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TALLAHASSEE—March 10, 2021—Meeting in Tallahassee on March 5th in closed session, the Florida Commission on Ethics took action on 36 matters, Chair JoAnne Leznoff 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 found probable cause to believe **CHRISTINE ROBERTS** former Greater Ft. Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau's (CVB) Vice President of Convention Sales misused her position, used inside information, and had a conflicting employment or contractual relationships while employed with the CVB. The Probable cause finding goes to use of inside information to assist her boyfriend in winning contracts with her agency and circumvention of Broward County procurement

processes to award contracts to companies owned by her boyfriend and to benefit herself.

The Commission considered a complaint filed against former write-in candidate **J.J. SCHNEIDER, JR.**, who qualified to run for Lake County Commissioner. Probable cause was found to believe he violated Florida's Constitution and disclosure law by filing an inaccurate 2019 Form 6 when he qualified to run for office. However, the Commission will take no further action on the allegation.

Probable cause was found to believe Broward County Commissioner **TIM RYAN** failed to disclose income to him or his law firm on his 2015 to 2017 Form 6s. However, based on the particular circumstances of the matter, the Commission will take no further action on the complaint.

The Commission considered a complaint filed against **R.C. "RICK" LUSSY**, former Candidate for Collier County Property Appraiser. They found probable cause to believe Mr. Lussy failed to list liabilities exceeding \$1,000 on his 2019 Form 6.

No probable cause was found to believe Charlotte County Sheriff **WILLIAM PRUMMELL, JR.** misused his position, regarding a crash review, to benefit his son-in-law who was involved in the crash.

The Commission found no probable cause to believe Seminole County Commissioner **ROBERT "BOB" DALLARI** misused his position and official resources to benefit his campaign.

No probable cause was found to believe **ANTHONY F. SABATINI**, Florida Representative, District 32, misused his position or official resources in relation to his law practice.

No probable cause was found to believe **ALISSA JEAN SCHAFER**, a Broward Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors, violated Florida's financial disclosure laws by failing to properly disclose secondary sources of income on her 2019 Form 1 disclosure.

The Commission considered the results of an investigation – required by statute – based on the findings of a random audit of **ALL FLORIDA SOLUTIONS, INC.**, an Executive Branch Lobbying Firm. Probable cause was found to believe the firm failed to accurately report compensation received from a principal for all four quarters of 2018.

In another investigation – required by statute – based on the findings of a random audit of **CARR ALLISON**, an Executive Branch Lobbying Firm, the Commission found probable cause to believe the firm filed inaccurate compensation reports for a principal in the second, third, and fourth quarters of 2018. Probable cause also was found to believe the firm filed inaccurate reports for a second principal in the third and fourth quarters of 2018.

The Commission also considered the results of an investigation of **NANCY BLACK STEWART, P.A.**, an Executive Branch Lobbying Firm, based on the findings of a random audit. No probable cause was found to believe the firm violated the law by filing an inaccurate 2018 third quarter compensation report.

An investigation based on the findings of a statutorily required random audit of the Executive Branch Lobbying firm of **PYLE AND ASSOCIATES** resulted in findings of probable cause by the Commission. The firm listed a non-registered principal on its four quarterly compensation reports in 2018. The firm also failed to report compensation earned from a principal on its first and third quarter 2018 compensation reports.

The Commission dismissed a complaint filed against **GEORGE A. SIMONS**, District Engineer for the Sebastian River Improvement District, after the investigation revealed Mr. Simons was not a "public employee" or "public officer" subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission.

A complaint filed against **ROBERT DAVID LONG**, Palm Beach Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors member, was dismissed by the Commission because the public interest would not be served by further proceedings.

The Commission reviewed 22 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: **ALEXANDRIA MARIE AYALA**, School Board Member, Palm Beach County School District; **LESLIE LONG** Chair and Co-Chair, Bowling Green Recreation Committee; **JOHN W. MINA**, Sheriff, Orange County; **ROBERT ANZEUTO**, Major, Orange County Sheriff's Office; **BRYAN NELSON**, Mayor, City of Apopka; **DAVE ARONBERG**; State Attorney, 15th Circuit; **RICHARD BLANKENSHIP**, Director of Parks & Recreation, Riviera Beach; **SCOTT EVANS**, Director, Riviera Beach Community Redevelopment Agency; **NATHAN OSGOOD**, Chief of Police, Riviera Beach; **JOSHUA LEWIS**, Major, Riviera Beach Police Department; **CHRISTOPHER HANS**, Lieutenant, Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office; **RYAN HOLROYD**, Deputy, Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office; **JASON GAVERN**, Deputy, Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office; **CHRIS VIA**, Mayor, City of Holly Hill; **JOHN PENNY**, Vice Mayor, City of Holly Hill; **ROY**

JOHNSON, City Commissioner, City of Holly Hill; **JOHN DANIO**, City Commissioner, City of Holly Hill; **PENNY CURRIE**, City Commissioner, City of Holly Hill; **GAIL CONIGLIO**, Mayor Town of Palm Beach; **JORDAN LEONARD**, Town Council Member, Bay Harbor Islands; **JOSHUA FULLER**, Vice Mayor, Bay Harbor Islands; and **STEPHANIE BRUDER**, Mayor, Bay Harbor Islands.

PUBLIC SESSION

During its public session meeting, the Commission adopted a settlement agreement in a complaint filed against former Hillsborough County Tax Collector **DOUG BELDEN**, finding he violated the law when he misused his position to benefit his re-election campaign. Further, as a part of the agreement, the Commission found probable cause to believe he solicited a favor based on the understanding his official action or judgment would be influenced thereby; however, the Commission will take no further action on this particular allegation. A civil penalty of \$4,000 for the violation will be recommended for imposition by the Governor.

The Commission also considered a stipulated settlement agreement prior to consideration of probable cause in a referral regarding **THOMAS HARDEE**, former Supervisor of Elections in Madison County. The Commission rejected the settlement proposal and found probable cause to believe he misused his position to arrange for the issuance of and/or receiving salary advances above and beyond the statutorily mandated salary of County Supervisors of Elections.

A settlement agreement, in a complaint filed against **ANGELA MONIQUE NIXON**, State Representative, District 14, was adopted by the Commission. The agreement finds Representative Nixon, as a Candidate, violated Florida's ethics laws by

filing an inaccurate 2019 Form 6. The matter will be sent to the Speaker of the House for handling in accordance with Section 112.324(4), F.S.

The Commission voted to forward a Petition for Costs and Attorney's Fees filed by **KARYN CUNNINGHAM** to the Division of Administrative Hearings for an evidentiary hearing to determine if Ms. Cunningham is entitled to having the attorney fees and costs incurred in defense of an ethics complaint reimbursed by David M. Singer. Mr. Singer filed a complaint against Ms. Cunningham in 2020 that was dismissed by the Commission with a finding of no probable cause.

A formal opinion adopted by the Commission provides guidance to a County Commissioner regarding the voting conflict law and whether or not a statutory exemption is applicable. The opinion finds the County Commissioner may vote on a measure where he is a part of the class of senior management officials and employees entitled to retirement benefits available under a local retirement option. The application of a statute exempting officials from the voting conflict law where the official is voting on matters affecting his or own salary, expenses or compensation as a public officer was at issue in this matter.

In another opinion, the Commission found a City Council Member does not have a prohibited conflict or a conflicting employment or contractual relationship when his business acts as a subcontractor in a contract between a business entity and the Sheriff's Office. Voting conflict guidance also was provided to the Council Member.

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.