
From: BaggettF@gtlaw.com <BaggettF@gtlaw.com>
Sent: Friday, June 2, 2023 9:30 AM
To: Angel Colonneseo <Angel.Colonneseo@ManateeClerk.com>
Subject: FW: Concern as to opinion provided to the Clerk

Angel, below is the email I sent to your county attorney this morning in an attempt to try and calm the waters and offer an opportunity for him to discuss the opinion we provided you. As you see, we in no way backed off of our conclusions and do not expect to. Any help you might be able to give Steve with the individual commissioners you have a good relationship with would be appreciated. Steve expects the county attorney to recommend termination at the board meeting scheduled for next week after which I understand there is a summer recess before the next meeting. Thanks and hope to see you next week.

Fred W. Baggett
Chairman

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From: Baggett, Fred (Shld-Tal-GovLP)
Sent: Friday, June 2, 2023 9:24 AM
To: 'Williw.m.Clague@mymanatee.org' <Williw.m.Clague@mymanatee.org>
Cc: Sanford, Stephen (Shld-WPB-Bond) <SanfordS@gtlaw.com>
Subject: Concern as to opinion provided to the Clerk

Mr. Clague,

This purpose of this email is an attempt to explain the circumstances which have resulted in the serious concern you have expressed to Stephen Sanford regarding an opinion our office provided to Angel Colonneseo, Clerk of the Court and Comptroller of Manatee County.

As you are aware, this concern was first brought to Stephen and then to me in early March. At that time I spoke with Clerk Colonneseo and informed her we could not continue representing her in other matters as she was requesting. Subsequently, we confirmed our termination of representation in writing by letter dated May 31.

Our office has represented the Florida Association of Court Clerks and Comptrollers for many years **in effect as** their **de facto** General Counsel. In that capacity we are often requested to advise the Association on the constitutional and statutory duties and responsibilities of the Clerks. Occasionally, a request is made by an individual Clerk as to a matter arising in their office which raises a question of their specific duty. In such an occasion, our contract with the Association requires the individual Clerk to retain us for that service. We are careful in our conflict of interest review to disclose any adverse party and if found, seek to resolve the potential conflict.

In the matter at hand, the Clerk provided us with a set of facts related to a purchase by an individual using the County "P" card and requested us to advise as to her duty to question the purchase to determine if it had been incurred for an authorized public purpose. Our opinion was issued without regard as to who made the payment but rather if it appeared to be for a meaningful public purpose. This did not involve an act by the County but one by an individual with authority to use the "P" card for an otherwise authorized purchased. We at no time intended any reflection of impropriety or wrongdoing by the County or the Commission who were not a party to making the purchase in question. It was purely our opinion based on the facts provided and the law as we found it.

As you know, the audit to which our opinion was attached is now a public record and cannot be eliminated. If you feel the conclusions contained in the opinion were misguided we would be happy to discuss and if shown to be in error, modify the opinion accordingly.

I want to assure you that our firm has considered Manatee County a valued client for even before our office joined Greenberg Traurig in 1991. We would never consciously do anything to in any way taint that relationship. If this situation has caused you and the Commission to feel otherwise, I want you to know that I take full responsibility for not recognizing the potential for the concern and truly hope we can work through this professionally and in a manner to preserve that valued relationship. Please feel free to call me if you wish to discuss further.

Fred W. Baggett
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