts taken on our part to reduce our budget. The last thing our office wants to do is to challenge the Mayor's Administration; however, the Mayor's memo appears to question the extent to which our office has behaved responsibly and such a charge deserves a response, as it would appear the Administration is not fully aware of our efforts. First and foremost, the Ethics Commission is an extremely efficient operation and arguably accomplishes more with less than any other County department. In point of fact, for the budget year 2008-09, we had a carryover of approximately \$300,000 (total budget of \$2.2 million) due to our economical approach to utilizing our budget. Secondly, our office has consistently given salary increases less than the standard County raises. For example, the County budget office would regularly build in an 8% raise into our budget every year and our policy was never to grant raises above 6% – this figure includes merit increases and the COLA. When the pressures to reduce spending on account of the recession and declining tax revenues became obvious to us, our office imposed salary freezes long before other departments were ordered to freeze or cut salaries. In fact, the senior staff members have not received a salary increase in close to two years. Furthermore, at beginning of this fiscal year, we eliminated premium pay and flex benefits from the paychecks of COE employees. In the past, we were reimbursing some employees for their cell phones, parking and other local travel expenses associated with their positions, but these benefits were taken away as well.

The County Administration has on several occasions demanded that our office reduce our budget during the middle of the year. In February of last year we were advised by the Administration to identify cuts of \$58,000 to take effect immediately. Although such a reduction created a hardship, we complied. In February of 2010, we were informed that we had to identify reductions of \$44,000 from our current's year budget and one suggestion from the Administration was for our employees to make a 5 percent contribution to the County's cost for health insurance. We presented this option to the Ethics Commission and the Executive Director was advised to find other expenses to cut from the budget

before affecting the salaries of the employees of the Ethics Commission. On February 26, 2010, a memorandum was transmitted to the County Budget Office indicating that we thought we could realize the \$44,000 savings in our budget for this year without reducing salaries, but would revisit the matter by July 1, 2010 if the proposed cuts would not achieve the abovementioned savings. Earlier this month, recognizing that our office would be unable to reduce the budget by \$44,000 without cutting salaries, all full-time employees were advised that they would have to take at least four furlough days between now and the end of the fiscal year and our intern position was eliminated.

The Commission on Ethics has at all times acted responsibly in response to the County Administration's recommendations. However, the Ethics Commission has made its own well-considered determinations as to where the cuts in our budget are best made rather than following the County Administration's shotgun approach. The core issue is whether the Administration should micromanage the budget of the independent Ethics Commission. As long as the Ethics Commission is spending its annual budget allocation sensibly, that is, living within its means and making adjustments whenever they are necessary, we do not believe it is good policy for the Administration to interfere in the management of our budget, as it compromises the independence and autonomy of the Miami-Dade Commission on Ethics and Public Trust.

We are available to discuss this memorandum with you at your convenience.

cc: The Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor, Miami-Dade County