



MEMORANDUM
OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN DENNIS C. MOSS

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

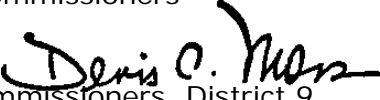
Downtown Office
111 NW 1st Street, Suite 220
Miami, Florida 33128
(305) 375-4832 | Fax (305) 372-6011

District North Office
10710 SW 211th Street, Suite 206
Miami, Florida 33189
(305) 234-4938 | Fax (305) 232-2892

District South Office
1634 NW 6th Avenue
Florida City, Florida 33034
(305) 245-4420 | Fax (305) 245-5008

Date: January 16, 2009

To: The Honorable Jose "Pepe" Diaz
and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

From: The Honorable Chairman Dennis C. Moss 
Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners, District 9

Re: **Chamber Decorum, Rules of Debate, Obtaining the Floor and
Call to Order**

I want to thank my colleagues for their vote of confidence, and I look forward to the next two (2) years that we will be working together. I view it as a tremendous honor to be in this position and I am committed to work hard to move our community forward. I also want to thank the Mayor for his support and say that I look forward to working with him over the next two years as well. During this time we may not agree on everything and we both have to do our jobs according to the county charter, but the one thing that we can agree on is that the future and our community is too important to allow our differences to get in the way.

Once again, I want to state that I plan to conduct my chairmanship based upon three (3) guiding principles:

1. Is it right
2. Is it in the best interest of the people and the community
3. Is it in the best interest of the commission and county

Further, I want to say that I will be fair and respectful to the Mayor, each of my colleagues, the administration and our residents and visitors, but I expect the position of the chair to be respected as well.

To this end, I want to outline in this correspondence some of the rules of procedures I will be implementing for the smooth and orderly operations of the county commission.

Chamber Decorum

Rule 2.01, section (2) of governing rules of the commission outline the following duties:

“Duties of Chairperson. The chairperson shall (a) preside at all meetings of the commission and preserve strict order and decorum”

I have to be honest and say that the perception of the commission and the decorum in the chamber at times, are areas of concern voiced in the community and by some of my colleagues. Therefore, I am implementing the following:

1. Everyone who enters the chambers must be seated and quiet during the commission meeting. The only exception to this would apply to the Sergeant-at-Arms, other authorized security personnel and duly credentialed media as it relates to being seated. However, the being quiet rule applies to everyone. This means no gathering, standing around and conversations should be occurring in the manager administration area, on the dais or any other areas of the chamber. Commissioners and their aides will be expected to adhere to these rules. Commissioners will be expected to control the behavior of their staff and the manager will be expected to control the behavior of his staff or they will be removed. There should not be a problem adhering to these rules. This kind of decorum is routinely observed in the various committee meetings. In the committee meetings commissioners their staff and the administration are seated, quiet and attentive. Unlike what happens at times in the regular BCC meetings.
2. Conversations in the chamber should be moved to the outside, so that they don't disrupt our meetings.
3. There will be no use of cell phones on or around the area of the dais or in the audience.
4. There are twenty-seven (27) seats around the dais for commission staff. Each commissioner is assigned two (2) seats for their staff and the office of The Chair is assigned three (3) seats.
5. The Sergeant-at-Arms will be responsible for making sure that everyone is seated and quiet, and that chamber decorum is adhered to.

Rules of Debate and obtaining the floor to speak

Rule 7.01, section (c) getting the floor, improper reference to be avoided states:

“Every member desiring to speak for any purpose shall address the presiding officer, upon recognition, shall be confined to the question under debate avoiding all personalities and indecorous language.”

1. All speakers, the mayor, county commissioners, the county manager, county staff, the public, etc. shall be required to go through the chair and to be recognized first, before speaking.
2. **Commissioners may request to have a colloquy or conversational exchange or dialogue with their colleagues, the mayor or administration, other staff or members of the public without having to go back and forth through the chair. If the**

request to have a colloquy is granted, the member may proceed. The chair reserves the right to rescind the approval to engage in a colloquy if the exchange becomes argumentative, offensive or otherwise difficult in the opinion of the chair. The intent here is to keep the dialogue that takes place in the chamber orderly, respectful and meaningful.

Call to Order

Rule 7.01, section (d) INTERRUPTION; CALL TO ORDER; APPEAL A RULING OF THE CHAIR states:

"A member once recognized shall not be interrupted when speaking unless it be a call to order or as herein otherwise provided. If a member is called to order, the member shall cease speaking until the question of order shall be determined by the presiding officer, and if in order, the member shall be permitted to proceed. Any member may appeal to the commission from the decision of the presiding officer upon a question of order, when, without debate, the presiding officer shall submit to the commission the question. "Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?" and the commission shall decide by a majority vote."

At times, we tend to stray from the question or subject of discussion before the commission, or there is a tendency to make the same comments over and over again, wasting valuable commission time and unnecessarily aggravating colleagues. Therefore, I will be reinforcing the following:

1. Commissioners will be expected to stick to the subject matter at hand.
2. When a call to order is made, the commissioner speaking is expected to cease speaking as called for in our rules until the question of order has been decided by the chair.
3. Commissioners who fail to follow the chairs directives by refusing to adhere to the subject matter at hand; by refusing to conclude after continuing to be repetitious in their comments; by refusing to cease speaking when a call to order has been invoked; by participating in comments that include personalities or indecorous language, shall be ruled out of order and forfeit their fight to the floor.

In conclusion, if we adhere to our own rules, the meetings will run more efficiently; we will ensure a tone of civility and decorum and we will improve our commission image as a whole.

Cc: Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor
George Burgess, County Manager
Robert A. Cuevas, County Attorney
Honorable Harvey Ruvlin, Clerk of the Courts
Kay Sullivan, Clerk of the Board
Sergeant-at-Arms

DCM/cjb