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PRESS RELEASE

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TALLAHASSEE—July 31, 2024—Meeting in Tallahassee on July 26th in closed session, the Florida Commission on Ethics took action on 45 matters, Chair Ashley Lukis announced today. Eight of those matters were probable cause hearings. A finding of probable cause is not a determination that a violation has occurred. Such a determination is made only after a full evidentiary hearing on the allegations.

The Commission considered two complaints against Florida Governor **RON DESANTIS**. In the first complaint, the Commission found no probable cause Governor DeSantis failed to report a golf simulator as a gift. The second complaint also contained allegations related to gift disclosure. The Commission also found no probable cause to believe he failed to report free air travel as a gift.

The Commission found probable cause to believe that **JACK L. MCLEAN, JR.**, former Quincy City Manager, violated the constitutional amendment prohibiting abuse of office to obtain a disproportionate benefit and misused his position when he worked simultaneously for Quincy and Riviera Beach and was compensated by two entities for the same periods of time. Probable cause was also found to believe Mr. McLean requested sick leave reported on his timesheet be changed to compensatory leave to boost his unused sick leave to the maximum allowed for payout.

No probable cause was found to believe Margate Mayor **TOMMY RUZZANO** misused his position when he was involved in discussions about whether City baseball fields should prioritize travel or recreational baseball and about the membership of the board of the local youth baseball league.

The Commission found no probable cause to believe that **MICHAEL JOSEPH**, North Miami Beach Commissioner, violated the constitutional amendment prohibiting abuse of office to obtain a disproportionate benefit and misused his position when he used his City issued P-card to pay for travel expenses to a forum in New York, a conference in Orlando, and to purchase funeral flowers for two families.

An ethics complaint against North Miami Beach Commissioner **DANIELA JEAN** was dismissed with a finding of no probable cause. The allegations were that she violated the constitutional amendment prohibiting abuse of office to obtain a disproportionate benefit and misused her position to purchase personal items from Amazon on a City issued P-card.

No probable cause was found to believe **MARIJA DICEVICIUTE**, former Florida Division of Emergency Management Appeals Officer, used or disclosed information,

gained by her official position and not available to the general public, for the benefit of herself and/or another.

The Commission rejected the finding of its advocate and found no probable cause to believe **BOBBY CROSBY**, Gilchrist County Administrator, violated the constitutional amendment prohibiting abuse of office for a disproportionate benefit and misused his position when he directed a subordinate city employee to load City property on a City vehicle and take it to his son's private property.

A complaint filed against former Brevard Sheriff's Deputy **JOSEPH SNYDER** was dismissed due to his death.

The Commission reviewed 36 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: **MELISSA WILLIAMSON NELSON**, State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit; **REGGIE LEON**, Miami Gardens City Council; **CYNTHIA CRIBBS**, Executive Secretary for the Office of the State Attorney, Fourth Judicial Circuit; **JAMES SLATON**, Lake Wales City Manager; **THOMAS DELNAY**, Lee County Deputy Building Official; **WANDA RENTAS**, former Kissimmee Vice Mayor and former Congressional candidate for the 9th District in the United States House of Representatives; **KEN SCHNEIER**, former Longboat Key Mayor, current Vice-Mayor and member of the Town Commission; **ADAM MORRISON**, Suwannee County Attorney; the following Suwannee County

Commissioners: **DON HALE, MAURICE PERKINS, TRAVIS LAND, LEO MOBLEY,** and **FRANKLIN WHITE; RONALD MEEKS**, Suwannee Planning and Zoning Director; **CHRIS HALL**, Collier County Commission Chair; **SALLY DICKSON**, University Park Recreation District Board Chair; **VIVIAN CARVALHO**, University Park Recreation District Senior District Manager; **JOSHUA MALDONADO**, Brevard County Sheriff's Deputy; **KIM BARTON**, Alachua County Supervisor of Elections; **SERGEANT ROSENBERG**, Madison County Sheriff's Office Sergeant; **CHRIS ANDREWS**, Madison County Sheriff's Office Undersheriff; **DEPUTY RYAN DAVIS**, Madison County Sheriff's Deputy; **MICHAEL ILCZYSZYN**, Cape Coral City Manager; the following Cape Coral City Councilpersons: **ROBERT WELSH, WILLIAM STEINKE, DAN SHEPARD, TOM HAYDEN, JESSICA COSDEN,** and **KEITH LONG; JOHN GUNTER**, Cape Coral Mayor; **ALEKSANDR BOKSNER**, Cape Coral City Attorney; **MICHELE PINES**, Clermont City Councilmember; **BENJAMIN TURINSKY**, Board of Supervisors for the Lake St. Charles Community Development District member; **YVONNE BROWN**, Board of Supervisors for the Lake St. Charles Community Development District member; **RANDY FINE**, Representative, District 33, and Candidate for Florida Senate; **ELIZABETH MILLER**, former Attorney, Office of the Attorney General.

PUBLIC SESSION

During its public session meeting, the Commission adopted a settlement agreement between the Commission Advocate and former St. Lucie County Sheriff **KEN J. MASCARA**. The settlement indicates Mr. Mascara misused his position and official resources to assist a campaign to prevent a particular candidate from running

against him in the general election. The Commission recommended the Governor impose a civil penalty of \$5,000, and public censure and reprimand.

The Commission dismissed a Petition for Costs & Attorney Fees filed by **FRED TRICKER**, Walton County Planning Commissioner, against Gary Shipman, the Complainant in a previously dismissed complaint filed against him. The petition failed to meet the statutory requirement to prove entitlement to recover costs and reasonable attorney's fees.

During its public session meeting, the Commission took action on appeals of automatic fines assessed for late submission of financial disclosure reports submitted by public officers and employees. Contact the Commission's office to obtain rulings (Item VII on the July 26 meeting agenda, posted on the Commission's website.)

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 \$20,000 per violation.