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## PRESS RELEASE

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TALLAHASSEE—October 28, 2020—Meeting in Tallahassee on October 23<sup>rd</sup> in closed session, the Florida Commission on Ethics took action on 34 matters, Chair Dan Brady announced today. A finding of probable cause is not a determination a violation has occurred. Such a determination is made only after a full evidentiary hearing on the allegations.

The Commission dismissed a complaint filed against Miami City Commissioner **JOE CAROLLO**, finding no probable cause to believe he misused public funds to throw campaign events for a candidate, or to surveil and harass a local business owner who supported a political opponent, or to direct employees to issue code enforcement violations to a particular property owner.

The Commission considered complaints filed against two Public Safety Officers and Trustees for the Town of Indian River Shores Public Safety and Firefighters'

Defined Benefit Plan **WILLIAM B. CROSBY** and **RICK VILLARS**. No probable cause was found to believe they participated, voted, and failed to disclose a voting conflict. No probable cause also was found regarding an allegation Crosby and Villars misused their positions to benefit themselves.

No probable cause was found to believe Clay County Tax Collector write-in Candidate **THOMAS HERBERT PLATT** filed an inaccurate 2019 Form 6 when he qualified to run for office.

The Commission found no probable cause to believe Midway City Council Member **SAMUEL STEVENS** misused his position to hire a specific company to do work for the City. In a related complaint filed against Midway City Manager **LENWOOD HERRON**, the Commission found no probable cause concerning an allegation he misused his position to hire a specific company to do work for the City.

The Commission found no probable cause in a complaint filed against Duval County Property Appraiser and former Supervisor of Elections **GERALD DONALD HOLLAND**. The allegations were that he misused the resources of his office to park his personal boat in the City's parking lot and that he used campaign funds to install a private shower in his personal office suite within the Duval County Property Appraiser's located in a building owned by the City of Jacksonville.

The Commission voted to grant a request by the complainant to withdraw his complaint filed against Miami-Dade County Commissioner **ESTEBAN BOVO**, due to good cause shown.

The Commission reviewed 26 complaints for legal sufficiency. These reviews are limited to questions of jurisdiction and determinations as to whether the contents of the complaint are adequate to allege a violation of the Code of Ethics or other laws within

the Commission's jurisdiction. As no factual investigation precedes the reviews, the Commission's conclusions do not reflect on the accuracy of the allegations made in these complaints. The Commission dismissed the following complaints for lack of legal sufficiency: **A. VICKY LEIVA**, Board member, Miami 21 Ad Hoc Task Force; **MELISSA TAPANES LLAHUES**, Miami 21 Ad Hoc Task Force; **IRIS ESCARRA**, Miami 21 Ad Hoc Task Force; **ROSY APONTE**, Candidate, 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court Judge; **APRIL GRIFFIN**, Candidate, Hillsborough County Tax Collector; **ANDREW J. MEYERS**, County Attorney, Broward County; **TARYN KRYZDA**, County Administrator, Martin County; **HERMAN ROBINSON**, City Commissioner, Lake Worth Beach; **JACK "DOUG" LILES**, Candidate, South Walton Mosquito Control District; **JAMES COUEY**, Trustee, Bayshore Gardens Park and Recreation District; **MARLON BOLTON**, City Commissioner, Tamarac; **JOHN STEVENS**, Commissioner, Cedar Hammock Fire Control District; **SUZANNE VON PAULUS**, Assistant State Attorney, 11<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit; **MANUEL CHORENS**, Detective, Miami Beach Police Department; **GARY SMITH**, Mayor, Ponce Inlet; two complaints filed against **TAMARA SHAMBURGER**, Board Member, Hillsborough County School District; **DANIAL RAWLINSON**, Trustee, Bayshore Gardens Park and Recreation District; **MAYRA URIBE**, County Commissioner, Orange County; **ALEZ GARCES**, Board Member, Triple Creek Community Development District; **PAULA BARACALDO**, Director of Building Construction Services, Pasco County; **R.J. LARIZZA**, State Attorney, 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit; two complaints filed against **BRITTNI BROWN**, Mayor, Town of Greenville; **LEE JONES, JR.**, Interim Town Clerk/Town Clerk, Town of Greenville; and **BILL MATHIAS**, Board Member, Lake County School District.

## **PUBLIC SESSION**

A formal advisory opinion was adopted by the Commission providing that under the unique circumstances presented, the members of a governing board of a water management district will not have a conflict of interest if their tenants or businesses apply to their agency for reimbursement of irrigation equipment under a cost-share grant program created by the agency.

An opinion was adopted noting a voting conflict exists for a County Commissioner who votes on the rezoning request of the parent company and owner of the business entity which employs her because the measure inures to the special private gain or loss of a principal by whom the Commissioner is retained.

Another advisory opinion adopted by the Commission states a member of a rail commission has a voting conflict regarding a measure requesting a memorandum of understanding between the Commission, the Florida Department of Transportation, and a rail company for expanding rail service, and regarding a resolution of support for expansion.

The Florida Commission on Ethics is an independent nine-member commission formed in 1974 to review complaints filed under the statutory Code of Ethics and to answer questions from public officials about potential conflicts of interest through its issuance of advisory opinions.

If the Ethics Commission believes a violation of the law may have occurred, it may decide to hold a public hearing. If it concludes a violation has been committed, it may recommend civil penalties including removal from office or employment and fines up to \$10,000 per violation.