

## News Release

Contact:

Christie Kelley, Executive Director  
(561) 355-1915

### Summary of Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics Meeting Held on January 8, 2026

The Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics took the following action at its monthly public meeting held on January 8, 2026.

The Executive Director presented the 2025 Annual Report to the commissioners.

The COE approved three advisory opinions. The full opinions will be available on the COE's website within seven days

at: <https://www.palmbeachcountyethics.com/coepub/>.

**RQO 26-001**: An employee of Palm Beach County (county) asked if the Palm Beach County Code of Ethics (Code) would prohibit him from accepting event sponsorship on behalf of a non-profit organization when the employee is a founding board member of the non-profit and the donor is a county vendor.

**The COE opined as follows**: The Code does not prohibit an employee from accepting a charitable donation from a vendor as long as the guidance provided is carefully followed. The Code allows an exception for the solicitation and acceptance of funds for a non-profit charitable organization from a county vendor or a lobbyist or principal or employer of a lobbyist who lobbies the county, provided there is no quid pro quo or other special consideration given and if a charitable solicitation log is submitted to the COE.

**RQO 26-002**: The County Attorney asked if the Code would prohibit the mayor of the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) from serving in an ex-officio capacity on the board of a not-for-profit organization when the organization is a county vendor and the mayor also serves as the host or honoree of the organization's annual fundraising event.

**The COE opined as follows**: The Code does not prohibit the mayor from serving on the organization's board; however, because the mayor is not required by law or ordinance to serve on that board, the ex-officio exception does not apply. Thus, if the mayor chooses to serve on the board, he or she would be prohibited from using his or her official position in any way, including using his or her title as mayor and/or county commissioner to give a special financial benefit to that organization.

**RQO 26-003**: A county employee asked if the Code would prohibit him from accepting travel expenses related to his membership on the board of a company that is a county vendor.

**The COE opined as follows**: The Code does not prohibit accepting travel expenses in this scenario if the guidance in the opinion is followed. The Code provides an exception for travel expenses, even from a vendor, if the expenses are waived in advance by a majority vote of the BCC and the travel is for governmental purposes and related to the duties and responsibilities of the employee. If properly waived, the travel expenses are not considered a gift and do not need to be reported.

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



*Honesty - Integrity - Character*

#### **Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics**

The Historic 1916 Courthouse  
300 N. Dixie Hwy, Suite 450  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
561.355.1915  
FAX: 561.355.1904  
**Hotline: 877.766.5920**  
**E-mail: [ethics@pbcgov.org](mailto:ethics@pbcgov.org)**

#### **Commissioners**

Michael S. Kridel, Chair  
Peter L. Cruise, Vice Chair  
Michael Kugler  
Rodney G. Romano  
Kristin A. Vara-Garcia

#### **Executive Director**

Christie Kelley

#### **General Counsel**

Rhonda Giger

#### **Intake & Compliance Manager**

Gina A. Levesque

#### **Education & Communications Manager**

S. Lizabeth Martin

#### **Investigator**

Mark A. Higgs

#### **Investigator**

Abigail Irizarry

