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September 6, 2019

The Honorable Aramis D. Ayala, State Attorney
Office of State Attorney, Ninth Judicial Circuit
415 N. Orange Avenue
Orlando, FL 32801

Re: Investigation Request/Possible Sunshine Law Violation

Dear Ms. Ayala:

We are writing to request an investigation by your office into possible sunshine law violations by members of the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (GOAA) board of directors, a public board subject to Florida's open government laws.

According to an article by *Orlando Sentinel* reporter Beth Kassab and a subsequent column by Scott Maxwell, the GOAA board met on August 28. The agenda included a proposal brought by the Authority's CEO that would allow him to start recruiting for in-house counsel, a new position. (Beth Kassab, [Mayors Buddy Dyer, Jerry Demings decry Orlando airport board moves as "unprecedented" and "dangerous," Orlando Sentinel Aug. 28, 2019](#); Scott Maxwell, [As Hurricane Dorian threatened, Orlando airport leaders tried to mount a coup . . . again/Commentary, Orlando Sentinel, Sep. 4, 2019](#))

Rather than discuss the CEO's proposal, the board chair announced he wanted to discuss hiring two outside attorneys as co-general counsels, Tara Tedrow and former Florida Supreme Court Justice James Perry. Both Tedrow and Perry were at the meeting. That motion was modified and the board voted 5/2 to hire two new contract attorneys. The only two no votes came from Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer and Orange County Mayor Jerry Deming, both of whom questioned whether there had been discussions among board members prior to the public meeting.

Additionally, board member Ralph Martinez questioned how the two attorneys had been selected.

It's important to note that the proposal to hire new contract attorneys was not on the meeting agenda, background material on the attorneys wasn't provided, and there was seemingly scant discussion about the attorneys, their qualifications, or the costs involved. And, importantly, the two attorneys specifically mentioned were in attendance at the meeting. The attendance of the two attorneys could be a coincidence, we suppose, but it would appear there may have been private discussions between some of the board members prior to the public meeting.

The Sunshine Law requires that any discussion of public business be held at a meeting open and noticed to the public. Any discussion about hiring new contract attorneys by board members prior to the public meeting would be a violation of law. We believe that this merits your attention, Ms. Ayala, and we respectfully request that your office investigate the actions of the GOAA board members.

Please let us know if you have any questions or if we can be of any assistance. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the letter 'B' followed by a period.

Barbara A. Petersen, President

Cc: Jim Baltzelle, Chair, First Amendment Foundation
Mayanne Downs, General Counsel, City of Orlando
Beth Kassab, Reporter, *Orlando Sentinel*
Scott Maxwell, Columnist, *Orlando Sentinel*